

## Hazard Mitigation Grant Ensures Bayfield County Will Be Prepared for Power Outages

Madison, WI – The Bayfield County Courthouse, a historic brown sandstone building, was experiencing multiple power outages each year. The Bayfield County Courthouse located in Washburn was built in 1894. Bayfield County is located on the shores of Lake Superior in Northwestern Wisconsin. The county courthouse is a critical structure that houses most county offices providing services to the 15,000 residents living in the county. The courthouse is also designed as an emergency shelter for the area. A solution to the power outages that affected critical services to the community needed to be designed. Bayfield County applied for funding utilizing the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HGMP) 5 Percent Initiative. The grant was approved to purchase a 200 KW generator.



Bayfield County Courthouse

Budget limitations were a major consideration in solving the power outage problem. Finding a solution would require exploring grant opportunities available at FEMA. The county applied for Mitigation grant funding under the 5 Percent Initiative which considers funding projects that are difficult to pass the benefit-cost analysis. FEMA and Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) awarded the grant to Bayfield County in August 2013. The generator installation was completed in October 2014 for a total cost of \$99,000. The new generator solved the critical power need for the county.



200 KW Generator

Power outages ranged in duration from a few minutes to several hours. The sole backup power source only provided short-term power to individual electronics. This left the HVAC system and power to county offices, county telephone system, county vehicle fueling station and the cooling system for phone and computer equipment unprotected in the event of an outage. The newly installed generator would operate efficiently to continue county services to the community.

In 2016, northwestern Wisconsin was ravaged by multiple rounds of severe thunderstorms, heavy rains, high winds, and extensive flooding. While county and local first responders worked to cope with damage to roads, harbors, homes, and businesses, another round of storms on July 21 caused thousands of power outages across Bayfield County and the surrounding area, including the courthouse and jail. The outages also coincided with one of the hottest days of the year, with temperatures reaching over 90°F. Although the courthouse lost power, the grant-funded generator provided backup power until electricity was restored on the 22nd.



The mitigation measure taken by Bayfield County's installation of the generator was seen the very first time the region experienced severe weather. The benefit of having the proper generator to alleviate lengthy power outage times allowed county staff to continue providing essential emergency response services during the outage. The courthouse was able to be utilized as a cooling and equipment charging center for Bayfield County residents without power. According to Bayfield County Administrator Mark Abeles-Allison, "Without this backup generator, services to residents during this disaster would have been negatively impacted."

**Additional information on FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grants Program (HMGP) is available at:**  
<https://www.fema.gov/what-mitigation>

**For more information regarding Wisconsin Hazard Mitigation, please visit:**  
<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/mitigation/default.asp> or contact them via e-mail,  
[DMAWEMHazardMitigation@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DMAWEMHazardMitigation@wisconsin.gov).