



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



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Power Profile: Nicole Albers

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The Florida municipal industry is a large asset to energy delivery in our state and your association ably represents the municipals providing electricity. Describe your role in that regard.

As the Director of Public Affairs & Strategic Communications for the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA), I take immense pride in being associated with an organization that represents 33 municipal electric utilities across the state. Florida's 33 public power utilities are owned and operated by the communities they serve, delivering reliable, efficient, and clean electricity to more than three million Floridians and businesses at an affordable cost. FMEA is the statewide trade association that provides our members with government relations, mutual aid coordination, communications, education, and networking opportunities.

In my role, I oversee external relations and communications with the public, governmental agencies, legislators, stakeholders, and the media. I also manage our advocacy efforts and coordinate grassroots efforts among our member utilities. In addition, I oversee aspects of internal communications to our member organizations and their thousands of dedicated employees. As a small organization, we tend to wear many hats. I am also the lead on our annual conference and various other events which provide opportunities for local officials and public power professionals to come together and learn from each other and facilitates a strong network of public power champions throughout the state. It is truly an honor to be a part of the public power community, serving in the energy industry in the great State of Florida.

As the Florida Legislature has officially opened the 60-day session, what are the issues most pressing within the energy industry from your perspective?

As a public servant at heart myself, my gratitude runs deep for the women and men with the distinct honor of legislating and for the professional staff who so ably support them. Our state legislature is exploring a host of issues related to energy, from the state's vast energy resources, electric vehicle charging stations, Florida Public Service Commission rules, and much more.



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On the issue of municipal utilities, FMEA's upmost priority is to continue our advocacy before the legislature about the value that public power provides to the state and the 33 communities – and millions of Floridians – we serve. It means educating legislators on the impacts of municipal utility legislation that places restrictions on how municipal utilities transfer funds to the owners of their assets, their cities, and disassembles our long-standing and working model of governance, which is directly accountable to the people they serve. Public power utilities are unique from other utility models in that we are locally owned, locally operated, and locally controlled. Our revenues are used to reinvest in and harden our utility infrastructure and to directly support our local community. Our lower-than-average rates and high reliability reflect our customer-first focus and the continuous investments we make in our systems.

In Florida, ensuring the security and resilience of energy infrastructure is a critically pressing issue, especially in the face of extreme weather events and other disruptions like physical and cyber threats. Protecting critical infrastructure is an ongoing area of concern that state lawmakers are looking to address this year.

In general, this is an exciting time of profound change and transition within the energy sector. But I believe our legislature is working to balance that transition with good public policy that ensures the transition does not outpace the availability and affordability of energy technologies, which supports the core mission of our electric utilities to provide safe, reliable, affordable electric service to Floridians.

In your role, communication and ability to form trust and credibility are critical. What advice do you give to young professionals about networking and collegiality?

Building strong relationships is essential for success in any professional role, and at the foundation of any relationship are credibility and trust. Remember that your word is golden – it can take months to years to build your credibility, while trust can be shattered in just seconds. Because of this, it is important to always do what you say and try to approach each situation in earnest. If you don't have the answer, it takes far less time to gather the correct information than it does to restore trust once it is broken by saying the wrong thing. Relationships matter. Seek out mentorships in each new endeavor you take on, and continually build and cultivate your professional peer network. Be kind. You never know when your path will once again cross with a former colleague or acquaintance.

What inspired you to start your career in the energy industry? Are you finding there are increasingly more opportunities for women in the industry?

After welcoming my first child and dedicating nearly 15 years to the public sector, I felt ready for a change. I was seeking a fresh professional challenge that could leverage my extensive experience in serving the State of Florida while also offering a good work/life balance. That is when I found an ad for a public affairs manager position at the Florida Municipal Electric Association. The prospect of working in a new and exciting industry ripe with change was exhilarating, and I was immediately drawn to the position, especially given its requirement for my blended experience in legislative affairs and communications offices in the public sector. ... (continued on next page)



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As an added bonus, the role also allows me to maintain my connection to public service, as our FMEA member cities and utilities are filled with some of the finest public servants in the state.

Since joining FMEA more than six years ago, I have witnessed the growth in opportunities for women across the entire industry. In recent years, FMEA launched our own efforts to elevate women in public power. Through women leadership empowerment groups like Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum, becoming connected to broader community that celebrates the achievements of women in our industry creates even more opportunities for women to thrive through professional development, networking, mentorship, and elevating the next generation of women leaders.

Based upon your own personal experiences in your profession, what has been the biggest challenge you have faced or lesson you have learned?

One thing I learned early in my career is to stay flexible on your path to success. It isn't always easy, but adaptability cultivates growth and growth is the key to success.

What advice would you give the 2nd year college student looking for a career within the energy industry?

You don't have to have it all figured out right now, and if you do, great! Remain open to unexpected possibilities while actively exploring diverse areas within the industry. Internships offer an excellent way to gain varied experiences, enhance your resume, and even get your foot in the door for a longer-term career experience. The energy industry is incredibly dynamic and constantly evolving, and so, too, are the career opportunities in the field.