

Difficult budget decisions ahead for Willmar Public Schools. **A3.**

Studio Hop returns this weekend. **C1.**



WILLMAR, MINN.

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## Physician now faces 7 counts involving 4 patients

Granite Falls man makes appearance in criminal sexual conduct case

By Susan Lunneborg and Linda Vanderwerf  
West Central Tribune

GRANITE FALLS — A Granite Falls physician originally charged in March is now facing seven felony counts of criminal sexual conduct by falsely representing a medical purpose.

Dr. Mark Wendell Eakes, 58, is accused of performing unnecessary pelvic, rectal or breast examinations of four patients who saw him between October 2019 and September 2021 at Avera Granite Falls Health Center here.



Eakes

He appeared June 13 in Yellow Medicine County District Court on the seven charges in the most recent criminal complaint, which was filed June 8.

Four of the charges in the amended complaint are third-degree criminal sexual conduct, alleging sexual penetration, and three of them are fourth-degree counts that allege sexual contact.

The first criminal complaint was filed with the court in January, and Eakes was summoned to make his first court appearance in March. Since then, amended complaints have been filed four times. The first amended complaint removed one of the original three charges against one alleged victim, and subsequent amended complaints have added charges against three additional alleged victims.

Eakes has remained free on his own recognizance with a number of conditions. They include having no contact with the alleged

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Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Beaude Schultz, 7, left, and Jasper Halverson, 7, react to water pouring on their heads at the splash pad located at Rice Park in Willmar while attempting to beat the heat as temperatures hit 90 degrees Tuesday.

# BEATING THE HEAT

Splash pad offers relief from early summer high temps

By Macy Moore  
West Central Tribune

Willmar

Temperatures soared Tuesday as a heat wave blanketed most of Minnesota. Residents were advised to stay indoors if possible, and to keep cool as temps climbed into the high 90s.

That didn't deter some west central Minnesotans from cooling off at the splash pad in Willmar's Rice Park, however.



Above: Children keep cool in the summer heat Tuesday at the splash pad at Rice Park in Willmar.

Left: Brooke Wulkan, left, and mother Kalley Lingl, right, swing Hudson Lingl, 1, into a water feature Tuesday at the splash pad.



## WMU may be called to assist as heat waves persist

By Jennifer Kotila  
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — Extreme heat conditions are again causing the Midcontinent Independent System Operator to call on all utilities and communities to assist in "keeping the lights on," according to Willmar Municipal Utilities General Manager John Harren.

MISO manages the power grid for 15 Midwest states, including Minnesota, plus the Canadian province of Manitoba. It issued a capacity advisory Sunday — and a hot weather alert Monday, June 13, through 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 15. The organization also declared conservative operations from midnight until 8 p.m. for Wednesday, June 15.

"If you read the paper today and have been paying attention to the news, MISO keeps telling

us they have a shortage," Harren told the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission at its meeting Monday.

"Depending on the summer and many moving targets that go along with power supply, they are anticipating a shortage of five gigawatts, which is substantial. They are asking all utilities, communities to assist in keeping the lights on if we have those peak days, where consumption is going to exceed output, that we all do our share."

Willmar Municipal Utilities staff is currently developing a plan to share with the community so everyone knows what is coming and what to expect, Harren said.

Typically, when energy shortages exist, conserving energy consists of not running large appliances, such as

clothes dryers and dishwashers, during peak energy consumption times, he added.

This is the second or third time in the last couple of years that MISO has notified Willmar Municipal Utilities of possible shortages in the energy supply, Harren noted. It was notified this winter during the vortex, but was not actually called upon to generate power as some other utilities were in the MISO and Southwest Power Pool regions.

The Southwest Power Pool oversees the bulk electric grid and wholesale power market in the central U.S. for utilities and transmission companies in 17 states.

Willmar Municipal Utilities currently can produce up to 12 megawatts via its diesel generators, Harren said Tuesday. The utility also has some

power generation from its wind turbines.

The utility posted a peak alert on Tuesday afternoon implementing load sharing Tuesday afternoon and also asking customers to conserve energy by reducing their electric usage during the afternoon.

The utility was last called on to run its diesel generators in June 2021.

"The request from MISO never elevated any higher last June than the local runs," Harren said, adding that when the Texas grid failed in February 2021, other areas within the MISO and Southwest Power Pool footprint had rolling blackouts.

"It's becoming more frequent. Hopefully, we don't have a perfect storm that is going to require us to get into

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