

# CUSTOMER UPDATE

**Is Jack Frost  
nipping at  
your toes?**



**Learn about space heater  
use, cost, and safety  
inside this issue!**

## **FEATURING: SPACE HEATERS**

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# OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

Mr. Kim Cosens  
Mr. Dale E. Simon  
Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal

As general manager, I have the privilege of meeting with each of our employees to recognize them on their milestone employment anniversaries (10 year, 15 year, etc.). Recently, in one of these meetings, I asked one of our meter services workers what he was proudest of when looking back over his twenty-five years at OPU. Without hesitation, he said, "Our safety culture." He then reminisced and laughed about how ludicrous it seems now looking back at a time when meter technicians were "exempt" from wearing a seatbelt because they had to get in and out of the vehicle so frequently!

We have come a long way and we are all very proud of our safety culture. One measure of our success with safety is we finished the 2018 calendar year with no OSHA recordable injuries. An OSHA recordable injury is an injury that occurs at work which requires more than first aid treatment. A cut which requires stitches or a sprain for which the doctor prescribes a pain killer are examples of OSHA recordable injuries.

So what do we mean by a "safety culture"? It is much more than just following safety rules and procedures. A safety culture is the collection of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors employees share in relation to the hazards and risks we face both at work and home. To start with, we do not believe

in the old adage that "S\*#t happens". ALL injuries and "accidents" are preventable. When you break down and analyze any incident, you find there were numerous factors at play that caused it to happen, and therefore, numerous things could have been done to prevent it.

Related to the belief that all injuries are preventable is accountability. Accountability means not making excuses. I don't ever want to hear, "there is nothing we could have done to prevent it." We hold ourselves and each other accountable for safe practices. All employees have the right, and the responsibility, to speak up and stop the job if they feel uncomfortable with the situation from a safety perspective. We give one another permission to say something and we agree to not get defensive if someone points out we have lapsed in an aspect of safety or missed a potential hazard.

I encourage you to develop your own safety culture within your family. Give your loved ones permission to speak up and call you out if you are doing something potentially dangerous. Maybe you, too, sometimes drive without a seatbelt. Or maybe you sneak peeks at your phone while driving. Don't allow yourself to make excuses or rationalizations for a behavior that has been proven to be extremely dangerous. I look forward to the day in the future when we look back on our current environment of using mobile devices while driving and see it as being just as absurd as giving our meter technicians an "exemption" to wearing a seatbelt because it was too inconvenient.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Keep heat from escaping by closing your shades at night. Window shades insulate against heat loss through the glass even with the best windows. Open them back up when the sun is out to gain heat from the sun.



Cyber security is one of those topics that most of us would like to avoid discussing; however, it's one of those topics that should be discussed and reviewed on a regular basis.

Wikipedia definition of Cyberattack:

*"Cyber-attack is any type of offensive maneuver employed by individuals or whole organizations that targets computer information systems, infrastructures, computer networks, and/or personal computer devices by various means of malicious acts usually originating from an anonymous source that either steals, alters, or destroys a specified target by hacking into a susceptible system."*

The City of Owatonna is continually reviewing the strategies we use to try and keep our data safe and secure from cyberattacks. Some steps we have taken to do this include installing and maintaining network firewalls that monitor and filter unwanted traffic coming into our networks from the internet. We also use Web Filters to block out sites that are known for hosting malware or other harmful programs. Another area we monitor and maintain is Operating System software updates and security patches to both our desktop computers and servers. It is also important for network users to have strong passwords and to change those passwords on a regular basis, which is why we require our employees to change their passwords on a regular basis. Another component of keeping our systems safe from cyberattacks includes installing, maintaining, and monitoring virus software on every computer on our network.

There is no perfect world where every possible attack can be anticipated and prevented but one very important thing that cannot be overlooked, is making sure that all data is backed up and secure, so that if something were to happen it can be restored back to its original state. At the City, our backups are done every night and are reviewed every morning by IT staff to make sure they are complete and without errors. We also require all City employees to take an online Cyber Security course annually to help them to understand their role in keeping our data safe and secure.

There are many outside agencies that we use as resources to ensure we are implementing as many reasonable best practices in this Cyber-attack area as possible. We also use outside agencies to perform security audits from time to time, which helps to identify weaknesses that weren't identified on our own.

In addition to all the steps the City of Owatonna takes to combat cyberattacks, it's also important for every person to individually review and understand the basics of cybersecurity. Everyone is a target for these attacks, so

what practical steps can you take? Doing a few quick searches on the internet can provide you with a lot of simple and practical steps you can take to protect yourself. Here is a list of a few that I found and that I think are important:

1) **Keep your software up to date.**

Turn on Automatic Updates for your operating system. If you use other Internet browsers such as Chrome or Firefox, make sure these are up to date as well. Also make sure browser plug-ins are up to date as well, such as Flash, Java, etc.

2) **Avoid Phishing scams.** Phishing scams are a constant threat - using various social engineering (link is external) ploys, cyber criminals will attempt to trick you into divulging personal information such as your login ID and password, banking or credit card information.

3) **Practice good password management.** Use long passwords - 20 characters or more is recommended. Use a strong mix of characters, and never use the same password for multiple sites. Don't share your passwords and don't write them down (especially not on post-it notes attached to your monitor). Update your passwords periodically, at least once every 6 months (90 days is better).

4) **Be careful what you click.** Avoid visiting unknown websites or downloading software from untrusted sources. These sites often host malware that will automatically, and often silently, compromise your computer. If attachments or links in email are unexpected or suspicious for any reason, don't click on it.

5) **Install anti-virus protection.** Only install an anti-virus program from a known and trusted source. Keep virus definitions, engines and software up to date to ensure your anti-virus program remains effective.

6) **Back up your data.** Back up on a regular basis - if you are a victim of a security incident, the only guaranteed way to repair your computer is to erase and re-install the system.

### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

# SPACE HEATERS



**use • cost • safety**

Space heaters provide a convenient way to warm up a room quickly, but should be used properly to ensure safe and cost effective operation.

According to the US Consumer Products Safety Commission, more than 25,000 fires and 300 deaths are attributed to the improper use of space heaters every year. Does this mean they are dangerous and should be avoided at all cost? No, but a few safety tips should be followed to limit the risk of fire or injury.

- Use newer models with built in safety features such as tip over and overheat protection
- Look for the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label
- Place space heaters on a flat level surface
- Keep space heaters away from flammable items like bedding, furniture, curtains
- Place in an area without foot traffic where pets and children can't reach
- Make sure to keep 3 feet of clear space around the heater
- Do not use around flammable vapors such as paint and gasoline
- DO NOT USE SPACE HEATERS INTENDED FOR OUTDOOR USE IN YOUR HOME

The cost of using an electric space heater is another important issue to consider before turning them on. Although space heaters often come with multiple power settings, they can still be more expensive to use than the furnace or hot water heating system in a home, even older inefficient ones. Electric space heaters generally use up to 1500 watts of electricity, more than it takes to use most vacuum cleaners. Running an electric space heater on high for 8 hours a day will cost more than \$1.20 per day. That's an additional \$36 a month for each space heater. Running an electric space heater on high for 24 hours will cost more than \$3.60 per day, an additional \$108 per month!

There are, however, ways to use space heaters without causing drastic increases to your utility bill. First, space heaters should be used only to supplement the home heating system, not to replace it. Use space heaters to add additional heat in a small area or room, not the whole house. Avoid using the high setting unless necessary. Try using a low or medium setting instead. Use the thermostat to reduce the excess electricity used.

If you spend a lot of time in a cool room of the home, a space heater can help keep you more comfortable without having to turn the heat up for the whole house. They can also provide additional heat for individuals that are sensitive to cold temperatures such as elderly and young children. When using a space heater for comfort in the evening, turn the temperature down 2 degrees on the furnace allowing the rest of the house to cool down slightly.

For recap, using a space heater requires following a few simple safety precautions to ensure they don't cause injury or damage. Space heaters will add additional cost to your utility bill and should only be used to supplement the heating system in your home.

# EQUIPMENT SERIES



The water main repair truck is a mini workshop on wheels. It is a valuable tool in helping the water crew with main and hydrant repair and maintenance. It is equipped with a generator, dedicated heater, floodlights, tools and other supplies the crew needs to work safely and efficiently including cones and barricades.



OPU's first priority is always the safety of our workers and the public. Just as is done by emergency responders at a vehicle accident scene, backing the truck up to the excavation serves as a barricade from oncoming traffic. This is done to supplement the cones and barricades placed around the work zone. Floodlights housed in the back of the truck light up the area for better visibility ensuring quality work in the most efficient manner.

The majority of main breaks occur when the weather is less than desirable (wintertime). The truck also serves as a warming place for the crew, which is an important place to have since the work is usually performed in standing mud and water.

This 2013 Ford F350 was purchased for approximately \$50,000 and with limited use, is expected to last 20 plus years.

## REBATE CHANGE

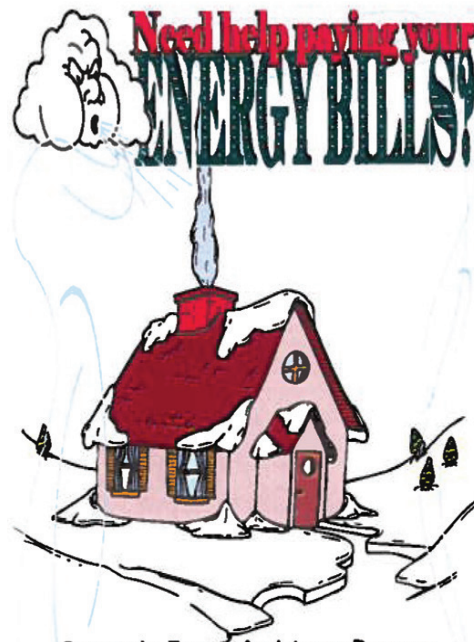


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LED BULB REBATES  
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LITTLE LESS GREEN...**

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(down from \$15 per bulb last year).

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**Semcac's Energy Assistance Program**  
may be able to help you with winter energy bills.  
(Eligibility is based on household income.)

Serving Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Steele  
& Winona Counties

**Call SEMCAC!**  
**800-944-3281**

The Energy Assistance Program is funded by the State of Minnesota  
Department of Commerce through a block grant from the Federal Health and  
Human Services Department

# CARBON MONOXIDE

**Carbon monoxide alarms do not last forever.** The detecting components will lose their effectiveness after 5 to 7 years and may no longer detect carbon monoxide. Pushing the test button usually only tests the battery, horn and circuitry. It will not test if the gas sensing element is functioning.

In 2009, Underwriters Laboratories (UL), began requiring an end-of-life warning to alert homeowners when their carbon monoxide alarm has reached the end of its useful life. However, if your alarm was manufactured before August 2009, it may not contain the end-of-life feature. Even newer alarms can malfunction due to chemical exposure, damage, misuse and various other reasons. Carbon monoxide alarms do not detect the presence of carbon monoxide when in end-of-life mode. Replace your carbon monoxide alarms before the end-of-life warning. If there is any doubt, replace it.

Symptoms of CO poisoning can include headache, dizziness, weakness, shortness of breath, confusion, blurred vision, nausea/vomiting, or loss of consciousness. Contact OPU **immediately** if your detector goes off or if you or your family members experience these symptoms.



## **SAVE THE DATE – CRWP’s Annual Downstream Environmental Film Festival 2019**

The Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) is bringing back the Downstream Film Series this year! The event will feature high quality short films on environmental issues, amazing natural places, and whimsical intersection between art and water.

The goal of the event is to connect environmental issues and perspectives to the local community, promote discussion, and inspire people to take action for clean water in our watershed.

*Please join us for an enjoyable night with a variety of films, community discussion, and show support for your watershed.*

**When:** Friday February 22nd, 2019 at 7:00 PM

**Where:** The Grand Event Center, 316 Washington Street, Northfield, MN 55057

CRWP is a local non-profit dedicated to maintaining and improving the health of the beautiful Cannon River Watershed through education programs, conservation projects, and community problem solving. **To learn more check out [www.crowp.net](http://www.crowp.net) or contact Kevin Strauss at [kevin@crowp.net](mailto:kevin@crowp.net)**

*For further information regarding the City Stormwater Management Program, visit [www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater](http://www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater) or contact Bradley D. Rademacher Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist at (507)-774-7300.*

# REBATES

## Shower Yourself With Savings!



**\$25**  
**WaterSense**  
**Showerhead**  
**Rebate\***

If you shorten your shower one minute,  
you can save 550 gallons per year.

**But if you switch your showerhead,  
you can save 2,900 gallons per year!**

\*Rebate will not exceed the purchase price.

**CONTINUE TO MAKE A  
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WATER EFFICIENCY REBATES:**

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- Rain Barrels..... \$10
- Weather-Based Irrigation  
Controllers ..... \$75

**look for**



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# CONSERVE & \$SAVE<sup>®</sup>



INDICIA

P.O Box 800 208 S. Walnut Ave.  
Owatonna, MN 55060

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

### OFFICE HOURS:

#### Monday-Wednesday:

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

#### Thursday:

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

#### Friday:

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

#### Saturday & Sunday:

Closed

### Payment Options

- Online at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com)
- Automatic Withdrawal; bank account or credit card
- Drive-up drop box located in the parking lot south of building
- Drop box locations at Cash Wise Grocery Store and HyVee Food Store
- Mail
- At Owatonna Public Utilities; cash, credit card, check or money order

### Moving?

Remember to contact the Customer Service Department **ONE WEEK** prior to moving, 451-2480.



*Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association*

### Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Program

OPU is accepting scholarship essays and applications for the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship. MMUA splits the scholarship fund into \$2,000, \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500 scholarships.

For more information visit our website at <http://www.owatonnautilities.com/residential-customers/energy-education/>



Your opinion matters to us. Please take a few minutes to tell us how we did by visiting our website at [owatonnautilities.com/customerurvey](http://owatonnautilities.com/customerurvey) or simply scan the QR code above.

### From the Editors

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. Feel free to give us a call at 451-2480 or send an email to [schmolt@owatonnautilities.com](mailto:schmolt@owatonnautilities.com).

### Gas Leak?

If you smell gas and can't find the source immediately, go to a neighbor's house and call OPU at 451-1616.



Don't turn electrical switches on or off or use a flashlight or telephone in the home, because an electrical spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.



[WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM](http://WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM)