

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



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# OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal  
Ms. Dena Keilman  
Mr. Jay Johnson

If you are a regular reader of our monthly newsletter you know we have been talking a lot about our Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project this year. We are very excited about it and we are doing our best to keep you well informed as we progress.

On October 12, our long-awaited installation of new ERTs (Encoder Receiver Transmitter) on our gas meters began. The batteries in our existing ERTs are reaching the end of their 20-year life, so it is an opportune time to make this upgrade. Fortunately, our gas meters are located outside the home and changing the ERT can be accomplished without interrupting gas flow, so there should be very little impact to you, our customer. After the gas meters are completed, we will move on to the water and electric meters. This project will be on-going well into 2022.

It's a good time to revisit why it is we are doing this project in the first place. One of our strategic focus areas is to leverage technology where it can benefit our relationship with our customers and help our employees be more successful in serving our customers. The AMI project clearly meets this objective.

AMI is an improved way to read, collect, and evaluate the information our meters can provide. This will allow our engineering team to better monitor the health of our electrical system and plan infrastructure for future community growth. Real time outage notification will help us to respond more quickly by being able to determine the extent and probably cause of an outage much more rapidly. We will be able to collect readings for billing, move orders, and usage evaluation without rolling a truck. This saves money and frees our employees up to do more valuable tasks.

AMI positions us for the future giving us more flexibility to offer things such as time-of-use pricing which can help to shift load from on-peak to off-peak periods. You will eventually have the option to become much more in control of monitoring your energy consumption and making decisions which affect your energy costs.

The installation is being done by Scope services who is a subcontractor of our meter vendor. They perform this work in different communities throughout the country. I was pleased to hear from them that they found our customers to be more informed and better educated about the project than what they experience in other communities. This made me proud of the work our communications team has done in getting the word out. Our team will continue to do their very best to keep you informed as we proceed with the various phases of this multi-year project.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

**DID YOU KNOW...**An oven that is up to temperature can hold its temperature for up to 10 minutes after being turned off. To help save energy, set the automatic-off timer for your oven to turn off up to 10 minutes before your kitchen timer sounds.



## Winter Parking Ordinance

Owatonna's long standing odd/even side parking ordinance is in effect from November 15 to March 31. The purpose of the ordinance is to facilitate snow removal and street maintenance. If it is necessary for you to leave a vehicle on the street between 12:01 AM and 12:00 PM (noon), park on the even house numbered side of the street on even numbered calendar days and likewise, park on the odd numbered house side of the street on odd numbered days. You should anticipate the midnight date change. Also keep in mind that in December and January we will have two odd days in a row, the 31st and 1st.

Odd/Even parking or alternate side parking regulations are common in Minnesota. A notice is posted at all entrances to the city and on streets throughout the city. It is the responsibility of hosts to notify guests of the odd/even side parking restriction.

Odd/Even parking enforcement is not contingent on an impending snow storm. It is not our objective to write parking tickets when it snows, but rather to get people into the habit of consistently complying with the ordinance. Writing tickets to illegally parked cars during or after a snow storm doesn't help in the snow removal operation. Voluntary compliance, precipitated by consistent enforcement, results in a significantly more effective and efficient plowing operation.

The ordinance reads:

72.02 PARKING DURING STREET MAINTENANCE OR SNOW EMERGENCY.

(A) (1) No person shall park or leave standing any vehicle on any street in the city on any day between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 12:00

noon from November 15 through March 31, except as hereinafter provided:

(a) On even-numbered calendar dates, vehicles may be parked on the near side of the street adjacent to lots and houses which have been assigned even numbers; and

(b) On odd-numbered calendar dates, vehicles may be parked on the near side of the street adjacent to lots and houses which have been assigned odd numbers.

(2) This division (A) does not apply to any street where parking is limited to one side, to any cul-de-sac which has combined even and odd house numbers, nor to any street which has more restrictive parking requirements.

(3) This division (A) does not apply to street parking within a two-block radius of duly constituted churches for regularly scheduled weekend services, holiday services, funerals and weddings. Street parking is allowed one hour prior and one hour after the scheduled service times.

(B) Signs announcing the existence of the winter parking ordinance and the hotline telephone number shall be placed at all entrances to the city.

(C) No vehicle shall be parked or be permitted to remain on any street in or serving the Business District, as defined in § 71.065 of this code of ordinances, between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. on any day, contrary to the signs ordered by the Council to be posted on such streets. Signs in place effective upon the adoption of this chapter shall be in effect until ordered changed.

(D) Any violation of this section shall be subject to the penalties set forth in § 71.999 of this chapter.

**MAYOR**  
Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank  
Nathan Dotson  
Jeff Okerberg  
Kevin Raney  
Greg Schultz  
Brent Svenby  
Doug Voss

Streets exempt from winter parking ordinance:

- All cul-de-sacs (any street with the word "PLACE" in its name).
- Any "DRIVE" or "LANE" where the house numbers change from even to odd on the same side of the street.
- Any street where parking is limited to one side.
- Any street which has more restrictive parking requirements.

The Owatonna Police Department would like to thank everyone for taking the time to adhere to this ordinance. The general intent of this ordinance is to provide on street parking for our residents and visitors and to assist the city street maintenance crews by ensuring efficient and effective snow removal that benefits all of us. The Owatonna Police Department wants to wish everyone a safe and joyous holiday season, and travel with care! For more information, please call the Owatonna Police Department at 507-774-7200.



SCAN ME

### TO VIEW THE ORDINANCE:

Visit <https://www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/> and under the Government tab select City Codes, Section 72.02 Parking during Street Maintenance and Snow Emergency.



## Salt Levels Rise in Minnesota Waters

*Information and pictures for this article provided by Angie Hong, educator for East Metro Water Resource Program, originally printed in the Winter 2019/2020 edition of "Breeze", an American Water Works Association - MN Section publication.*

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency would like you to think about salt, and not just because we saw snow recently. As chloride concentrations continue to rise in lakes, rivers, and groundwater around Minnesota, the agency is working with partners to develop a Statewide Chloride Management Plan that will help to keep our freshwater resources, well... fresh.

Chloride (salt) concentrations have been increasing in the Minnesota, St. Croix, and Mississippi rivers since 1985 and MPCA's most recent water monitoring data show that 50 water bodies around the state – that's 221 river miles and 1,400 acres of lakes – have accumulated so much chloride that they are now toxic to fish and aquatic life.

While most people are familiar with the harmful impacts of winter road salt, it turns out there are also several other significant ways that chloride makes its way into our environment. Some surprising culprits include water softener salt, agricultural fertilizer, manure, industrial discharges from factories, and dust suppressants applied to dirt and gravel roads. In fact, a 2019 report by the University of Minnesota estimates that 65% of all chloride discharged into lakes and rivers by wastewater treatment plants (136,000 tons of chloride annually) comes from water softeners.

Chloride is a tricky pollutant because it persists in the environment and cannot be filtered out with practices such as raingardens, buffer plantings, or stormwater ponds. Once salt is in water, it can only be removed through reverse osmosis. Imagine trying to run an entire lake through a reverse osmosis filter, and you'll quickly understand why most experts agree that chloride in our environment is basically there to stay.

High chloride levels can kill fish, invertebrates, and plants, but salty water isn't just a problem for nature: the MPCA has found that 16% of monitoring wells in the Twin Cities area that are located in shallow sand and gravel aquifers have too much chloride. This is a major reason for concern in a state that gets 75% of its drinking water from groundwater. Chloride in drinking water can also corrode lead and copper pipes, leading to additional health concerns.

Through the Statewide Chloride Management Plan, MPCA hopes to work with municipalities, counties, watershed districts, and other state experts to develop strategies for reducing the biggest sources of chloride in our waterways – winter maintenance, dust control, and water softening. The agency is also focusing on critical areas around the state where more salt is being used – highly developed watersheds with lots of roads and parking lots, and areas with very hard drinking water.

MPCA is currently asking the public to provide comments on the draft chloride management plan, which can be found online at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/draft-statewide-chloride-management-plan>. Send comments via email to Eric Alms at [eric.alms@state.mn.us](mailto:eric.alms@state.mn.us). Learn more about chloride and its impacts on Minnesota water at [www.pca.state.mn.us/water/chloride-101](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/chloride-101).

# HO HO NO!

Owatonna Public Utilities will **NOT** be collecting holiday lights for recycling this year, but customers can take them to:

## Steele County Waste Management Recycling Center

1171 Brady Blvd NW  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm  
Saturday 8am-Noon



## TOYS FOR TOTS



U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE

Due to our offices being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OPU will not be a drop off location this year for Toys for Tots. If you are interested in donating, visit the Toys for Tots website at <https://owatonna-mn.toysfortots.org> for a full list of drop off locations.



## LED Light Bulbs

ON  
SALE  
NOW

*Reduced pricing through December while supplies last at these participating retailers:*



Alexander Lumber Co.  
Arrow Hardware & Paint  
Batteries + Bulbs  
Lowe's  
Walmart

Be**bright**

# SMELL GAS? GET OUT!

THEN CALL OPU • 24 HRS • 507.451.1616



- Smell gas? (odor is like rotten eggs)
- Can't immediately find the source?
- DO NOT turn on a light switch or use the phone because the potential spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion!
- Get out and call OPU from your mobile phone or a neighbor's house.

Learn more about  
Gas Safety at

[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)



## Clean Streets for Clean Water!

In urbanized areas, stormwater carries phosphorus and other pollutants directly into Minnesota's water resources through the drainage system. Unlike Owatonna's household wastewater, stormwater does not go through the Wastewater Treatment Facility. In many cases, stormwater is discharged directly to our rivers and creeks.

## Fall Clean Water Tips

1. Have a storm drain near your home? Volunteer to adopt it through the City's Adopt a Catch Basin Program and receive a complimentary rake to keep it free of leaves and debris.
2. Sweep up your grass clippings, leaves, and other debris from driveways, sidewalks, and the street. Don't forget to keep the gutters cleared.
3. Clean up any excess fertilizer that has spread onto hard surfaces during application.
4. Even as the weather turns cold, continue scooping your pet's waste.
5. During routine fall tune-ups check your vehicle and outdoor equipment for leaks.

Learn more about the Adopt-A-Catch Basin Program by contacting Bradley D. Rademacher, Water Quality/ Stormwater Specialist at (507)-774-7300 or [Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us)



# REBATES

## Thinking About Remodeling? Think About Rebates!

Before you start your project, plan ahead! Choosing efficient appliances or equipment will help you save money on utility bills, plus we offer the following rebates:

### ENERGY STAR® REBATES

- Clothes Washers & Dryers
- Dehumidifiers
- Dishwashers
- Refrigerators & Freezers
- LED Bulbs & Fixtures

### EQUIPMENT REBATES

- Air Conditioners & Heat Pumps
- Boilers & Furnaces
- Electronic Ignition Hearth
- Furnace Fan Motors
- Showerheads
- Smart Thermostats
- Water Heaters

### WATER REBATES

- High-Efficiency Toilets

### BUILDING SHELL REBATES

- Attic Insulation
- Replacement Doors
- Additional building shell rebates are available to customers who complete a House Call Energy Audit. Call us at 507.451.2480 to schedule your audit.



Visit [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

# CONSERVE & \$AVE®

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



**OWATONNA PUBLIC  
UTILITIES HOLIDAY  
HOURS**

**Payment Options**

- Online at [www.owatonnautilities.smarthub.coop](http://www.owatonnautilities.smarthub.coop)
- Phone at (507) 451-2480  
Option 2 or 1-888-228-2398  
(Available 24/7)
- Automatic Withdrawal; bank account or credit card
- Drive-up drop box located in our parking lot
- Drop box locations at CashWise and HyVee Food Store
- Mail to P.O. Box 629, Owatonna, MN 55060
- ACH bank draft sent directly from your bank



During these continued trying times, we urge residents to support your locally owned businesses in Steele County. Show them we are all stronger together.

**STOP THE SPREAD**

In a continuing attempt to encourage social distancing and to protect our employees and the residents of Owatonna from the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), public access to OPU buildings will remain restricted until further notice. Our customer service reps are available by phone, during normal business hours, to help answer your questions. Utility payments can be made in a variety of ways that do not require face-to-face interaction. View the different options on the left.

**Moving?**

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

