

CUSTOMER UPDATE



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OPU MEMO



Ronnie Johnson,
Director, Engineering

OPU Commission

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

Let's start with a little history...back in 2014, Jaguar Communications approached the Owatonna Public Utilities and proposed a joint venture project. Jaguar was proposing to install fiber optic communication cables throughout the city of Owatonna. Jaguar expected to be installing these new facilities along the same routes that OPU had existing facilities. Jaguar's proposal to OPU was to have their contractor install conduits for OPU as well, in the areas that OPU had a need for new conduits. By working together, both companies could see a benefit in cost savings for the conduit installation. OPU recognized this proposal as an opportunity to not only save money on conduit installation, but also as the first step to "system hardening" our electric power system.

What do I mean by "system hardening"? In regards to electrical power lines, system hardening would mean designing and building or rebuilding the power lines in a manner that makes it harder for storms, trees, squirrels, birds, and other creatures to cause power outages. One way to do this is to replace the overhead power lines with underground power lines. So why aren't all power lines placed underground? Costs, costs, and even more COSTS is the answer. Placing all of OPU's power lines underground would be extremely costly and definitely create substantial electric rate increases. However, replacing small wire single phase primary overhead lines with underground lines can be cost effective. These single-phase primary lines are predominantly in residential backyard areas. These are the areas where most of our outages from storms, trees, squirrels, birds, and other creatures come from. These are the areas that OPU focused on for the joint project and the areas of focus for us over the next few years.

So where do we sit today? The joint conduit project was completed this year. This project was just the installation of conduit and equipment bases. OPU now has a lot of work ahead of us to complete our "system hardening" phase of this project. Here are some numbers to give you an idea of how much work the joint project generated:

- 52 miles = Total single-phase primary conduit installed.
- 11 miles = Number of miles completed with new primary facilities (system hardening).
- 41 miles = Empty conduit awaiting new facility installation.

- 43 miles = Total secondary wire conduit installed.
- 11 miles = Number of miles completed with new secondary facilities (system hardening).
- 32 miles = Empty conduit awaiting new facility installation.

OPU plans to complete this system hardening phase over the next 10 years. Depending on the amount of economic growth and development within our community, this timeline could be extended or shortened.

This type of project will not only make our system stronger, but it can also save over \$150,000 per year in tree trimming costs.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Fall is on it's way but don't let that stop you from hanging your clothes to dry. Using a clothesline instead of your dryer not only saves you money on your utilities, it also reduces the wear on your clothes, helping them last longer.



Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program

PURPOSE

The City of Owatonna (City) and Steele County (County) recognize the hardships and impact COVID-19 has had on business within the community. In an effort to support local businesses and help them sustain operations during this difficult time, the Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program will provide grants up to \$10,000 to assist eligible businesses adversely affected by the pandemic.

The City and County have each set aside funds for the Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program, a total of \$1 million is anticipated to be available. Grant funds will be awarded to businesses in most need of assistance after the application deadline. The program is subject to funding availability from the City and County. The City retains the authority and discretion to approve or deny an application, and reserves the right to subsequently add further priorities, change eligibility criteria, or discontinue the program in response to changing circumstances.

ELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

Businesses must meet all of the following criteria as of March 1, 2020 in order to be eligible for the Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program:

1. Private, for profit business with a physical establishment in the City
2. Be in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Revenue and Secretary of State, the County, and the City. If applicant is found not to be in good standing, they will be given one (1) week to rectify the situation
3. Ability to demonstrate the business was adversely affected by an Executive Order related to COVID-19 or experienced a significant financial hardship as a direct result of COVID-19
4. Business has been in operation since November 1, 2019
5. Employs 50 or less full-time equivalent (FTE) employees

****NOTE:** Businesses that received any federal relief funds such as the Small Business Administration (SBA), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), or Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) are still eligible for the Owatonna CARES Business Assistance Program, BUT if awarded grant funds, must use City funds for other eligible expenses.

INELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

Certain businesses are ineligible for the Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program, including:

1. Business that derived income from passive investments without operational ties to operating business; real estate transactions; property rentals or property management
2. Business that primarily focus on speculative activities based on fluctuations in price rather than the normal course of trade
3. Businesses that derive more than 51% of their income from gambling
4. Businesses that derive any income from

- adult oriented entertainment
5. Home-based businesses; those without a physical establishment
6. Non-profit organizations
7. Prohibited businesses by federal, state, or local law
8. Those that have received State CARES small business funding
9. Business in default prior to February 29, 2020

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Amount:

Business may apply for a one-time grant award not to exceed \$10,000. The City will review each applicant's request for grant funds to determine the level of assistance that will be provided.

Timeline

Applications will be open to businesses starting August 31, 2020. Applicants will have until 5:00 pm on September 21, 2020 to submit the required application and associated materials. Applications will be reviewed when submitted and a determination will be made if they are eligible and amount of funding that is eligible. If incomplete, applicants will have one (1) week after being contacted to submit additional information and/or materials.

The City will award grant funds and notify businesses during the week of October 5, 2020. Once a business is notified, the City will distribute the funds by check within 3 business days.

If grant funds are used solely for reimbursement of expenses previously incurred, the applicant will file a Certification of Expenses form with the City prior to funds being released. If grant funds are being used for expenses yet to be incurred but no later than November 15, 2020, the applicant will file a Certification of Expenses form with the City no later than November 30, 2020 stating how awarded funds were used.

All grant funds allocated to businesses must be utilized by November 15, 2020.

Uses

Funds cannot be used to replace lost revenues or pay for taxes under the Federal Guidelines. Funds may be used to cover operating expenses, including payroll, rent/lease payments, mortgage payments, utilities, payments to suppliers, or other critical business expenses including business consulting to modify business operations as a result of the public health emergency and as approved and authorized by the program.

Use of funds subject to verification to ensure compliance as required under the Federal CARES Act program requirements.

Right to Deny or Termination

The City retains the right to deny funds or terminate any agreement under the Owatonna CARES Business Grant Program if a grant applicant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in the grant guidelines or grant agreement.

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Reporting

As a condition for receiving grant funding, all grant recipients are required to submit a Certification of Expenses form to the City upon funds being issued or before November 30, 2020 specifying how the entirety of the grant funds were utilized and providing evidence in the form of paid invoices, statements, or similar documentation.

Indemnification

All grant recipients shall be required to indemnify the City of Owatonna and any officers acting on their behalf.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Prior to applying, please review the Program Guidelines to determine if your business is eligible.

1. Application forms will be accepted from August 31 to September 21, 2020
2. Application forms may be completed and submitted on <https://www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/>
3. Application requirements will include:
 - Basic details about the business.
 - Gross receipts or sales information.
 - Information on current operations including whether the business is currently closed or is providing reduced services.
 - Narrative descriptions and estimated calculations of the negative impacts of the business due to COVID-19.
 - Information about other grants received.
 - Proposed use and amounts of funding requested.
 - Supporting documentation and application attachments.
4. Upon submission of application, applicants will receive an email confirmation receipt of application.
5. The application will be reviewed for eligibility upon receipt. If additional information or documentation is necessary City staff will contact the applicant. You will be notified if your application is complete or not. All applicants will be given one (1) week after being contacted to submit any additional information.



ABSORPTION HEAT PUMPS

Information for this article obtained from www.energy.gov; images from roburcorp.com

Absorption heat pumps are essentially air-source heat pumps driven not by electricity, but by a heat source such as natural gas, propane, solar-heated water, or geothermal-heated water. Because natural gas is the most common heat source for absorption heat pumps, they are also referred to as gas-fired heat pumps. There are also absorption (or gas-fired) coolers available that work on the same principle. Unlike some absorption heat pumps, however, these are not reversible and cannot serve as a heat source.

Residential absorption heat pumps use an ammonia-water absorption cycle to provide heating and cooling. As in a standard heat pump, the refrigerant (in this case, ammonia) is condensed in one coil to release its heat; its pressure is then reduced and the refrigerant is evaporated to absorb heat. If the system absorbs heat from the interior of your home, it provides cooling; if it releases heat to the interior of your home, it provides heating. The difference in absorption heat pumps is that the evaporated ammonia is not pumped up in pressure in a compressor, but is instead absorbed into water. A relatively low-power pump can then pump the solution up to a higher pressure. The problem then is removing the ammonia from the water, and that's where the heat source comes in. The heat essentially boils the ammonia out of the water, starting the cycle again.

A key component in the units now on the market is generator absorber heat exchanger technology, or GAX, which boosts the efficiency of the unit by recovering the heat that is released when the ammonia is absorbed into the water. Other innovations include high-efficiency vapor separation, variable ammonia flow rates, and low-emissions, variable-capacity combustion of the natural gas.

Although mainly used in industrial or commercial settings, absorption coolers are now commercially available for large residential homes, and absorption heat pumps are under development. The 5-ton residential cooler systems currently available are only appropriate for homes on the scale of 4,000 square feet or more.

Absorption coolers and heat pumps usually only make sense in homes without an electricity source, but they have an added advantage in that they can make use of any heat source, including solar energy, geothermal hot water, or other heat sources. They are also amenable to zoned systems, in which different parts of the house are kept at different temperatures.

The efficiency of air-source absorption coolers and heat pumps is indicated by their coefficient of performance (COP). COP is the ratio of either heat removed (for cooling) or heat provided (for heating) in Btu per Btu of energy input.

LADDER SAFETY

This fall, when preparing to clean your gutters, look up and take notice of what's overhead. Electrocution can occur when a ladder contacts a power line. Keep these things in mind:

- Carefully check the location of all overhead wires before using a ladder
- Assume all overhead wires carry electricity
- Lower the ladder when carrying or moving it
- Never work on a windy day
- Never place a ladder where it could slide into an overhead line. Make sure the distance to the nearest overhead line is at least twice the length of the ladder.
- Place the ladder's feet on solid, level ground before climbing it.
- If a ladder should start to fall into an overhead line, let it go. Never try to move it and do not leave it unattended. Have someone call OPU to get help removing it.

Look up and stay safe!



**Remember to
keep meters
clear of brush
and other
obstructions!**

Keep at least an 18 inch clearance around all sides of your electric and natural gas meters. Unobstructed access is critical in protecting your life and property in the event of an emergency.

CARBON MONOXIDE

SYMPTOMS? = GET OUT! • CALL OPU • 24 HRS • 507.451.1616

- **Poisonous, potentially deadly gas**
- **Dangerous because it is colorless, tasteless, and odorless**
- **Learn the symptoms of exposure listed below:**
 - **HEADACHE**
 - **DIZZY**
 - **DROWSY**
 - **WEAK**
 - **NAUSEA**
 - **VOMITING**
 - **CONVULSIONS**



Learn more about
Carbon Monoxide at
www.OwatonnaUtilities.com



Take Action for Water Quality in Your Community!

MS4 Program Available 24/7 Online for Comment

Take the opportunity to learn a little bit about what the City of Owatonna has been working on as well as the opportunity to comment and review the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan as part of the communities MS4 Program. You may comment by filling out a survey on the City's website at <http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater> Your input is greatly valued!



Save the Date - 12th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up – Straight River Site

The 12th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on September 19th from 9am to 12 noon at Morehouse Park. The event is hosted in conjunction with the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event.

For the past 11 years, volunteers have combed the stream banks and waterways around Owatonna with the goal of cleaning trash and debris from the Straight River. With every passing year, more and more garbage is removed by hard working individuals and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference. Since 2009, residents of Owatonna and the surrounding cannon river watershed have volunteered cleaning up local creeks, the Cannon and Straight River.

*****Important COVID-19 Changes**

There will be no gathering for group photos or for a lunch, 6 feet of social distancing required.

Participants will be required to put on provided gloves and face coverings prior to signing in.

Families can pick up gear from the CRWP office during the week of September 13th – 19th and complete the clean up on their own rather than attending on September 19th. Please send photos, volunteer hours, and volunteer names to CRWP.

Do not attend if you feel sick.

Get Involved! If you are interested in helping or sponsoring the event, visit www.crw.net. Please come and join us to ensure our waters stay clean, safe and healthy!

Learn more by contacting Bradley D. Rademacher, Water Quality/ Stormwater Specialist at (507)-774-7300 or Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us

REBATES

Make sure your heating system will be working properly and efficiently this season.

Complete a Furnace/Boiler Clean & Tune and apply for a

\$25 REBATE!



Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

CONSERVE & \$AVE[®]



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Owatonna, MN 55060

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POSTAL CUSTOMER
ECRWSS

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.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

Moving?

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



School's in session!!

Keep your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road and pay extra attention in school zones or around buses. Red lights mean STOP. Stay at least 20 feet away from the bus.

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.



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