


# CUSTOMER UPDATE

# POWER OUTAGE

## *Safety Tips*



Understanding and preparing for the impacts associated with power outages and their sudden restoration can help keep you and your family safe.

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# OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

Kent Rossi  
Jay Johnson  
Doug Zirngible  
Greg Vetter

I recently came across the historical timeline of the first municipal power plant in Owatonna and was amazed by how quickly it was constructed. The very first meeting of the Owatonna Public Utilities Commission was held on April 17, 1924. By August 8, the land for the new power plant was purchased, construction began on September 1, and by December 31, the building and smokestack were substantially complete. By April 23, 1925, the power plant was online, serving the citizens of Owatonna.

In contrast, the new 49-megawatt dispatchable generation project planned by the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) in Owatonna will take approximately four years to complete. Much of this timeline is consumed by the permitting process, which largely focuses on the impact the new generation will have on the grid as well as impacts on air quality.

Back when our original power plant was constructed 100 years ago, it was only connected to its customers, with no grid to support it. If the plant went offline, the entire town went dark. Today, our reliability depends more on the transmission lines connecting Owatonna to the larger grid than on the local generators. Nevertheless, new local generation will help with reliability.

It is expected to operate only a few hours per year, primarily serving as a backup for the solar and wind energy we increasingly rely on to meet the state's 100% carbon-free generation mandate by 2040.

Solar and wind power are intermittent, providing energy only when the sun is shining, or the wind is blowing. That's why SMMPA is building new "dispatchable" generation, capable of running on either natural gas or fuel oil. "Dispatchable" means it can be called upon to meet demand when renewable sources are insufficient.

While we are investing in new generation and other measures to enhance reliability, it's important to remember that no system is infallible. Preparing for power outages is a crucial part of ensuring your safety and comfort. Here are some questions to ask yourself in order to be better prepared:

- Do you have critical loads, such as medical equipment, that require battery or generator backup?
- Is your sump pump equipped with a battery backup?
- Do you have flashlights or other sources of light readily available?
- Do you have a way to charge your cell phones during an outage?

In our feature article this month, we provide detailed guidance on what to do—and what not to do—during a power outage. Being prepared ensures that you and your family remain safe and comfortable, even during unexpected power interruptions.

As we plan for both new generation and potential outages, our commitment remains to build a resilient and reliable energy future for Owatonna. Thank you for your continued trust and support as we work to maintain and improve our community's energy infrastructure.

**MAYOR**  
Tom Kuntz

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Dan Boeke  
David Burbank  
Nathan Dotson  
Kevin Raney  
Greg Schultz  
Brent Svenby  
Doug Voss

### Pollutant Reduction Strategy

As part of the City's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) our community is required to identify sources of pollutants and develop a plan to make progress towards reducing and preventing pollutants entering lakes and streams to keep them swimmable, fishable, and to support aquatic plants and animals. Many of the water bodies within the Cannon River Watershed are classified as impaired waters. Impairments are due to excess nutrients, sediment, and bacteria.

The City of Owatonna partnered with WHKS to develop a Pollutant Reduction Strategy to meet our total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) and waste load allocations (WLAs) goals for phosphorus, turbidity, and fecal coliform. Want to learn more about the City's actions towards reaching the pollution reduction goals? Visit the Owatonna Pollutant Reduction Strategy website (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0c138b-1c453a43b39af2a49e4e2c3fa6>) which outlines possible sources of pollutants, the City's pollutant reduction plan, and ways that you can help get involved!

Find more information on these important Stormwater Projects, by visiting Stormwater Projects | Owatonna, MN (<https://www.owatonna.gov/1973/Stormwater-Projects>).



### Clean H2Owatonna

Clean H2Owatonna is the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Management Program to keep area streams, rivers and waterways clean. For additional information regarding the City's Stormwater Management Program, please email the stormwater division or visit [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov).

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Periodically circulating air in your home by turning your A/C fan to "On" can help keep your home comfortable without the A/C fully kicking in, but make sure to turn the fan back to "Auto" on your thermostat after a few minutes to keep your electricity costs down.



# POWER OUTAGE

## *Safety Tips*



Understanding and preparing for the impacts associated with power outages and their sudden restoration can help keep you and your family safe.

We have become quite reliant on electricity and the benefits it brings to our lives. However, when mother nature or equipment failure happens, power outages (and their sudden restoration) can impact multiple areas of daily life and can be quite inconvenient.

Here are some things to consider before, during, and after a power outage:

### **SAFETY**

Keep your family safe and comfortable by gathering in a room with few windows or doors that let in drafts. Dress appropriately for the weather and give extra attention to infants, toddlers, older people, and those with medical conditions. Avoid candles, which can cause a fire, and never use gas stoves, ovens, barbecues, or portable heaters for indoor heating. Make sure electric stoves do not have anything flammable on them in the rare event the stove turns on when the power is restored.

### **FOOD**

Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed to prevent food spoilage. An unopened refrigerator can keep food cold for about four hours, and a full freezer can keep its temperature for about 48 hours. If the weather is cold, you can keep food cold outside in a secure location that's safe from animals. You can also freeze plastic storage containers filled with water to make ice to place in your ice chest, refrigerator, or freezer. When in doubt, throw it out. If food has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, throw it out. Also, any food having an unusual odor, color, or texture should be disposed of, as well.

### **ELECTRONICS**

Unplug computers and other sensitive equipment to protect them from possible surges when the power is restored. You can also disconnect appliances to avoid damage from electrical surges. Using surge protectors will provide additional protect to your electronics when power is restored. Ensure your outlets are not overloaded, electrical cords are not frayed, and equipment is in proper working condition. Overloaded circuits or faulty equipment can ignite when power is restored, especially if precautions are not taken.

### **POWER**

If you have a generator, use it outdoors and at least 5 feet away from your house. Direct the exhaust away from doors or windows and run an outdoor-rated extension cord from the generator's outlets to individual appliances. Make sure to install carbon monoxide detectors in your home according to manufacturer's guidelines for placement. Be sure to let the generator cool down before refueling. If you must connect the generator to your house wiring, have a qualified electrician install a properly rated transfer switch in accordance with all federal, state and local electrical codes.

## IN SEARCH OF

City of Owatonna resident  
to serve on the Board of  
Commissioners for the  
Owatonna Public Utilities

Must reside in Ward 3



# NEW AREA CODE: 924

Beginning July 30, 2024, you must dial the area code + telephone number whenever you place a call. If you do not dial the area code + telephone number, your call will not be completed. When calling us, please dial **(507) 451-2480**.

### Commitments:

- Board meets each month on the 4th Tuesday at 4:00 p.m.
- Serve on one of two committees: Personnel or Finance. Each committee meets monthly for approximately 45-60 minutes
- Other yearly meetings include: general manager review and a special budget meeting
- 5-year term with the option to reup one time for a total of two terms



Scan the QR Code to apply

## COMMUNICATION

Make sure your mobile phone is charged and has some data available in case Wi-Fi is down. You can also use social media or texting to let others know you're okay if phone lines are down. Have portable power banks readily available and charged to help keep your cell phone charged.

## MEDICAL NEEDS

Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices. You can discuss a plan with your primary care or medical device providers for your medical needs. If the power is out more than a day, discard any medicine that should be refrigerated, unless the drug's label says otherwise.

## NEIGHBORS

Check on neighbors, especially the elderly, those who live alone, those with medical conditions, and those who may need additional assistance.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Traffic signals may be disrupted during a power outage, so be extra cautious if driving is unavoidable. Keep an emergency kit with essentials like dry food (including infant formula), bottled water, medications, and flashlights with extra batteries. These items will help manage short-term power outages.

## STAY INFORMED

- You can check the affected outage area at [www.owatonnautilities.com/outages](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/outages)
- Like us on Facebook. Every 45-60 minutes updates are posted during a large outage

**REMEMBER, IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS OR HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911**





## Is OPU Going to Be at The Fair?

Owatonna Public Utilities has been at the Steele County Free Fair for more than 30 years. We wouldn't miss it!

Fair time is a *fairly* big event for us. We get pretty excited about it, though not necessarily for any utilities work we need to do beforehand. The utilities side of getting ready for the fair is pretty low impact for us, because the infrastructure is already there; the power lines are there, the transformers are there, the water pipes, the gas lines – it's typically

just a little bit of maintenance or maybe an upgrade here and there for us. One thing we are going to be working on is converting the overhead power lines at the fairgrounds to buried, underground lines – but that won't be happening during the fair itself.

No, the fair is something most of us here at OPU get involved in internally, in one way or another – to simply be at the fair, at our booth in the Four Seasons. The fair is a pretty big deal for the people who work at OPU. We wouldn't want to work anywhere else; we care deeply about what we do, we take pride in the work we do, and we love the community we live in – so the Steele County Free Fair is that special time of year when we get to be with that community in a capacity that doesn't involve restoring power from a downed power line or repairing a burst water main. We spend months working on a theme for what we'll have at the booth, planning out how the booth will be setup, what we'll have on display, and who's is going to be at the booth (we volunteer for two-hour shifts). We all get a kick out of the experience of sitting in the booth and meeting folks, answering questions, chatting with customers.

It's also gratifying that, over the years, folks remember that we always have our little replica water tower at the OPU booth pumping out free water. So, everyone reading this, remember: Bring a refillable container to the fair, stop by the OPU booth whenever you want, as many times as you want, and stay hydrated.



**In the Four Seasons Building!**  
August 13-18





# BUSINESS BITES

The process to compress air is generally inefficient and costly. While advancements have been made with air compressor technology over the years, efficiencies remain low when compared to other electrically operated equipment.

Because of the high cost of running air compressors, it's important to regularly check for, and repair, leaks in the systems. Small leaks occur easily over time, especially at quick disconnect fittings, shut off valves, and places where hard piping is connected to permanently installed equipment that has any vibration. The Department of Energy estimates as much as 30% of the electricity used in air compression is lost to leaks.

To assist commercial and industrial customers identify compressed air leaks, OPU has an air leak detection camera that can be loaned out to customers with air compressors 50 HP and larger free of charge. Once your leaks have been identified, OPU also offers a rebate for fixing and verifying the leaks have been corrected.

If you are interested in performing an air leak survey at your business to identify and correct leaks, please contact OPU. More information about our leak detector and rebate program can be found at: <https://www.owatonnautilities.com/business-customers/rebates/compressed-air-systems/>



## Clothes Washers

Get up to \$115 rebate

### MAKE EVERY WASH COUNT! CHOOSE AN ENERGY STAR® CLOTHES WASHER.

The average American family washes approximately 300 loads of laundry yearly. Investing in an Energy Star® clothes washer can help families in reducing their energy and water expenses. Energy Star® certified clothes washers consume roughly 20% less energy and about 30% less water compared to standard washers.

## CONSERVE & \$AVE™



## CONSERVE & \$AVE™

### COMPRESSED AIR LEAK DETECTION

Did you know that you could be losing 20-30% of your compressed air through leaks?

If you are a customer that has at least 10 horsepower of air compressors that operate at least 2,000 hours per year, we can provide you the use of an ultrasonic leak detector for FREE to locate your leaks without shutting down your processes.

+ Excluding back-up capacity.

Rebates of \$4-49 hp of air compressor capacity are available! +



For more information, visit [OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://OwatonnaUtilities.com)

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

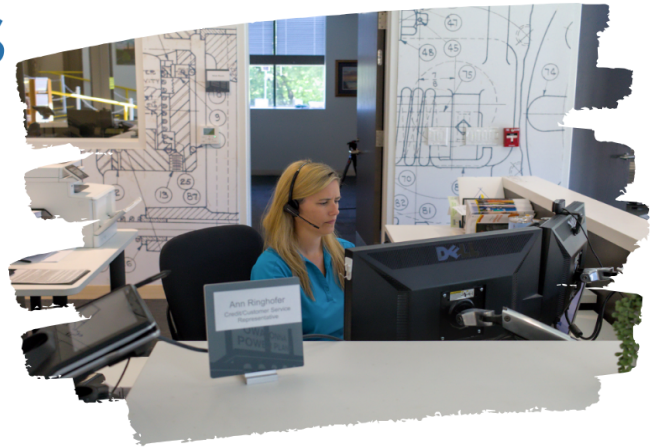
Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

## EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF UTILITY CAREERS

*Discover the possibilities*

### Customer Service Representative

National salary range  
**\$42,016- \$59,115**



Scan to watch  
Employee Interview

**Job description:** Perform customer relation duties of moderate complexity. Knowledge of all billing related processes, OPU operations, and OPU customer programs in order to accurately and efficiently respond to customer inquiries and complaints. Performs routine clerical and cashier duties as necessary, and is responsible for all monies received and paid out of the register. Responsible for set-up and maintenance of customer information in the customer billing system. Performs collection processes. Represents OPU through customer interaction and placing high priority on customer satisfaction.

#### Education Requirements:

Associate Degree in  
Business or related  
field is required

#### 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](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 800, Owatonna, MN 55060

### Moving?

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

