



VOLUME 28 | ISSUE #4  
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# CUSTOMER UPDATE



## FEATURING: BACKFLOW PREVENTION

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

# OPU MEMO



Jared Hendricks  
Key Accounts/Energy  
Conservation Officer

## OPU Commission

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

As a municipal water utility, Owatonna Public Utilities is committed not only to providing residents with safe drinking water, but ensuring there is enough drinking water for years to come. In March, we helped raise awareness of the Water Sense Fix-A-Leak Week. OPU is also taking the time to work with the American Water Works Association to raise awareness of Drinking Water Week from May 6-12, 2018.

In Owatonna, the water you drink, use for bathing, washing your clothes and watering your lawn comes from underground aquifers, Jordan and Mount Simon. Water pumped from these aquifers is already very clean with very minimal "treatment" needed because it has been naturally filtered during the years it takes to reach the aquifer. This is not the case for many parts of the country though.

Communities all around the country, including others in Minnesota, rely on surface water such as lakes and rivers for their drinking water supply. Surface water requires additional treatment to remove potential contaminants and ensure water is safe for use. Over the last century, many regulations have been implemented that help ensure the safety of the drinking water you use, whether it's here in Owatonna, or anywhere you are traveling to in the US.

With safer drinking water comes better health as well. A report from the CDC attributes sickness and disease to be one of the major reasons that the lifespan a century ago was only 47 years. Thankfully we don't worry about encountering these problems in our drinking water, but we do encounter a different type of problem, supply.

Adequate supply of fresh drinking water is a concern today, even in Minnesota, the Land of 10,000 lakes! The droughts in California and the drop in water level on White Bear Lake are good reminders that water is not unlimited and it should be used wisely. Ground water sources are also susceptible to being depleted from overuse as well.

As water is being pumped from aquifers, it is also being replenished from water filtering down through the ground. When water is used faster than the aquifer can be replenished the level drops risking the supply of water to a community. Conservation measures can have a large impact on the supply of water, as seen on White Bear Lake as well. WCCO reported in 2017 that strong water conservation measures have played a significant role in water levels returning to near normal levels in 2017.

As your water utility, OPU has a responsibility to ensure we can provide a reliable supply of water to Owatonna. Some of the ways we have done this is through water conservation education and rebates. This year, in honor of Drinking Water Week, OPU will also be giving out water conserving faucet aerators to customers who want to do their part in conserving water for Owatonna! During the entire month of May, you can stop down and pick up your water conservation kit. Pick yours up and you can help make a difference in the future of our water.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Use a rain barrel to water your outdoor plants. Rain water is healthier for plants, reduces storm water runoff, and conserves tap water.

Go to [www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips](http://www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips) for more conservation tips.



### HIGHLIGHTING: CITY OF OWATONNA ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

After a long winter with long cold spells and plenty of snowfall, we are approaching construction season.

The City of Owatonna has a busy construction season planned for the summer of 2018. The following projects are in the works:

- 2018 Street and Utility Project – This project includes reconstruction of Mill Street from Cedar Avenue to School Street. The pavement surface will be removed, bad spots in the curb will be repaired and there is a minor amount of watermain work on Mill Street.
- 2018 Downtown Alley and Parking Lots – The alley between Cedar Avenue and Oak Avenue on the north side of US Bank will be reconstructed. Owatonna public utilities will be making some modifications to the electrical system in the alley, so the pavement will be removed and OPU will complete their work before the pavement is replaced. The contractor will be responsible for maintaining access to the businesses and they will be made aware of the Crazy Days Celebration. In addition to the work on the alley, the parking lot to the west of Tone Music will be reconstructed at the same time. Other parking lots receiving work on the public lots west of the old Bubba's Bar and west of the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce.
- Hemlock Avenue – Hemlock Avenue will be reconstructed between 16th Street NE and 20th Street NE. The storm sewer will be upgraded along with removal and replacement of the street surface. Repairs will be made to the concrete curb as necessary. The sections from 14th Street to 16th Street and from 20th Street to 22nd Street will receive an overlay.
- 18th Street SW concrete repair and trail. The concrete pavement on 18th Street SW will be repaired as needed. This work is called concrete pavement rehabilitation abbreviated as CPR. In addition to the concrete work on the street, a new bituminous trail will connect from Linn Avenue to the Kaplan's Woods parking lot. Tree removal for the trail has already begun. This will be a nice connection between Linn Avenue and the existing trail system.
- Park Drive – The concrete pavement in Park Drive is almost 50 years old. The roadway will be reconstructed from St. John Drive to 21st Avenue NW and from 24th Avenue NW to 32nd Avenue NW. The City is working to eliminate the offset in Park Drive at 32nd Avenue by realigning the portion to the east of 32nd Avenue. In addition to the concrete pavement reconstruction, OPU is planning to install a new watermain from the tower location to Bridge

Street. The new watermain will help for future needs of the industrial park.

- McKinley Street concrete repair – the parking lane on the north side of McKinley Street between Cedar and Elm has sunk, resulting in an unsafe condition for the sidewalk adjacent to Roosevelt. This area is used by the School District as a bus transfer area and needs to have sidewalk that is up to code. The City is working with the School District to replace the curb, sidewalk and parking lane of the street. In addition, curb repairs will be completed on the south side of McKinley street. The work will be completed during summer break so it doesn't conflict with school operations.
- Mosher Avenue Sanitary Sewer – There is a section of sanitary sewer from McKinley Street to approximately 1,500 feet north along Mosher Avenue that needs replacement. The sewer will be placed in the east boulevard of Mosher Avenue.
- Kohlmeir Drive, which is the entrance to the beach at Lake Kohlmeir will be reconstructed. The proposed work includes reconstruction of the trail and removal of the retaining wall and overlay of the existing parking lot. The work is expected to be completed after Labor Day in order to reduce the impact to people using the beach.
- CPR – CSAH 45 and 19. Steele County and the City are working together to bring improvements to CSAH 45 (Oak Avenue) from Holly Street to School Street and from Oak Avenue to Willow Street on CSAH 19 (Rose Street). The work will repair deteriorated areas of pavement and prolong the life of the roadways for approximately 20 years.

As you can see, the City of Owatonna will be a busy place for road construction in 2018. We appreciate everyone's patience with the construction work and look forward to delivering cost effective street improvements for the City. Please contact the engineering department at 507-444-4350 with any questions or concerns.

### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss



# BACKFLOW PREVENTION

*Information for this article obtained from the American Water Works Association Manual M14 and OPU's Cross Connection Program*

In 2010, the average daily water usage of a person in the United States was 88 gallons. For a family of four that's 128,480 gallons annually. More and more it is evident this precious natural resource needs to be conserved and protected from contamination.

For millennia, people have been concerned with obtaining and maintaining pure and safe water supplies. Archeological studies reveal that as early as 3000 BC, the ancient Egyptian State had a government official who was required to inspect the country's water supply every 10 days. With the widespread use of water closets (toilet) in the 1800s came direct cross connections with water mains. This brought into focus the problem that, as one nineteenth century authority stated, "foul matters may get into the pipes." Currently, many government and industry professionals are aware of the need to prevent contamination of potable water supplies through cross-connections.

Across-connection is an actual or potential connection between any part of a potable water system and an environment that would allow substances to enter the potable water system. Those substances could include gases, liquids, or solids, such as chemicals, water products, steam, water from other sources (potable or non-potable), and any matter that may change the color or taste of water or add odor to water.

The United States Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) became law in 1974. The purpose of the act is to protect public health by regulating all public drinking water supplies in the United States. It requires protection of the public drinking water supply and its sources. It further requires the public water supplier (PWS) to be responsible to ensure that the water is protected from cross connections and backflow of non-potable items to the last free flowing tap (end use). The SDWA is the primary driving force in OPU's Backflow and Cross Connection Program.

Federal, state and local governments regulate the public health aspects of drinking water in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the water consumer. These agencies have jurisdiction over work done on the customer's premises.

From the point of service, several government agencies are responsible and proactively working to protect water users. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Public Water Suppliers (OPU) are responsible to ensure protection is in-place, that they are being maintained and tested and that there are no hazardous cross connections.
- Local plumbing and building officials are responsible for enforcing all provisions of applicable plumbing and building codes. Plumbing codes provide for point-of-use backflow protection for potable water systems. Their inspections ensure proper protection is in-place and that there are no hazardous cross connections at the time of construction.
- Fire marshals are responsible for regulating fire protection systems (e.g., fire sprinkler systems) downstream of the potable water system supply connection entering the premises.
- Safety inspectors (Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA] are responsible for inspecting potable water systems (plumbing) for workers' safety.
- Health officials are responsible for inspecting restaurants and other food preparation facilities (e.g., dairies), health care facilities (e.g., nursing homes), etc.
- Agricultural inspectors are responsible for the safe handling of chemicals (e.g., pesticides) used in growing and processing agricultural products.

As weather begins to become nicer and customers begin gearing up to have their in-ground irrigation systems put in service, we remind residents to have their systems and backflow devices tested at the time of system start up to avoid possible contamination of their home's and Owatonna's water supply. It is very common for these backflow devices to be damaged and not doing their job of protecting you. The environment they live in is very harsh, with the cold weather and being out of service through the winter many of their parts are compromised.

OPU's Cross Connection and Backflow Prevention program covers all water connections that are connected to the OPU water distribution system. In simple terms, this program requires customers to install, maintain and test equipment that keeps contaminants out of the water supply.

For more information regarding statutes visit the American Water Works Association website at [www.awwa.org](http://www.awwa.org). For more information regarding OPU's Cross Connection and Backflow Prevention program visit our website at <http://www.owatonnautilities.com/safety/back-flow-prevention>.

# EQUIPMENT SERIES



Have you ever wondered how power poles are installed? OPU uses a multi-purpose vehicle called a digger derrick that is equipped with an auger, extendable boom, crane cable, and a pole clamp making it capable of this and other tasks.

After the hole is dug, the vehicle is capable of gripping and handling the largest wooden power poles OPU installs. This clamp can also stabilize a broken pole while a new replacement pole is being prepared.

When new wires need to be run for maintenance or extending our system, the digger derrick is equipped with a pulling device called a cap stand that is powerful enough to pull the heavy wire through a section of poles for our linemen to install. The cap stand is also used to pull new wires through buried electrical conduit.

When a transformer needs to be replaced, the digger derricks crane is able to lift and install pole mounted transformers or those installed on the ground which can weigh up to 8000 lbs.

Although not used every day, a digger derrick is a very important piece of equipment for electric utilities to operate and maintain. OPU currently owns and operates two digger derricks. To ensure the reliability of our equipment, each is on an approximate 10 year replacement plan and can cost approximately \$300,000.

# OPU HIGHLIGHT



**Bev Ziemke**  
Credit/Customer Service Representative

Bev Ziemke has worked as a Credit /Customer Service Representative since she started with Owatonna Public Utilities sixteen years ago. Bev's background prior to OPU was primarily in customer service and secretarial administration.

Bev and her husband Tim have lived in Owatonna for 23 years. Prior to moving to Owatonna, Tim was in the Army and they lived in Newport News, VA and Fairbanks, AK. They have raised three daughters and are busy making memories with their six grandchildren.

Bev cherishes spending time with her family and friends. When Bev is not busy spoiling her grandchildren she enjoys live music concerts, boating, swimming, fishing, camping and traveling. She loves the ocean and learning about other cultures. Bev has been to many different destinations some of which include: Dominican Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica, Bahamas and Jamaica.

Thank you for all you do Bev! You have a passion for people and service!

# SOLAR CELEBRATION

You are warmly invited to our...

## Solar Celebration!

We would love to see your bright, shining face at our festivities!

**Billboard Solar Array Dedication**  
Tuesday, April 24, 2018 • 3:30 p.m.

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

- Refreshments •
- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony •
- Speakers •

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

# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Law **REQUIRES** homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, excavators and contractors contact Gopher State One Call two business days prior to digging, driving stakes, or performing any other activities that involve disrupting the ground. ***Never assume the depth of a utility or that the depth of the utilities are consistent.***

Gopher State One Call will contact the utility companies in the area to have underground lines marked. Once all utility lines are marked, digging may begin. Proceed with caution and avoid the tolerance zone or hand dig with a shovel within 2 feet of the marked utility lines.

Watch for private facilities such as sprinklers, power lines to garages or out buildings, gas grill lines or invisible fencing as these will not be located by Minnesota utility companies.

Visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org) to learn what information will need to be given when contacting Gopher State One Call.

The service is **FREE**. Call toll free at 800-252-1166 or simply dial 811.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**



## SEEKING PARTICIPATION – RAINGARDEN COST SHARE

The City of Owatonna is currently seeking applicants to participate in the Raingarden Cost Share Program. The City will provide 50% of the cost of installation, up to \$500. The City has a limited number of awards, so get started now with the planning process!

Rain gardens are a smart and proven way of using beautiful landscaping to clean our waterways, protect our natural habitats, improve homes and neighborhoods, reduce flooding and save money in pollution clean-up. They are also great for pollinators. **Schedule a site visit and learn why a Rain Garden is right for you!**

### Major Benefits of Raingardens

1. Keep water clean by filtering runoff before it reaches local waterways.
2. Protect our community from flooding and drainage issues.
3. Replenish aquifers by infiltrating water into the ground.
4. Enhance the beauty of your yard and our neighborhoods.
5. Provide habitats for wildlife such as birds, bees, and butterflies.
6. Participate in a great community activity.

Rain Gardens are a simple way to make a big difference!

**Learn more about the Rain Garden Cost Share Program** through *The City's Stormwater Website* or contact *Brad Rademacher, Water Quality Specialist, (507)-774-7300 or [Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us)*

# REBATES

## Spring into Savings!



**It's Easy  
Being  
GREEN  
with  
CONSERVE  
& \$AVE**

**LEAP into living green!**  
Owatonna Public Utilities offers rebates when you purchase new energy and water efficient appliances and equipment.

**HOP on to our website to learn more about our RIBBITS! Oops, we mean our REBATES!**

**April Showers  
Bring...  
RAIN BARRELS!**

Catch the  
rain and  
catch a  
**\$10  
REBATE!**



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

# CONSERVE & \$AVE<sup>®</sup>

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.

# April 18<sup>th</sup> is National Lineman Appreciation Day



**Thank you to our linemen for all you do!**  
**Pictured (l to r): Jeff, Collin, Matt, Nick, and Tony. Not Pictured: Tom & Jake**



**Tell Us How We're Doing**

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.