



CUSTOMER UPDATE

WHY

PUBLIC POWER BUILDS BETTER COMMUNITIES



COMMUNITY-OWNED AND
CUSTOMER-FOCUSED



YOUR VOICE MATTERS



LOWER COSTS AND
INCREASED RELIABILITY



PUBLIC POWER IS
#COMMUNITYpowered

PUBLIC POWER?

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OPU MEMO



Jeri Blazek,
Meter Serviceworker/
Project Development

OPU Commission

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

Back in February of 2020, Owatonna Public Utilities introduced the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) network project. To say things have been different since that initial introduction would be an understatement. Obviously, this has been a challenging year and some of the original timelines had to be recalculated. However, we are still looking at completing this project in early 2022.

This upgrade to our system will enable OPU to better utilize the data we can obtain from our metering devices to serve our customers. The engineering team can monitor the health of our electric grid. Leak detection and resolution will be more rapid. Real time outage notification, management, and analysis will decrease response times and increase safety during large and small events. Collection of billing reads, processing of move orders, and troubleshooting anomalies will be able to be performed with less resources and greater efficiency. In the future one of the opportunities this network provides is the ability for our customers to be able to access up-to-date information regarding their energy consumption. This will help our consumers make informed decisions regarding utility usages.

To construct the new network, it is necessary to change or retrofit our current metering devices. This change gives the meters the ability to transmit information to 11 new Cisco Connected Grid Routers (CGR) that have been strategically installed throughout our service territory. This data transport links together like a mesh and is called a Mesh network. Due to the connectivity of the system, if one part fails, the information stream can be re-routed so the system is considered self-healing. This does not imply the system won't need preventive maintenance or repair at times, but it does mean the possibility of interruption or lost data is greatly reduced.

The first installation phase involved the gas metering system. Since most gas meters could be retrofitted and are located on the outside of structures it allowed Scope Services, Itron's installation contractor, to begin work this past fall. As of this writing, Scope is in the final week of completing 10,047 gas endpoint exchanges.

To move forward Scope is currently working to transition their team to focus on the 9927 water meters in OPU's system that need to be addressed. Water meters are located inside of residences and facilities and will require a brief appointment for access. As field service representatives begin to work throughout the community, OPU will be reaching out to our customers with a postcard mailing. It will provide the information on how to contact Scope to schedule this appointment to get your water equipment updated.

The final phase of the metering exchanges involves our electrical metering system and is scheduled to begin in March of 2021. The gas and water meters communicate to the CGRs through the electric meters so after the electrical installations are complete we will be ready to convert those meters over to network mode and use the network at its full potential.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation as OPU continues to put the pieces into place to bring this AMI Mesh network to our community. We believe this will provide us tools to continue delivering reliable services and help our organization plan for the future.

Stormwater Utility Background

A stormwater utility operates similarly as an electric or water utility. The utility is administered and funded separately from the revenues in the general fund. This ensures a dedicated and stable revenue source for the expense of stormwater management including on-going operations and maintenance, funding capital improvement projects, meeting the requirements of emerging regulatory changes, as well as, future infrastructure needs.

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater runoff is water from rain or snow that does not soak into the ground. Instead, it flows from rooftops, across paved areas, and through sloped lawns. Different land cover produces different runoff rates and volume. Additional impervious surface will result in increased runoff amounts.

What is the difference between Stormwater and Sanitary Systems?

City Storm Sewers are separate from Sanitary Sewers and do not drain into municipal wastewater treatment facilities but carry Stormwater Runoff from a catch basin into streams, lakes, and wetlands. The Sanitary Sewer is a system of underground pipes that carries sewage from bathrooms, sinks, kitchens, and other plumbing components to the wastewater treatment plant where it is filtered, treated, and discharged.



How is the Stormwater Utility Fee calculated?

$FEE = \text{Equivalent Residential Unit} \times \text{Intensity Factor} \times \text{Current Rate}$

The fee takes three factors into account; the equivalent residential unit (ERU), the intensity factor, and the current rate. The ERU is determined by dividing the parcel acreage by 0.33. The intensity factor is determined for each classification using runoff values that take into account average rainfall totals, impervious surface percentages, and land use. The current rate is set annually by the adopted fee schedule. The current residential rate is \$4.35 per month.

How is the Sanitary Sewer Fee calculated?

Rates for domestic waste water disposal service shall be \$2.08 per 100 cubic feet of the average amount of water used in the months of November, December and January and billed starting in February and each subsequent month of the year at that calculated amount. Each month a standard service charge is added to the bill. The service charge is based on the size of the water meter line. The sewer charge remains constant for one year. See the table below for corresponding fixed service fee for water meter diameter.

Sanitary Sewer - Fixed Service Fees

Meter Size	Number	Monthly Charge
5/8 inch	8876	\$14.00
3/4 inch	162	\$16.33
1 inch	198	\$23.30
1 and 1/2 inches	139	\$37.76
2 inches	143	\$59.21
3 inches	37	\$140.43
4 inches	13	\$178.41
6 inches	5	\$212.03

Owatonna Public Utilities and City of Owatonna - History of a Working Relationship

Starting in 1996 the City and OPU partnered to offer customers unified billing for utilities services. This simplified payment and billing processes for all public services. Since then, the City and OPU have worked together to bring quality services to our residents.

Questions?

Questions regarding Stormwater and Wastewater should be directed to the Public Works Department at 507-444-4350. Additional information is available at ci.owatonna.mn.us/482/Public-Works.

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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PUBLIC POWER BUILDS BETTER COMMUNITIES

Why Public Power?

Information and graphics for this article obtained from the American Public Power Association

More than 2,000 cities and towns in the United States light up their homes, businesses and streets with “public power” -- electricity that comes from a community owned and operated utility.

Public power utilities are like our public schools and libraries: a division of local government, owned by the community, run by boards of local officials accountable to the citizens.

While each public power utility is different, reflecting its hometown characteristics and values, all have a common purpose: providing customers in the community with safe, reliable, not-for-profit electricity at a reasonable price while protecting the environment. All public power utilities share five basic tenets that comprise the public power business model:

Public Ownership

Public power utilities are owned by and operated for the citizens they serve and therefore are accountable to their local owners.

Local Control

Local, independent regulation and governance gives utility policymakers greater agility in decision-making and protects the long-term viability of the utility, while permitting customer involvement in the process. This ensures decisions reflect the values of the community.

Nonprofit Operations

Community-owned electric utilities serve only the interest of their customers, avoiding conflicts between the interests of shareholders and customers because they are one and the same. Excess revenues stay in the local community and are invested in system improvements and utility reserves, shared with the local government, or returned to the customer in the form of lower rates. They are not distributed among outside shareholders, as they are in the case of for-profit utilities.

Low-Cost Structure

Public power utilities have access to lower cost tax-exempt financing and generally have stronger credit ratings than privately owned utilities. Publicly owned utilities may have more efficient operations and access to less expensive federal hydro power.

Customer Focused

Community-owned electric utilities are dedicated to the singular mission of delivering the highest level of service and value to their customer-owners for the long term. Public power utilities focus on the specific needs of customers, including high reliability and lower rates, as well as local priorities, which may include new technologies, environmental concerns or advanced communications.

To learn more about the benefits of public power, visit the American Public Power Association’s website at www.publicpower.org.

5 ELEMENTS OF PUBLIC POWER BUSINESS MODEL



PUBLIC OWNERSHIP



LOCAL CONTROL



NONPROFIT OPERATIONS



LOW-COST STRUCTURE



CUSTOMER FOCUSED



To help keep our community safe, we encourage our customers to continue to call or email customer service. If you need in-person assistance, our lobby is now open.

ADDRESS: 208 S. Walnut Ave.

HOURS: Mon-Wed: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
 Thurs: 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
 Fri: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 Sat and Sun: Closed

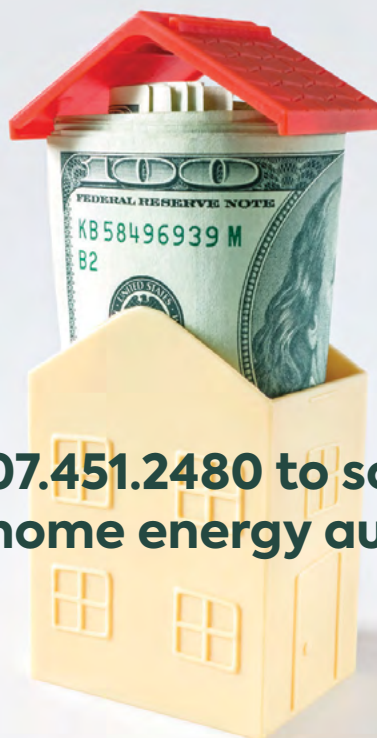
PHONE: (507) 451-2480

EMAIL: customerservice@owatonnautilities.com



When visiting our lobby, remember, a face mask and social distancing are required. Thank you!

Utility bills through the roof?



Call 507.451.2480 to schedule a home energy audit!

CONSERVE & \$AVE[®] HOUSE CALL

Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to learn more.

Take a Break From the Hectic

Take a little break from the hectic of everyday life and find these words in the word search to the left.

- Conservation
- Stormwater
- Fireplace
- Customer
- Sanitary
- Advanced
- Metering
- Energy
- Hearths
- Sewer

- Reliability
- Scholarship
- Community
- Reopening
- Ignition
- Deicing
- Public
- GasLeak
- Audit
- Local

W E W Z N P Z I G S S A N I T A R Y V O
 M V U T I H F L B E A A E J P B E E F G
 B C U J L X F K W W R V V Q O C O S X T
 Z S T O R M W A T E R D L S E P P Q I E
 C J E M B F F T O R R O J L Q M E V Z R
 O O S O R L D H F T J M R R Z Y N G V L
 Q F M C C R E L I A B I L I T Y I F H G
 Q Z A M H O F J D B Q K Y D I G N H D A
 V M Z R U O N R X E P Q U I V A G E H S
 R G Z J B N L S A Q I U C G P K I A G L
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 H D K U R G R J I G N I T I O N L M E B
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 D U P E S Q N S C B M O G T O N C U A R
 V X W Y L N W G P G D I S N D N A D Q L
 B T V F I R E P L A C E Z P O J L I F N
 Y W B W S J U Z A D V A N C E D J T V G

GAS FIREPLACE SAFETY

If you own a fireplace, fireplace safety should be one of your top concerns. With a gas fireplace, you are getting a safer fire but there are still safety precautions to consider:

- **Carbon Monoxide Detectors** - All gas fireplaces are made in a way which prevents the buildup of carbon monoxide inside the home. However, every home should still have a carbon monoxide detector on each floor even if there is no fireplace on that floor. If your home does not have carbon monoxide detectors, get them installed. If you do have them, make sure they are working properly and change their batteries regularly.
- **Give the Fireplace Proper Clearance** - One mistake many gas fireplace owners make is to place objects too close to the fireplace. People install gas fireplaces for their heat, but also for how they look and fit with the home décor. This can lead people to leave potential fire hazard items near the fireplace. Leave about three feet of clearance between a gas fireplace and any item that could potentially burn or suffer heat damage.
- **Yearly Cleaning and Inspection** - When it starts getting to the time of year where you will be using the gas fireplace more, a yearly inspection and cleaning is in order. A professional service can come in once a year to ensure the fireplace is completely clean and all the components are working properly. A professional service tech can make sure the vents are clean in a vented model, all of the gas lines are completely safe and check the different sensors and safety components to ensure they are all working in the way they should.

A gas fireplace can be a good value upgrade for any home. They look nice, they offer economical heating and there is something about the way a fire can add a certain feel to a room. As long as they are installed properly, not operated in a hazardous way, and basic safety guidelines are followed, the safety with a gas fireplace is a very minimal concern.



Deicing salt accounts for approximately 75% of chloride found in our waterways. During precipitation events and snowmelt, stormwater gathers excess salt and washes it into our nearby streams and lakes. The remaining 25% of chloride in surface and groundwater is from the Wastewater Treatment Facility from water softeners. Chloride in water has major negative impacts to wildlife, the environment, and us.

Knowing how much salt to use and the best time to apply is critical to keeping the balance between safe roads, driveways, parking lots, and sidewalks and a healthy sustainable environment.

Did you know? 1 teaspoon of salt pollutes 5 gallons of water!

Ways to make a difference:

1. Hire a Smart Salting Contractor, visit pca.state.mn.us to find certified contractors.
2. Educate your family, friends, and coworkers on the importance of proper and safe use.
3. Apply minimum amount necessary. Less is more.
4. Sweep up any excess salt. Remember if it is visible on pavement, it will just wash away.
5. Be patient, more salt never results in faster melting. Shovel, shovel, shovel.
6. Make sure to check your water softener for proper ratios or stop using a water softener all together.



Learn more about our Stormwater Program at ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater or contact Brad Rademacher, Stormwater/ Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300 or stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us.

Warmth Without the Waste!

ELECTRONIC IGNITION HEARTHES



Electronic ignition eliminates the wasted fuel of a standing pilot while providing better safety protection. You'll save money on your utility bill, and OPU is offering a

\$75 REBATE!

(Must be a new installation with an on-demand electronic ignition that is also a sealed combustion/direct vent unit.)

Visit 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

INDICIA

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



Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Program

OPU is accepting scholarship essays and applications for the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship. The essay deemed to best address the subject of "Municipal Utilities: Good for All of Us" will receive a \$500 scholarship from OPU and will be forwarded on to the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association for entry in the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship state-wide contest. MMUA splits their 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/>

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 800, 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.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Making sure your water heater is set to the correct temperature can save you money. To check the temperature, run hot water only on a faucet until it gets to its highest temperature, then fill a glass or bowl with water. Use a cooking thermometer to check the temp. If it is above 120 degrees, reduce the setting on your water heater and check the temperature again in 24 hours.



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.

