



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

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CUSTOMER UPDATE

Discolored

WATER

Is it hazardous, what causes it, how to handle it

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OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,
General Manager

OPU Commission

Matt Kottke
Kent Rossi
Randy Doyal
Jay Johnson
Doug Zirngible

As you have probably heard, Minnesota recently passed a new law mandating that all electricity provided in the state must come from 100% carbon-free sources by 2040. I have been hearing many questions about this new law. The most predominant questions are: 1) How much is this going to cost us? 2) Can we actually do it without causing occasional, or even frequent, blackouts? Others question whether concerns about cost and reliability are warranted, noting that 2040 is 17 years away and our wholesale electricity provider, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) has already committed to 80% carbon-free by 2030.

These are all excellent questions, and I can tell you that I have had numerous conversations with my counterparts throughout the state about this topic. Municipal utility managers and boards support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change while also being very concerned about the potential impact this mandate will have on our ability to continue providing affordable and reliable electricity. While there have been estimates by some organizations that predict dire consequences from this new law, the truth is we really don't yet know how much the new law will impact rates and reliability.

Transitioning to 100% carbon-free electricity sources will require significant investments in new technologies and infrastructure, which could result in increased costs for our customers. We want to reassure you that we are working hard to minimize any potential rate increases, and we don't expect any immediate changes to your bill. However, over time, our costs could increase as our industry invests in new infrastructure to comply with the law.

Renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, are important components of a clean energy future. However, they are also intermittent and dependent on weather conditions, which can create challenges for grid operators in managing supply and demand and maintaining grid reliability. We believe that a balanced approach that considers all available energy sources, including natural gas and nuclear power, is the most effective way to meet our energy needs while also reducing emissions. We also believe that natural gas will continue to play a critical role in backing up the intermittent output from wind and solar plants; therefore, moves to limit the use of natural gas should be avoided.

Back when SMMPA did the analysis that led to its commitment to 80% carbon-free by 2030, it analyzed higher targets as well, including 100%. It settled on 80% because projections showed that above 80%, costs began increasing dramatically. SMMPA's analysis included only technologies which were currently commercially available. With Minnesota's new goal in place, we need to advocate for policy change and investments which will bring new technologies to the market more quickly.

Our industry is committed to exploring all options to meet the state's mandate while also ensuring that we can continue to provide affordable and reliable electricity service to our customers. This is a big challenge, but it is not impossible. We will keep you informed as we work through these issues, and we appreciate your understanding and patience as we navigate this transition.

Openings on City Boards & Commissions

Apply online in March to serve

The City of Owatonna encourages community members to attend public meetings and serve on any of its 12 boards and commissions. The terms of 26 current board or commission members will expire April 31. Of these, 15 are eligible for reappointment. This leaves 11 seats to fill with new members assuming those who are eligible for reappointment opt to serve another term.

Visit Owatonna.gov to apply for an opening on any of the following: Airport Commission, Fire Civil Service Board, Human Rights Commission, Public Library Board, Public Utilities Commission and the Shade Tree Commission.

Spring Park & Recreation Registrations

The Owatonna Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department's upcoming programs include something for everyone. Check out the Spring/Summer Activity Guide that was sent through US mail in February or online at Owatonna.gov. New options include Backyard Adventure Camp, Outdoor Adventure Camp, Nature Investigators and more! Family archery and geocaching programs provide fun opportunities to get out and try something together as a family! Register on the Owatonna Parks, Recreation and Facilities website at www.owatonna.gov/283/Parks-Recreation, by phone at 507-444-4321 or in person at 540 West Hills Circle. Scholarships are available. Volunteer coaches are always needed for youth sports programs.

Brooktree Golf Course Prepares for 2023 Season with New Staff and New Bar Area

The City Council approved the 2023 Fee Schedule for Brooktree Golf

Course at its December 20 meeting. Season passes are available to purchase at 540 West Hills Circle and will be available at Brooktree Golf Course when the Clubhouse opens. Brooktree is scheduled to open in early Spring depending on the weather. Tavern Nine's hours will mirror golfing hours. For additional information, please visit brooktreegolfcourse.com, call 507.774.7100 or follow Brooktree Golf Course on Facebook.

New Golf Supervisor

Kurt Stangler was hired by the City of Owatonna on February 13 as Golf Supervisor at Brooktree Golf Course. His responsibilities include managing the operations of the clubhouse, events, tournaments, programs, leagues and coordinating operations with Tavern Nine. Stangler's background includes leading golf operations at public and private courses around Minnesota, in New Orleans and tournament operations around the United States with the PGA Tour. We are excited to have Kurt join our team," said Jenna Tuma, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. "His 20-plus years of golf experience managing full-service golf operations will help Brooktree continue expanding on the ways it serves the community."

Clubhouse renovations continue

Over the winter months, City crews have been building a new bar area in the Clubhouse. Tuma continued, "The Brooktree experience is being reimaged to create a neighborhood hub for fun and a scenic experience for the whole community to enjoy." Rather than strictly being a destination for golfers, Brooktree's Clubhouse and outdoor patio also welcome non-golfers for dining and beverages. The project will be completed in time for 2023 golfing.

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dan Boeke

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Now Hiring Summer Seasonals!

Join the Parks, Recreation and Facilities staff for a summer of fun, adventure and opportunity! Whether this is a first job or a job following retirement, there are several fun job opportunities filled by 150 seasonal staff to help provide and maintain fun summer opportunities for community members. View and apply for job postings by visiting Owatonna.gov.

Available positions for those age 18 years or older:

- Brooktree Coordinator
- Brooktree Guest Services-Lead
- River Springs Guest Services-Lead
- Head Lifeguards
- Lake Kohlmier Guest Services-Lead
- Log Rolling Program Lead
- Camps/Outdoor/Adaptive Program Leads
- Parks, Buildings and Golf Maintenance

Available positions for those age 16 years or older:

- Water Safety Instructors

Available positions for those age 15 years or older:

- Brooktree Guest Services
- River Springs Guest Services
- Lake Kohlmier Guest Services
- Camps/Outdoor/Adaptive Guest Services
- Lifeguards

Discolored

WATER

Have you ever wondered if it's okay to drink your tap water if it is slightly discolored or has a slight reddish tint? People who drink rust in water won't suffer ill health effects since rust is oxidized iron, which isn't harmful. However, having rust in your home's water should not be tolerated since it can cause staining to fixtures, surfaces, and dishes. OPU's raw water at each well location contains iron, but don't worry, this is normal. OPU also doesn't recommend washing clothes with discolored water because it can stain clothing.

Discolored water may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it is safe to drink. Under Department of Natural Resources (DNR) rules, iron is considered a secondary or "aesthetic" contaminant. The present recommended limit for iron in water is 0.3 mg/l (ppm), based on taste and appearance rather than on any detrimental health effect. Private water supplies are not subject to the rules, but the guidelines can be used to evaluate water quality.

Water main breaks are a common occurrence during all seasons and can be a big culprit of rusty, discolored water. Water main breaks occur due to a number of reasons, including ground shifting, corrosion due to the age of water mains, and sudden fluctuations of water pressure. Discolored water and trapped air are common occurrences after a water main break or other water system maintenance work. Discolored water is caused by sediment and mineral deposits in the pipes that can be stirred up when the water is turned off and then back on following work on OPU's water system.

Flushing the cold-water pipes in your home or business usually clears up the discolored water and allows trapped air to be released. After water main repair work is completed in your area, OPU suggests running all COLD water taps until the water runs clear. Begin with the lowest faucet in your home or business and then open the other faucets one at a time, moving from your lowest floor to your highest. Once the water runs clear, usually in five minutes or less, turn off your faucets in the same order, lowest to highest. You should also flush your refrigerator's water lines.

If both your hot and cold water are brown, the reason is likely from a water main break in a local water main or fire hydrant. Water main breaks can result in sediment in your water supply due to the interconnectedness of many municipalities' water lines. This happens often and is typically not a major cause for concern.

If only the hot water is brown, your water heater is likely to blame. Sediment buildup in the water heater itself can lead to rusty brown water. This problem should be addressed as soon as possible to

prevent your water heater from breaking entirely. To fix the problem, you will need to drain and flush the water heater tank to remove any sediment buildup. If the water heater tank is showing early signs of corrosion, call in a plumber for their professional opinion on what to do next.

If only the cold water is brown, the trouble is likely the pipes that have corroded with age. This is common in older homes that have plumbing of steel or cast iron. We recommend contacting a professional plumber to see if you need to have the piping replaced with copper or plastic piping.

If you only notice the issue from a few faucets, you likely have a water supply pipe that is corroding. Sometimes, this can be a minor problem that can be fixed by running the water for 20 minutes or so to flush out any small amounts of rust that might have broken loose from the pipes. However, if the problem persists after attempting a simple fix, you likely need to replace the pipes in question.

OPU takes water quality very seriously and implements yearly hydrant flushing and more frequent flushing in low flow areas to ensure adequate water flow and improve water quality. Hydrant flushing is a process of opening fire hydrants to clean the water distribution system. The flushing helps remove sediment, mineral buildup, and other impurities that can accumulate in pipes over time. Regular hydrant flushing is an essential maintenance practice that helps ensure the safety and quality of the water supply.

During the flushing process, water flow rates and pressures are increased, which helps to improve water quality by removing stale water and sediment from the system. Flushing also helps to maintain optimal flow and pressure levels throughout the system, which can reduce the risk of water main breaks and ensure that firefighters have access to adequate water supplies in case of a fire emergency.

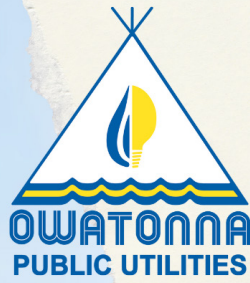
In addition to these benefits, hydrant flushing also helps to detect and identify potential problems in the water distribution system. By monitoring the color, odor, and taste of the flushed water, OPU can detect changes in water quality that may indicate issues such as pipe corrosion, or other problems that require further investigation.

Overall, if you experience discolored water, flushing the pipes is often a simple solution, but it's important to seek professional advice if the problem persists.

IN SEARCH OF

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

Must reside in Ward 4



OPU has a board member seat opening in May 2023. If interested scan the QR code to the left to apply. You must be an Owatonna resident living in Ward 4.

To view a ward map visit: <https://www.owatonna.gov/Faq.aspx?QID=171>

To learn more about the OPU Board of Commissioners visit our webpage: <https://www.owatonnautilities.com/about-us/opu-commission/>

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

NEED HELP PAYING YOUR ENERGY BILLS?

SEMCAC's Energy Assistance Program
may be able to help you with winter
energy bills.

(eligibility is based on household income)

CALL SEMCAC!
800-944-3281

Serving Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Steele & Winona Counties.

The Energy Assistance Program is funded by the State of Minnesota Department of Commerce through a block grant from the Federal Health and Human Services Department.

smart hub Sign Up Today

With SmartHub you can:

- Check your usage
- Contact our office
- Pay your bill
- Manage notifications
- Report a service interruption



owatonnautilities.smarthub.coop

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Cooking or baking in the oven? Set the cook timer on your oven a few minutes shorter than the necessary cooking time to save money on your utilities. As long as you use the light instead of opening the door, the oven will stay up to temperature long enough to finish cooking or backing your dish.





JUST A REMINDER, KEEP YOUR OUTDOOR METERS FREE OF SNOW AND ICE

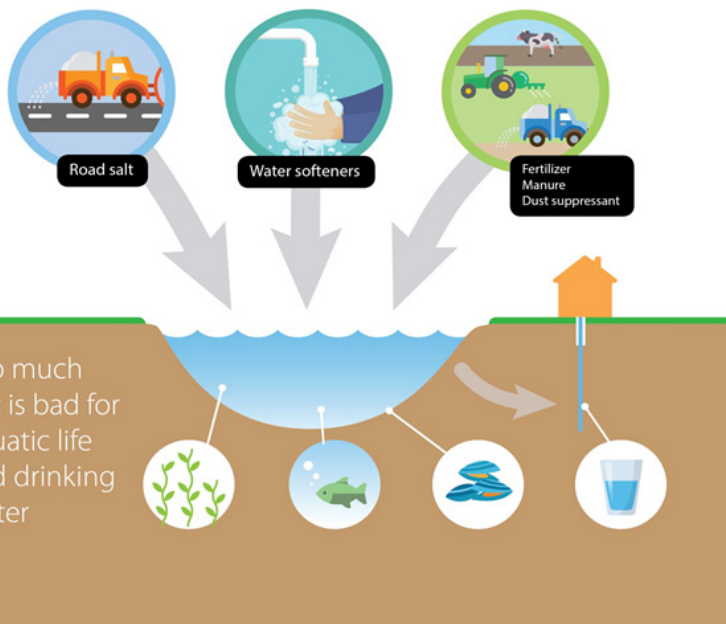
In Minnesota, snow and ice tend to cover everything at some point. When your gas meter is covered with ice and snow, it can cause a potentially dangerous situation. If there is snow on your meter, brush it off. If it's covered with **ice**, give us a call at 451-2480 option #1 and we'll take care of it for you.

In addition, snow and ice should be cleared from exhaust and combustion air vents for gas appliances to prevent the accumulation of carbon monoxide in buildings and to prevent operational problems for the combustion equipment. Monitor the accumulation of snow or ice blocking regulator or relief valve vents which could prevent regulators and relief valves from functioning properly. Use caution in cleaning snow from around the piping on service regulator set as it is susceptible to damage that could result in failure of the equipment. Where possible, use a broom instead of a shovel to clear snow off regulators, meters, and associated piping.

As always, 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 a spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.



Salt pollution comes from several sources



Help Keep Chloride Out of Our Lakes and Rivers:

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.
7. If you store large piles of salt (commercial or industrial business), make sure it's covered and on an impervious surface. Furthermore, make sure continuously sweep transfer and storage areas.

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

Don't **flush** your money away!

Install an efficient WaterSense® Toilet and get a **\$25 rebate per toilet**.



By replacing old, inefficient toilets with WaterSense models, the average family can reduce water used for toilets by 20 to 60 percent—nearly 13,000 gallons and more than \$100 every year.

Nationally, we could save 520 billion gallons of water per year, or the amount of water that flows over Niagara Falls in about 12 days!

To apply for a \$25 rebate per toilet, download a Water Efficiency Rebate Application at www.OwatonnaUtilities.com.

WORD SEARCH

WATERSENSE	GALLONS
TOILETS	NIAGARA FALLS
HOME	CONSERVE
BATHROOM	SAVE
EFFICIENT	MONEY
FLUSH	REBATE

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

CONSERVE & \$SAVE

Commercial Customers

Install an efficient WaterSense® Flushometer-Valve Toilet and get a **\$50 rebate per toilet**.



By replacing old, inefficient flushometer-valve toilets with WaterSense models, an office building with 500 occupants can save over a half-million gallons of water and nearly \$2,500 in water and sewer costs per year.

Nationally, we could save nearly 39 billion gallons of water per year. That's equivalent to nearly one full day's flow of water over Niagara Falls!

To apply for a \$50 rebate per toilet, download a Water Efficiency Rebate Application at www.OwatonnaUtilities.com.

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

March 18th is National Natural Gas Utility Worker's day!



Left to Right: Brent Glende, Dave Fox, Jeff Wencil, Buzz Brady, Joe Bellomy and Jerry Hansen.

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

Thank
you for
all you
do!



Left to Right: Brian Clausen, Launie Sorensen, Jeri Blazek, Craig Hansen, and Luke Van Hooser.

Moving?

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

Gas Leak?

If you smell gas and can't find the source immediately, go to a neighbor's house and call 911.

Don't turn electrical switches on or off or use a flashlight or cell phone in the home, because an electrical spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.

