



OWATONNA PUBLIC UTILITIES

VOLUME 31 | ISSUE #4
APRIL 2021

**Spring Water Main
Flushing Info Inside**

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Spring Water Main Flushing Info Inside

OPU MEMO



Key Accounts/Energy
Conservation Officer

OPU Commission

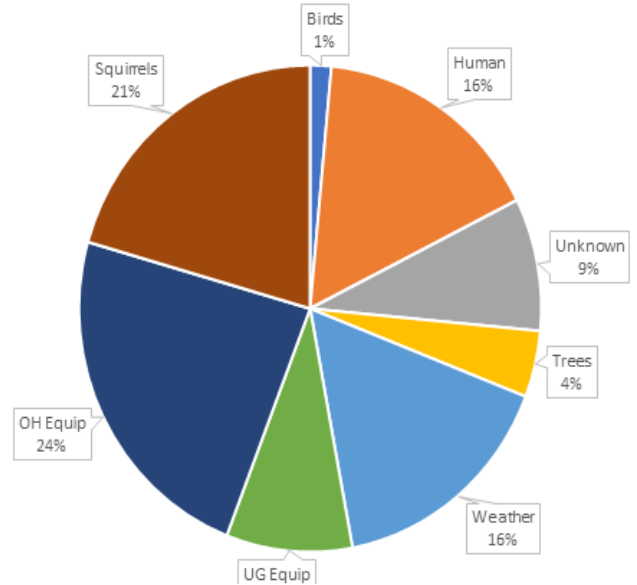
Mr. Matt Kottke
Mr. Kent Rossi
Mr. Randy Doyal
Ms. Dena Keilman
Mr. Jay Johnson

As your local Municipal Utility, OPU takes pride in providing reliable electricity to the homes and businesses in town. Reliability isn't just reducing the chances of power outages by trimming trees and locating powerlines underground, it's also restoring power quickly when there is an outage.

Power outages can happen due to a tree falling on power lines; a car accident taking down a power pole; equipment malfunction; squirrels; birds, weather or a long list of other reasons. These events, or causes, may blow a fuse, or multiple fuses, on the powerlines. This is called a fault. Before line workers can restore power, they must first identify where the outage is, where the fault is, and what caused the outage to make sure it doesn't create another fault.

To better serve the community and minimize the impact to customers, OPU has employed technology to assist in timely and accurate responses

2020 Outages by Cause



to outages. The use of CRC, our call center, has made it easier for customers to call in power outages quickly, without getting placed on hold. Customers who are signed up for SmartHub can report outages from the app on their cell phone. Don't have SmartHub? That's ok, you can still report an outage on our website at www.owatonnautilities.com/outages.

Another important technology OPU has implemented is our Outage Management System, or OMS. This system automatically receives the outage reports to determine where the fault has occurred and what areas are affected by it. Before OMS, line workers had to drive, or walk, the neighborhood to visually identify the fault. This used up precious outage restoration time. Knowing where the fault is, allows line workers to quickly confirm the fault, limit their search to a specific area and increases restoration time.

Because OMS relies on the outage reports to quickly and accurately identify faults and predict what circuits are out of power, OPU asks ALL customers to report their power outages, even if you think your neighbor has already done so. In fact, it's possible you and your neighbor may get your power from different transformers and we may not know that your house is also out of power.

What can YOU do to help reduce power outages? Before you dig, make sure to call 811 to locate underground utilities so you don't hit them; before using a ladder outside, look up and look around for powerlines so you can stay clear of them; and if you see a tree branch laying on a power line, leave it alone and please call us to report it.

Working together, we can ensure power stays on or, in the case of an outage, is restored quickly.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Opening windows to let the wind through can help keep you cool in the spring without having to turn on your A/C. Remember to close them as it cools off at night so you don't have to turn your heat on either.



Underway: MPCA Environmental Review of Owatonna's Wastewater Treatment Expansion

Project would accommodate population growth, help protect rivers

To accommodate a growing population and reduce pollution in several rivers, the City of Owatonna in southern Minnesota is proposing to expand and upgrade its wastewater treatment facility. The city plans to nearly double its treatment capacity from 5 million to 9.1 million gallons of wastewater per day.

The treated wastewater is discharged to the Straight River. To protect the river and downstream waters, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has drafted a permit for the discharged wastewater that would limit several potential pollutants, including two stricter limits, one for phosphorus and one for hexavalent chromium.

Under the proposed new limits, the facility would need to decrease the amount of phosphorus it discharges by 27 percent, from 7.6 tons to 5.5 tons per year. Less phosphorus in the river and downstream Lake Byllesby would help curb excess algae, which is detrimental to fish, other aquatic life, and recreation.

The MPCA also proposes lowering the limit for hexavalent chromium, a chemical used in many industrial processes such as metal plating, from the current limit of 39 parts per billion a day to 29 parts per billion a day. Hexavalent chromium can be toxic to human and aquatic life if ingested at high levels.

The Straight River, which flows 56 miles from south to north, through Owatonna and Medford, and into the Cannon River in Faribault, is designated as a state water trail for recreational uses. Scientists have found that the river has several water quality challenges, including levels of sediment and bacteria too high at times to meet water quality standards. Improving wastewater treatment in the watershed is an important strategy to reducing pollutants in the Straight River and downstream waters, including the Cannon River, Lake

Byllesby, Lake Pepin, and the Mississippi River.

Under state rules, Owatonna's wastewater treatment expansion requires an environmental assessment worksheet, a tool that government units use to gather information for deciding whether a more extensive environmental impact statement is needed. The worksheet describes the project's potential effects on nearby land uses, geography, bodies of water or groundwater, and wildlife and habitat. The MPCA is asking for public comments on the worksheet through May 3.

The city will add one building and several new components to the facility at its current location northeast of the intersection of Hoffman Drive Northwest and State Avenue. The site is bordered by farmland to the north; commercial areas to the west and south; and the Straight River, commercial areas, and residential areas to the east. Construction is expected to start in 2022 and last 24-30 months. The city will continue to use its existing treatment system during construction. In addition to increasing its treatment capacity and meeting new state limits on pollutants, the project will address the problem of aging infrastructure.

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

No impact is expected to the North Straight River Parkway, a 2.3 mile recreational trail that runs between the facility's east property line and the Straight River.

The environmental assessment worksheet is available on the MPCA website. The project requires an updated wastewater discharge permit, available online at the MPCA public notices webpage (scroll to March 2), which will also be open for comment at the same time. Comments on both, which must be in writing, are due by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 3 to:

- Environmental assessment worksheet: Kim Grosenheider (651-757-2170) MPCA, 520 Lafayette Road N., St. Paul, MN 55155-4194 or.
- Wastewater discharge permit: Holly Mikkelsen (218-316-3860), 7678 College Road, Suite 105, Baxter, MN 56425



National Lineman Appreciation Day

April 18, 2021



The Electric Department at Owatonna Public Utilities is comprised of 10 linemen and 1 substation technician. The line crew consists of Jeff Bertram (Electric Foreman) 29 years of service, Tom Foss (lead lineman) 27 years, Jake Perdue (lead lineman) 14 years, Tony Hartle (lead lineman) 7 years, Brandon Belch (journeyman lineman) 3 years, Nick Kleindl (journeyman lineman) 2 years, Lance Diderrich (journeyman lineman) 1 year, Samuel Bahl (apprentice lineman) 3 years, and Matt Madery (apprentice lineman) 1 year. Additional members are Nate Brinkman (night serviceman) 2 years, and Joel Trites (substation technician) 8 years. OPU currently has one apprentice opening and uses temporary help during construction season.

Linemen go through years of schooling and training to become seasoned crew members. First they must complete a 1-2 year certified Lineworker program. Once hired as an apprentice, they complete a 4-year program through MMUA and Northwest Lineman College which includes on the job training (at OPU and MMUA), coursework, checkoffs and testing. Once finished, they receive state-accredited Journeyman Lineman Certification. It takes several years working as a journeyman to become proficient in all aspects of the job. This makes it a necessity to routinely bring in new apprentices so they have time to gain experience and be qualified to take on the role when lineworker positions are vacated for various reasons.

The electric department is responsible for all overhead and underground construction and maintenance, distribution switching, and transmission line

inspection and repair, as well as covering emergency outages. OPU's electric distribution system consists of 101 miles of overhead, 95 miles of underground, and 6.5 miles of transmission line. Currently, we are tasked with the multi-year project to convert the majority of Owatonna's overhead lines to underground to improve system reliability. The crew also provides security inspections, substation checks, support and maintenance for three OPU substation sites and three SMMPA substation sites. Additionally, in collaboration with MMUA, our linemen provide mutual aid and storm restoration, travelling as far as Florida and New York. Mutual aid events are one of the best things you can do as a lineman, it tests your skills as well as makes you proud to be able to help out so many people. It's always a good feeling to get the lights back on.

Because of the nature of their job, safety is the top priority for our linemen. Teamwork and collaboration with engineering are promoted to improve communication which in turn creates a safer, more efficient workplace. Knowing each other's strengths helps the team plan their jobs and improve their quality of work. They each have a duty to our customers by providing an essential service. In their role, they are the light-house keepers since they work to keep our community's lights on.

We at OPU appreciate our linemen and the hard work they do to keep the power going for our customers. Please feel free to reach out in person or give a shout out on social media thanking linemen for the job they do to keep your lights on.

WHY IS MY BILL HIGHER THIS MONTH?

This year over President's Day weekend, severe winter weather ravaged the central United States and drove natural gas prices to unprecedented highs which continued into the following week. To ensure our community continued to have uninterrupted service for heat and other uses, OPU--like many public natural gas systems--was forced to pay these inflated prices on the spot market. Unfortunately, those prices, must ultimately be passed on to you, our customers.

The fortunate news is, it is not as bad as we had originally anticipated. Our call to action to customers asking them to reduce consumption resulted in savings of more than \$120,000 per day. And, additionally, our commission has decided to spread the additional cost out over 12 months rather than recovering the cost in a single month which is standard policy.

Is there assistance available if I can't afford to pay my bill?

There is LIHEAP (Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program) money available to assist those struggling to pay their heating bills.

Contact SEMCAC at 1-800-944-3281 for more information.

You may also contact our customer service department at 507-451-2480 for assistance setting up payment arrangements or they can point you in the right direction to receive other financial heating assistance.

So how is the monthly amount calculated?

Look for the gas consumption, in CCF, on your February bill and multiply it by \$0.2188. In this example, 109 CCF * \$0.2188 = \$23.85 will be added to your bill from April 2021 through March 2022.

Start To	Days	Meter Readings Previous	Meter Readings Present	Meter Multiplier	CCF Used	Rate Code
1/18/21	29	61	170	1	109	GR99
1 @ \$12.13						12.13
109 CCF @ 0.6814						74.27
109 CCF @ 0.1018						(11.10) CR

Where can I find it on my bill? The monthly charge will be displayed in the natural gas billing section of your statement and will look similar to this display.

Monthly Service Charge	2 @ \$30.45	60.90
Meter		
Commodity Charge	209 CCF @ 0.6692	139.86
Purchased Gas Adj	209 CCF @ 0.1417	29.62
	Total usage for Meter: 209	Total Charge: 169.48
Meter		
Commodity Charge	144 CCF @ 0.6692	96.36
Purchased Gas Adj	144 CCF @ 0.1417	20.40
	Total usage for Meter: 144	Total Charge: 116.76

Gas Cost True Up MN Tax		3.82
Gas Cost True Up Steele County Tax		0.28
Gas True-up 1 of 12 = \$0.2188 per gas CCF on Feb 2021 Bill		55.58
Minnesota Sales Tax-Gas Season	\$347.14 @ 0.675%	23.41
Steele County Tax-Gas Season	\$347.14 @ .500%	1.74
Total Gas Due		432.43



Please feel free to reach out to our customer service department at 507-451-2480 with any additional questions or for answers to frequently asked questions, visit our website at <https://www.owatonnautilities.com/february-2021-winter-storm/>

Owatonna Public Utilities reminds you...



**Call 811 or visit
gopherstateonecall.org**
(at least 48 hours in advance, not including weekends and holidays).

*Do not remove flags or stakes from your yard
until the project is complete.*



As things warm up, many people are out enjoying the weather walking their dogs. Stepping in dog waste can be a disgusting experience. Even worse is knowledge that pet waste may be polluting our drinking water and local recreational areas. When rain and snowmelt flows across the land it carries pet waste to storm drains, which eventually flow into a lake or stream. This poses an unnecessary public health and environmental risk. If you think, picking up your dog's waste is unpleasant, try swimming in it.

Did You Know: One day's waste from a large dog can contain as much as 7 Billion Fecal Coliform Bacteria!

Scooping your pet waste isn't just a courtesy for those walking behind you; it also keeps our water resources safe. Here are a few tips on how owners can protect local water and recreation areas:

- Always bring a disposal bag with you when you walk your dog
- Many trailheads in the Owatonna parks system have bag stations
- Make sure to place the bag in a proper receptacle
- Routinely clean your yard, boulevard, and paved surfaces

Take time and properly dispose of your pet's waste, remember we all live downstream!

For further information regarding the City Stormwater Management Program, contact Bradley D. Rademacher Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist, (507)-774-7300 or Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us

It's time to schedule some

Spring Cleaning!



Complete a
Central Air Conditioner
Clean & Tune
and apply for a

\$25 REBATE!

Regular preventative
maintenance is
the best way to
ensure trouble-free,
energy-efficient
operation.

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

CONSERVE & \$AVE[®]



INDICIA

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.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.

Be Aware Of Our Workers!



Don't Drive Distracted.

www.OwatonnaUtilities.com



Remember: Work zone safety is everyone's responsibility. When you see the orange "Utility Work Ahead" signs, please stay alert, slow down and give our workers a brake!

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