



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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# CUSTOMER UPDATE

*Lawn care  
During Dry  
Conditions*



**Tips for keeping a healthy lawn while saving water**

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# OPU MEMO



Josh Prokopec,  
Manager, Facilities &  
Gas/Water Operations

## OPU Commission

Kent Rossi  
Randy Doyal  
Jay Johnson  
Doug Zirngible  
Greg Vetter

Recently, the topic of PFAS has made its way into the news again. We'd like to share some information from the Minnesota Department of Health on PFAS and what it means to us in Owatonna.

PFAS stands for "per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances" and are a family of man-made chemicals that have been widely used for decades now. Some PFAS are extremely stable and do not break down in the environment. These PFAS have been found in groundwater and surface water in Minnesota. Thankfully, Steele County and specifically Owatonna, does not have any PFAS chemicals detected in our water. In fact, many of the counties around us do not have any PFAS chemicals detected in their water sources either.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has a goal to test all community water systems for PFAS even though PFAS are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act and community water systems are not required to test their drinking systems for PFAS. Owatonna is one of several communities who volunteered to participate in this project and make

their PFAS testing results publicly available.

PFAS are emerging contaminants which means there is a new awareness of them, along with more understanding about how they move in the environment and affect public health. Because PFAS are the focus of active research and study, new information is released frequently.

PFAS are used in a wide variety of industrial processes and commercial products and not all uses in industrial settings are currently known. Every day, new ones are invented, used in industry, incorporated into commercial products, and released into the environment.

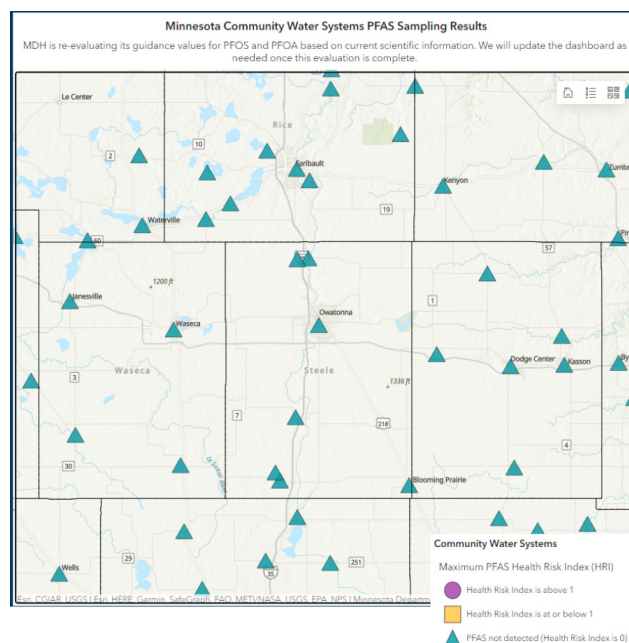
Some PFAS can build up and stay in the human body for many years, but the good news is, they can also slowly decline if the exposure stops. Exposure can happen through:

- Drinking contaminated municipal water or private well water
- Eating fish caught from contaminated water
- Accidentally swallowing contaminated soil or dust from indoor or outdoor places
- Eating food grown or raised near places where PFAS were used, manufactured, or disposed of
- Eating food packaged in material that contains PFAS
- Using some consumer products treated with or containing PFAS such as stain resistant carpeting, floor waxes, water repellent clothing and personal care products including cosmetics, dental floss, antifog cleaners for glasses, etc.
- Swimming or recreation in contaminated lakes or rivers

Common uses of PFAS include:

- Nonstick cookware, stain resistant carpets and fabrics,
- Coatings on some food packaging (especially microwave popcorn bags and fast-food wrappers),
- Components of fire-fighting foam, and
- Many industrial applications.

More information regarding PFAS can be found on the Minnesota Department of Health website, the Minnesota Pollution Control website and the US Environmental Protection Agency website.



For people who have private wells, visit <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/topics/pfcs.html> for testing information.



## Parks, Recreation & Facilities Fall and Winter Activities

**Sign up now!**

The Fall and Winter Activity Guide is filled with various activities for all ages including archery, geocaching, water aerobics, youth sports, adult trips and weekly activities, adaptive recreation activities, snowshoeing, tennis, pickleball, special events and so much more! Register for programs online at [owatonna.gov](http://owatonna.gov), by phone at 507-444-4321 or in person at City Hall during office hours.

**MAYOR**  
Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

## City of Owatonna Launches New Online Tool

**Community Members Can Use SeeClickFix to Report Service Requests**

The City of Owatonna has a new online tool for community members to report quality-of-life issues and request government services. SeeClickFix is now available for reporting violations of ordinances for junk, yard signs, animal control or if any City infrastructure needs attention. To get started, community members can download the app at:

- iOS or Android device at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/seeclickfix/id322000552?mt=8>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.seeclickfix.ma.android>.
- Or visit <https://owatonna.gov/concern>



Through SeeClickFix, anyone can submit photos, location information and details directly for City staff to prioritize and respond to. The app also allows community members to view, comment on and follow issues submitted by others. Residents can even create their own "watch areas" to receive notifications about all the reports in their community, enabling them to follow the progress of all service requests—not just the ones they submit. In addition, the platform provides a centralized system for staff to manage issues from creation through resolution. Using a mobile device, staff can manage resources, time and materials while working onsite at each job's location. City assets can also be managed, created, updated, inspected and logged which provides an efficient way for City staff to manage many types of assets in parks, streets and other areas. This technology has made mobile phones an essential tool for the job, creating greater efficiency and effectiveness.

## Stay Informed on City of Owatonna News!

Check out the weekly Owatonna Update e-newsletter at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) to find out about City news, projects and decisions. Just click on "City Services" then "Communications" and "Stay Informed". Sign up to automatically receive each issue of Owatonna Update at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov), click on "Notification Sign-up".

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Promote water conservation year-round by harnessing the water you typically let run to warm up a faucet and repurpose it to nourish your beloved house plants. Elevate your eco-friendly efforts by taking an additional step: rather than discarding leftover coffee, enrich your plants by incorporating its nutrient-rich properties.





# Lawn Care During Dry Conditions



**Tips for keeping a healthy lawn while saving water**

Proper lawn care during drought conditions is important for both lawns and water utilities.

Lawns in Minnesota consist of grasses known as cool-season turf. Cool-season turf naturally goes through two dormant periods during the year: first is the winter dormancy while the second is considered the summer decline. The summer decline is especially notable during drought conditions when lawns turn brown. Although it is easy to think brown grass is dead grass, that is not necessarily the case. A healthy yard that goes brown and dormant during the summer is still healthy and will stay healthy if it is properly taken care of to reduce additional stress.

Healthy lawns come from healthy root zones. Healthy root zones are deeper, more water efficient, and better drought and stress resistant than shallow root zones. Having a lush green yard does not necessarily mean the root zone is healthy, in fact a browning lawn may have a healthier root zone than a green lawn if properly cared for.

The first step in a healthier root zone is responsible watering during dry conditions. The EPA estimates that roughly 50% of water used for irrigation is wasted water, mainly through excessive runoff, evaporation, and inefficient water use by grass. It is better to let the grass go completely dormant and stop watering a lawn, than it is to water incorrectly. Homeowners embracing the brown will help ensure water isn't being wasted outdoors, making sure it's available for in-home needs such as drinking, bathing, and cooking, as well as reducing stress on the water utility infrastructure.

When opting to water, there are a few important things to consider. Watering too fast will cause more water to runoff instead of being absorbed into the ground, wasting water. Using irrigation heads and sprinklers that cause misting instead of steady streams of water cause more water to be blown away or evaporated into the air, again wasting water.

Frequent shallow waterings can damage lawns, instead, apply approximately 1" of water to a lawn no more than once per week to ensure the rootzone is saturated while conserving water.

When choosing to water, timing of irrigation can have a large impact on how much water is being used by the lawn instead of being wasted. When it's hot, sunny, or windy, less of the water is absorbed into the ground and is instead lost to evaporation. Watering right before dark can also promote mold in the lawn, adding further stress. Watering in the early morning before the heat of the day and before the wind picks up will reduce this waste and keep from stressing a lawn.

Another in healthy lawn care is proper timing of chemicals like fertilizer and weed killer. Fertilizer and weed killer should be applied in the spring and/or fall growth season instead of the summer decline. Although many weed killers are designed for broad leaf plants and don't normally kill grass, they still put stress on the grass that can kill the lawn if it's already in a dormant or stressed condition. Fertilizing during the summer decline can also burn off the grass because the root zone isn't growing as rapidly at the time.

Lastly, some changes to mowing can improve lawn health and allow it to handle stress and drought more easily. During drought conditions, raising the mower deck to 3"-4" allow the grass to better shade the ground keeping it cooler as well as reducing moisture evaporation. Reducing the frequency of mowing also benefits the lawn. Another way to avoid stress from mowing is to make sure your mower blades are sharp. Dull blades rip and tear the grass blades and cause the lawn to use 40%-60% more water than a yard mowed with a sharp blade.

For other water saving ideas visit our website at [www.owa-tonnautilities.com](http://www.owa-tonnautilities.com).



# EMBRACE THE BROWN!

**Current Minnesota Drought Conditions & Water Saving Tips**

**Visit us at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) for current drought conditions in Minnesota and find water saving tips, too**

## Free Ways to Save Energy!

Stop in to Owatonna Public Utilities during regular business hours to pick up free kits from the Customer Service desk!

### Water Saving Kit

Sava Spa Showerhead, Leak-Detection Dye Tablets, Dual-Threaded Bubble Faucet Aerator, Closed-Cell Polyethylene Hot Water Pipe Insulation, Plumbers Tape.

### Air Sealing Kit

Switch and Outlet Sealing Gaskets, Self-Stick Door Sweep, Adhesive Weather Stripping, Deluxe Window Insulation Kit.

Due to new federal lighting standards

## TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR LED BULB REBATES!

**Rebates for screw base LED bulbs for all residential and commercial customers will end December 31, 2023.**

Apply before they are gone!  
Download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions:  
[owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com)



## CONSERVE & \$AVE®



## Customer Owned BURIED GAS PIPING NOTIFICATION

*In compliance with the Department of Transportation, Pipeline Safety Regulations, Part 192.16,*

Owatonna Public Utilities is notifying customers about their responsibility for customer-owned gas piping. Owatonna Public Utilities DOES NOT own or maintain gas piping downstream (house side) of the natural gas meter. Gas piping after the gas meter is customer-owned. Maintenance and inspection of customer-owned piping is the customers' responsibility.

**To ensure safe and reliable operation, customer-owned buried gas piping should be:**

- Periodically inspected for leaks
- Periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic
- Repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered, or flow of gas should be shut off
- Located and marked in advance when excavation is performed or is about to be performed near the buried gas piping
- Carefully excavated by hand when work is performed near the piping



← Piping coming into the home is the customer's responsibility



# SMELL GAS?

# GET OUT!

## CALL 911



- Smell gas? (odor is like rotten eggs)
- Can't immediately find the source?
- DO NOT turn on a light switch or use the phone because the potential spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion!
- Get out and call 911 from your mobile phone or a neighbor's house.

**Learn more about Gas Safety at**  
**[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)**



**Take Action for Water Quality in Your Community!**

**Visit the Clean River Partners and City of Owatonna Fair Booth**

Take the opportunity to learn a little bit about what CRP and the City have been working on as well as the opportunity to be comment and review the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan as part of the communities MS4 Program. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan document will be available at the booth for you review! You may also review and comment by filling out a survey on the City's stormwater web-site. Your input is greatly valued! Steele County Fair dates: August 15th – 20th, 2023.

**Save the Date - 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up on 9/16/2023**

For over a decade, volunteers have combed the stream banks and waterways around Owatonna with the goal of cleaning trash and debris from the Straight River. With every passing year, more and more garbage is removed by hard working individuals and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference. Since 2009, residents of Owatonna and the surrounding cannon river watershed have volunteered cleaning up local lakes, creeks, the Cannon and Straight River.

The 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on **September 16th from 9am to 12 noon** at Morehouse Park. The event is hosted by the Clean River Partners, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event. This is the largest one-day clean-up event in Minnesota with over 200 volunteers working in 8 locations across the watershed!





# SOME LIKE IT HOT

The average water heater lasts 10-15 years. Is yours due to be replaced before it fails? If so, make sure you choose an energy efficient model. Do your research to find one that best fits your needs: [www.energy.gov/energysaver/selecting-new-water-heater](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver/selecting-new-water-heater)

Remember, Owatonna Public Utilities offers several water heater rebates to help with your purchase!



## WATER HEATER REBATES:

- **Storage (Tank)**  
0.64 UEF = \$125  
0.80 UEF = \$250
- **Instantaneous (Tankless)**  
0.82 UEF = \$200  
0.91 UEF = \$250
- **Solar Hot Water:**  
\$15 per sq ft NET aperture  
(up to \$1,200 max lifetime total rebate per location)

Before you shop, go to [www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com) to download rebate applications with minimum efficiency requirements and complete terms and conditions.

### WORD SEARCH

WATER HEATER  
STORAGE  
TANKLESS  
HEAT PUMP  
SOLAR  
GALLONS  
EFFICIENT  
REBATES

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

# CONSERVE & \$AVE™



For our commercial customers,  
Owatonna Public Utilities offers a

**\$200 REBATE**  
**PER 100,000 BTUH INPUT**  
FOR WATER HEATERS WITH  
88% OR HIGHER THERMAL EFFICIENCY

Download a Commercial Water Heater  
rebate application with complete  
terms and conditions at  
[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com).





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](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
- ACH bank draft sent directly from your bank

### Moving?

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

Come visit us in the Four Seasons Building!

# STEELE COUNTY FREE FAIR

August 15 - 20, 2023

### 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.



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