

# CUSTOMER UPDATE

**Is Jack Frost  
nipping at  
your toes?**



**Learn about space heater  
use, cost, and safety  
inside this issue!**

## FEATURING:

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# OPU MEMO



Brian Clausen  
Water Design Engineer

## OPU Commission

Mr. Dale E. Simon  
Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal  
Ms. Dena Keilman

This past summer has been one of the wettest years on record providing an abundance of rain and surface water. This seemingly continual rain isn't the only water we have in Owatonna.

In Owatonna there is enough underground water pipes to stretch from here to the Canadian border. There is over 166 miles of public watermain and 180 miles of private water services and mains serving our close to 10,000 water customers.

The water that comes to the faucet in your home is quality water and is readily available from our underground aquifers. It originates from 8 deep wells that range in depth from 700' to 1325' below the surface. This water is not processed through any special treatment plants and is continually tested to ensure its safety and quality by our production department. These wells pump 1.3 billion gallons annually to meet the needs of Owatonna. We have numerous towers, boosters and other facilities scattered throughout the City that have state of the art monitoring and management equipment to ensure that your water is at your fingertips in the quantity, quality and pressure that you need.

This vast water system is a reliable one considering the harsh environment that it exists in. The frigid Minnesota winters, cause frost and ground shifting; the damp and corrosive soils, cause rusting. These items all play a part in damaging our water infrastructure. Because of this OPU has been very aggressive over the years in combating these contributors to shortened pipe life and breaks. We annually replace thousands of feet of aging pipes and update our materials and construction practices to give us greater life cycles and value. This upcoming year we are planning on investing in replacing 9 blocks of watermain along Truman Ave that has been prone to breaks.

Even with our proactive approach to managing our infrastructure we still experience around 16 watermain breaks per year. These breaks are repaired by our dedicated water crew. At OPU we track the time that a water outage takes to repair from the time the water is shut off to when it is restored. We are on average less than 130 minutes to complete the repair. This is an impressive number considering most breaks happen in the winter in very difficult conditions.

We are excited to utilize our ever-growing GIS system capability by now being able to correlate soil corrosiveness to water main break history. As corrosiveness is our leading cause of equipment failure it is wise to keep tabs on where it is most probable. This gives us a better understanding to what to expect for infrastructure life cycles and where to invest in our community.

We are in the process of completing phase 2 of 3 for a large water project in the southwest portion of Owatonna to increase pressure and volume. This project is scheduled to be complete by mid-summer of 2020. This project will provide for increased water availability, future expansion of the City limits, increased fire safety protection and increased economic potential that will allow our community to prosper for many years to come. This project has already played a major role in bringing in industrial growth such as Costco and Minimizer along with potential others.

We are truly blessed to live in Owatonna where quality water is so prevalent. As a utility we do not take this for granted and strive to be stewards of our resource while providing quality and value to you our customer.

### Everbridge Emergency Notification System

Everyone in Owatonna should be able to receive emergency notification warnings from public officials. In Steele County Public Safety Officials have multiple ways to provide emergency warning information to the public including emergency warning sirens, radio and television emergency alerts, the integrated public alert warning system and the Everbridge emergency warning system.

#### What is Everbridge?

Everbridge is a Emergency Notification System to keep residents, safe and informed with quick and reliable emergency notifications and public service announcements.

#### What kind of events will be alerted via Everbridge?

Steele Counties use the Everbridge system to alert residents of a variety of events, ranging from severe weather, floods and other emergencies, evacuation notices, law enforcement emergencies and shelter in place notifications.

#### Which local agencies participate in Everbridge notifications?

The Rice & Steele 911 Center

The National Weather Service

All public safety agencies within Steele Counties have the ability to request community notifications.

### RESIDENT ALERT SIGN-UP INSTRUCTIONS

Go to <http://ricesteele911center.com/>

Click on the Resident Alert button

Click on "Sign Up" button to add your information to this notification system.

You will be asked to create an account: Create a Username and Password

Enter a Registration Email Address. This address is used to send temporary passwords, if you forget your credentials.

Accept the Terms of Use by checking the box and Click "Create Your Account"

You will be asked to complete your profile; this is where you enter your personal information.

You will then select how you want to receive alerts. Options may include SMS text messages, email, mobile phones, landlines, or a mobile application for Android and iOS devices.

The order you set these contact paths will be the order we will try and reach you in the event of an emergency. You can register as a resident or business. Use your company name for first and last name if registering a business. Enter any locations you care about. Alerts based on a geographical location on a map. Insert up to five addresses for which you want to receive an alert if the location is affected by an incident or upcoming event.

You can sign up only for the alerts you care about. You'll be presented with various alert subscriptions to sign up for. These could be important community alerts, transportation alerts, weather notifications, etc.

Once you have finished and saved your account, you have successfully signed up.

If you have any questions, e-mail [ricesteele911@rsc-psap.org](mailto:ricesteele911@rsc-psap.org) or phone 507- 455-2810

#### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

#### COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss



Register for  
Emergency Alerts from  
Rice & Steele Counties  
[ricesteele911center.com](http://ricesteele911center.com)



# SPACE HEATERS



**use • cost • safety**

Space heaters provide a convenient way to warm up a room quickly, but should be used properly to ensure safe and cost effective operation.

According to the US Consumer Products Safety Commission, more than 25,000 fires and 300 deaths are attributed to the improper use of space heaters every year. Does this mean they are dangerous and should be avoided at all cost? No, but a few safety tips should be followed to limit the risk of fire or injury.

- Use newer models with built in safety features such as tip over and overheat protection
- Look for the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label
- Place space heaters on a flat level surface
- Keep space heaters away from flammable items like bedding, furniture, curtains
- Place in an area without foot traffic where pets and children can't reach
- Make sure to keep 3 feet of clear space around the heater
- Do not use around flammable vapors such as paint and gasoline
- DO NOT USE SPACE HEATERS INTENDED FOR OUTDOOR USE IN YOUR HOME

The cost of using an electric space heater is another important issue to consider before turning them on. Although space heaters often come with multiple power settings, they can still be more expensive to use than the furnace or hot water heating system in a home, even older inefficient ones. Electric space heaters generally use up to 1500 watts of electricity, more than it takes to use most vacuum cleaners. Running an electric space heater on high for 8 hours a day will cost more than \$1.20 per day. That's an additional \$36 a month for each space heater. Running an electric space heater on high for 24 hours will cost more than \$3.60 per day, an additional \$108 per month!

There are, however, ways to use space heaters without causing drastic increases to your utility bill. First, space heaters should be used only to supplement the home heating system, not to replace it. Use space heaters to add additional heat in a small area or room, not the whole house. Avoid using the high setting unless necessary. Try using a low or medium setting instead. Use the thermostat to reduce the excess electricity used.

If you spend a lot of time in a cool room of the home, a space heater can help keep you more comfortable without having to turn the heat up for the whole house. They can also provide additional heat for individuals that are sensitive to cold temperatures such as elderly and young children. When using a space heater for comfort in the evening, turn the temperature down 2 degrees on the furnace allowing the rest of the house to cool down slightly.

For recap, using a space heater requires following a few simple safety precautions to ensure they don't cause injury or damage. Space heaters will add additional cost to your utility bill and should only be used to supplement the heating system in your home.



# CONSERVATION TIP\$

Open shades and blinds on the south side of the house during the day to let the sunlight in. Not only will this help brighten your house, it helps to heat it! Make sure to close them when the sun goes down to insulate around your windows.



## Free Empty Wooden Wire Reels

## You Haul

**Contact OPU Operations  
Supervisor, Jamey Krogh  
at 507-456-5087 to  
arrange pick-up**

OPU is not responsible for any injuries  
associated with removing/loading reels

## OPU HIGHLIGHT



Photo from OHS Magnet

The Owatonna Public Utilities is proud to host the OHS Carolers on Thursday December 12, 2019 in our lobby at 4:25 p.m. Stop in and enjoy the sounds of the season with us and the OHS Carolers.

## DON'T THROW AWAY OLD HOLIDAY LIGHTS. RECYCLE THEM!

Once you've purchased all the new energy efficient LED holiday lights you need this season (and applied for your rebate from Owatonna Public Utilities; see our website), what should you do with the old ones?

**Owatonna Public Utilities will  
recycle all of your old holiday  
light strands for FREE!**

It's easy – just bring your old strands of lights into the Owatonna Public Utilities lobby and drop them in the bins designated for holiday light recycling.

Available now through January 31



Bring your unwrapped toy to our office before December 12th and receive an LED light bulb for free!



# ICE ON METERS

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 451-1616 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.



## Be Smart About Salt

As snow and ice melts it collects and washes surface pollutants into our lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater. One of the major pollutants carried into our waterbodies during the winter months is road salt. Once in the water it becomes very difficult to remove the chloride. At high concentrations, it can harm aquatic life and contaminate drinking water.



A recent study found 47 waterbodies in Minnesota that tested above the water quality standard for chloride and estimated Minnesotans dump over 350,000 tons of salt on roadways and parking lots annually.

### How does it get in our water? Two main sources:

1. Winter road application
2. Water softeners

### How to make a difference:

1. Hire a Smart Salting Contractor, visit [pca.state.mn.us](http://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. Never use more than 4 pounds/1,000 sq. ft.
4. Sweep up any excess salt, if visible on pavement it will just wash away.
5. Be patient, more salt does not result in faster melting. Shovel, shovel, shovel.

Learn more about our Stormwater Program at [ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater](http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater) or contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300 or [stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us).



# REBATES

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# CONSERVE & \$AVE<sup>®</sup>





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

### 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.



*Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year  
from Everyone at the  
Owatonna Public Utilities*

### 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.

### HOLIDAY HOURS:

#### Christmas Eve:

December 24 - Closed

#### Christmas Day:

December 25 - Closed

#### New Year's Day:

January 1 - Closed



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