



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

VOLUME 30 | ISSUE #2
FEBRUARY 2020

CUSTOMER UPDATE



FEATURING: COLD-CLIMATE AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 OPU Memo | 4 Cold-Climate Air Source Heat Pumps | 6 How Can We Contact You |
| 2 Conservation Tips | 5 SmartHub | 7 Home Energy Audits |
| 3 City Spot | 5 Natural Gas Safety | 8 Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship |
| 3 Clean H2Owatonna | 6 Gas Fireplace Safety | 8 General Information |



WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM

OPU MEMO



Jeri Blazek,
Meter Serviceworker

OPU Commission

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

Owatonna Public Utilities has decided to embrace an exciting opportunity to upgrade the current meter data field collection system we have in use to an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) network. This comes at a time when the batteries in our current meter modules are reaching their 20-year predicted life expectancy. The upgrade will allow us to utilize the data we obtain in many different avenues. For instance, our engineering team will be able to better monitor the health of our electrical grid and plan/build infrastructure for future community growth. Real time outage notification analysis will also help us during both small and large events. It will speed the time of leak detection and resolution. We will be able to collect readings for billing, move orders, and usage evaluation without a truck roll.

This will not change or effect the quality and reliability of the services you have come to expect from OPU. It is simply an improved way to read, collect, and evaluate the information our meters can provide. With this new network customers, both residential and commercial, will eventually see an added value by being able to take an active role in monitoring and decision making in regards to their personal energy usage.

We anticipate the life of this upgrade project running over the course of the next two years—2020 to 2022. In the coming months beginning in spring 2020 OPU will launch a pilot roll out of the new network before implementing a city go-live. To facilitate this change, OPU will be partnering with Itron, the meter manufacturer, and their contractors to help retrofit or change the existing hardware we have in place in the field. We want this transition to be as comfortable and convenient as possible for all of our customers. In most cases the electric and gas meters are located on the exterior of structures and are accessible for work to be done without an appointment. However, all water meters are located within facilities and we will eventually need to schedule a brief appointment for access to install new equipment.

Our goal is to regularly reach out to you through customer updates and area mailings in regards to the progress of this project. This will keep you informed and ensure you will be aware when we have contractors working in your neighborhoods. With community support, we will strive to schedule our work in a way that is most convenient for your business or household.

As your local utility, we believe this AMI network will help us best serve you and contribute to our overall mission of enriching the quality of life in our community by delivering reasonably priced, reliable, safe, and customer-focused utility services.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Check the gasket on your fridge and freezer to make sure they seal properly. Over time, gaskets can come loose from the door, crack, or lose their tight seal causing cold air to escape making your fridge work harder to stay cool and your furnace fight the extra cold air. To test your gasket, close a piece of paper (or dollar bill) in the door. If it pulls out easily, it is time to check or replace your gasket.



CITY SPOT

HIGHLIGHTING: CITY OF OWATONNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OWATONNA CITY COUNCIL

The City of Owatonna is looking for seasonal and temporary employees to fill upcoming and current openings. It is hard to envision, but spring is just around the corner. Are you or someone you know looking for that great flexible part-time job? Are you interested in running a riding mower at the parks? Are you interested in keeping everyone safe at the pool? We have a wide range of jobs available.



If you have any questions about working for the City of Owatonna, please contact Emily Thamert at 507-774-7346 or Lynn Gorski at 507-774-7345.

Apply at: <http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/>

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Winter Stormwater Pollution Prevention Tips

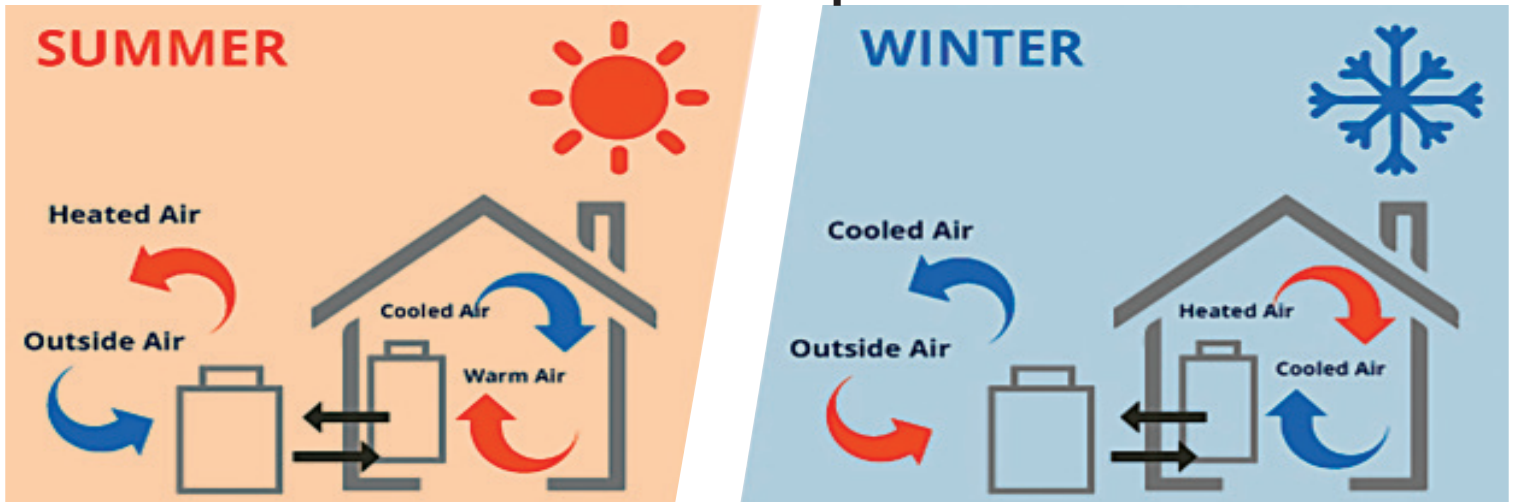
When winter hits and rain turns to snow, it is still important to consider stormwater pollution. Pollutants such as soaps, fertilizers, automotive fluids, and pet waste can collect in the snow pack, accumulating until a thaw suddenly dumps them into the stormwater system. Contaminants that end up in the storm drains are carried off, untreated, to streams and bodies of water that we use for drinking, swimming, and fishing. Here are a few helpful habits to reduce the amount of harmful pollutants entering storm drains this winter season.



1. Winterizing vehicles. Check that your car is not leaking oil or other fluids. It takes only a small amount of motor oil to pollute thousands of gallons of water. Also, dispose of drained fluids properly. Many service stations will collect used motor oil and recycle it.
2. Washing vehicles. On a warm winter day, you may be tempted to break out the hose and bucket to get some road grime off your car. Take a moment to see where that runoff is going. Does it wash down the driveway and into a storm drain? Using a car wash facility may cost a few dollars more but the water will be controlled and treated.
3. Deicing driveways and sidewalks. While it may be habit to stock up on salt for the winter, many people would not consider dumping a bucket of salt on the lawn in the summer. However, the results are similar. Always choose physical removal before chemicals.

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

How Heat Pumps Work



High-efficiency technologies like air source heat pumps (ASHPs) have significant potential to improve space-heating efficiency and reduce energy costs for houses in cold climates. ASHP technology has been available for many years, but until recently, technological limitations caused concern about efficiency and reliability during the coldest months of the year in [Minnesota]. Recent generations of ASHPs have improved, making the systems better suited for cold-climate heating.

Cold-climate air source heat pumps (ccASHP) are available as both central-ducted systems and ductless systems. Central-ducted systems are designed and installed to meet the full load of the home by distributing heat through forced-air ductwork. Ductless systems deliver heat to a specific area of a home through a single interior head with no ductwork.

Cold climate air source heat pumps typically require a backup system to provide heat when cold outdoor air temperatures limit the heat pump capacity, or prevent them from operating. Ducted systems typically use a natural gas, propane, or resistive electric furnace as a backup. These backups take over the load of the system at an outdoor air temperature where the capacity of the heat pump is no longer sufficient. This temperature varies but is usually around 5-10°F.

Cold-climate air source heat pumps operate in three ways. The three modes of operation are heat pump heating, backup heating, and defrost mode. Heating events where only the heat pump was used typically had the highest COPs, around 1.3 at the lower temperature change point (5-10°F) and increasing to about 3.5 in the shoulder heating seasons (around 50°F to 60°F). While the outdoor air temperature has the largest impact on the COP, heating cycles at the same outside air temperature did have a range of COPs. Secondary factors on cycle COP include the rates of operation of components in both the indoor and outdoor units.

The second type of heating operation was the backup furnace mode. These events occurred at outdoor temperatures below the point where the ccASHP was expected to meet the full load of the home (5-10°F for how these systems were sized).

The final mode of operation is defrost. When the ccASHP is operational and outdoor conditions are below freezing, there is a risk that frost can form on the outdoor coil. To prevent this, ccASHP systems run in defrost mode by reversing the system and transferring a small amount of indoor heat back to the outside.

Research shows opportunities for residents and utilities to reduce total site energy by 35% to 50%. These savings may be attributed to climate, type of ccASHP, and the system the heat pump replaced, but in all cases, ccASHPs saved homeowners and renters significant amounts of energy and money.

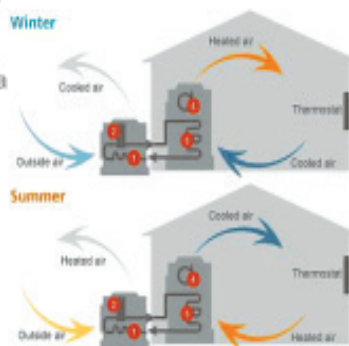
Overall, CEE research found that ccASHPs performed to their rated specifications for both system capacity and efficiency (COP or heating seasonal performance factor). With proper sizing, installation, and integration with backup heating systems, ccASHPs are an attractive replacement for homes with propane or electric heating.

This article (and graphics) has been condensed from the original article which can be found online at: [https://www.mncee.org/blog/july-2018-\(1\)/cold-climate-air-source-heat-pumps/](https://www.mncee.org/blog/july-2018-(1)/cold-climate-air-source-heat-pumps/)

• Cold Climate Air-Source Heat Pump?

- An ASHP uses a refrigerant system involving a compressor, condenser, and evaporator to absorb heat at one place and release it at another.
- Delivery of both heating and cooling via forced air distribution
- New generation systems can operate as low as -13 °F
- ASHPs have the potential to deliver energy and peak saving as well as reduce reliance on delivered fuels.

cee
Center for Energy and Environment





Smart Management. Smart Life. SmartHub

Paying your Owatonna Public Utilities bill shouldn't be a complex task, and with our SmartHub web and mobile app - it won't be.

You may have heard about SmartHub, our innovative tool for account management, but what can it do for you? SmartHub can help you take control of your OPU account like never before, giving you more time to focus on other responsibilities.

SmartHub has several features that make managing your account as easy as possible. Whether through the web, or your smartphone or tablet (Android or iOS), you'll be able to pay your bill, view your usage, contact customer service and get the latest news.

As soon as you log in, you'll be able to view your billing history and make a payment with just a couple of clicks...or taps, if you're using the app. You'll be able to see your current bill, along with bills from the previous month or even the previous summer, if you want to compare costs. Not only will you see your billing history, but you'll be able to view your actual use. You can see how your use is trending over time, which will allow you to take steps to lower your bill.

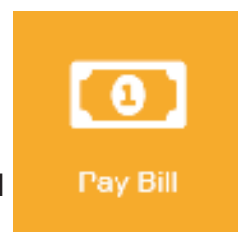
Making payments through SmartHub is fast and easy. The first time you make a payment either through the web or through your mobile device, you'll be able to securely store your payment information for future transactions. The next time you need to pay your bill, it will only take a couple of clicks.

You'll also be able to see important Owatonna Public Utilities notices with SmartHub. You'll be able to select how you want to be notified about your bill, including email and text

messaging. You'll even be able to set usage thresholds so that you'll know when you're using more than you'd like and help you keep your electricity bill as low as possible.

You can also use SmartHub to contact OPU for customer service requests or with any questions you may have. SmartHub's contact feature makes it quick and easy.

Access SmartHub by visiting www.owatonnautilities.com and clicking the "Pay Bill" icon, or by downloading the app on your mobile device through the Apple App Store (iOS devices) or Google Play Marketplace (Android devices).



Plenty of things in life are complicated. Manage your Owatonna Public Utilities account simply, quickly and easily with SmartHub.

SMELL GAS? GET OUT!

THEN CALL OPU • 24 HRS • 507.451.1616



- 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 OPU from your mobile phone or a neighbor's house.

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.

How can we contact you?

From time to time it is necessary to contact you for such things as meter exchanges, meter access, leak notification, high consumption, planned outages, and/or emergencies, to name a few. It is very important we have the correct contact information so we are able to contact you in a timely manner.

Please help us ensure we have your correct contact information by calling customer service at 507-451-2480 or logging into your SmartHub account. If you prefer, simply fill out the form below and mail or drop it off in the office. Thank you, in advance, for helping us provide you with the best service possible.

Name:	_____	Preferred Method of Contact
		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone
Service Address:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Email
Phone Number: (Best to Reach You)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cell
		<input type="checkbox"/> Home
		<input type="checkbox"/> Work
Email Address:	_____	
Emergency Contact & Phone Number (in case we can't reach you)	_____	

Utility bills through the roof?



**Call 451.2480 to schedule
a home energy audit!**

CONSERVE & \$AVE[®] HOUSE CALL

Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to learn more.



P.O. Box 800 208 S. Walnut Ave.
Owatonna, MN 55060

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Permit No 41
Owatonna MN

POSTAL CUSTOMER
ECRWSS

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.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.

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.

WE'LL BE CLOSED

OPU will be closed on Monday, February 18, 2020 in observance of President's Day.

The office will reopen on Tuesday, February 19, 2020



WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM