

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



**Does your home  
have a space that  
needs extra heat?**

**Creature Comforts need to be used with caution.**

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

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# OPU MEMO



Josh Prokopec,  
Gas/Water Design  
Engineer

## OPU Commission

Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal  
Mr. Jay Johnson  
Mr. Doug Zirngible

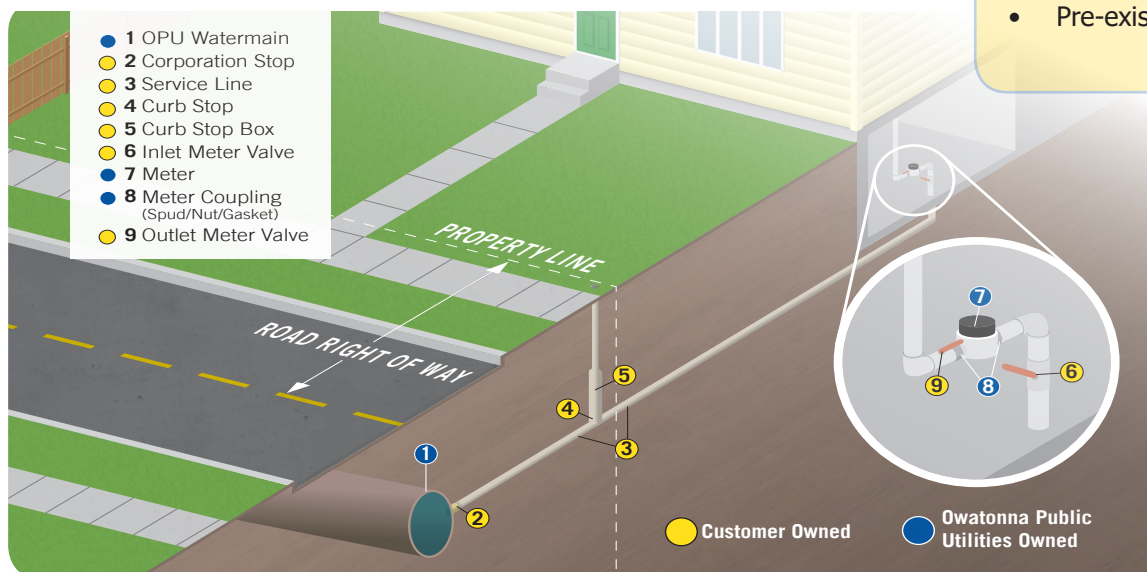
Have you ever wondered what the **\$0.99 Water Svc Line Protect** charge is for on your OPU bill? Hopefully the information below will give you some insight into its value!

The Owatonna Public Utilities' (OPU) Water Service Line Protection Program provides homeowners with protection from many of the unexpected costs of service line repairs. Whether it's severe damage repair or thawing a frozen water service line, OPU will cover costs and allow the customer to work directly with contractors to save customers time and money.

As a homeowner, you own, and are responsible for, the water service line to your home. Harsh frost conditions, shifts in the ground and aging pipes are just some of the things that can damage your service line and require repair or replacement at your expense. Replacement of a service line can include digging up your yard, public sidewalk and street, costing you thousands.

Worse yet, your homeowners' insurance may not cover repair costs (contact your homeowners' insurance agent for specific coverage details). The Water Service Line Protection Program can help protect you from the unexpected costs of repairing or replacing a leaking service line.

In addition to providing a valuable service to OPU customers, the program is intended to minimize disruption and public hazard due to leaks which would not otherwise be repaired in a timely manner. Since the program's inception we have had between 40-50 water service leaks per year that have benefited by this program. The costs of those repairs have ranged in cost from \$350-\$10,400 making this a valuable program.



### **Enrollment Process/Eligibility:**

- Customers who are single-family homeowners are automatically enrolled in the Water Service Line Protection Program.
- Single family homeowners and building landlords are eligible for the Water Service Line Protection Program. All homes must be served by a residential water service line with a diameter of 1 inch or smaller and must be attached to a permanent foundation.

### **Services Covered:**

- Thawing a frozen water service line once/year
- Repairing or replacing water service line from the Corporation Stop to the Inlet Meter Valve.
- Restoration of the road right of way, including street, curb, public sidewalk, boulevard, and driveway approach
- Backfilling of trench created by maintenance work between the property line and building

### **Services Not Covered:**

- Incidental or consequential damage resulting from water service line break or leak
- Repair of customer-owned utilities, irrigation systems, dog fences, etc.
- Restoration from property line to building
- Restoration inside building
- Required service line upgrades in conjunction with street projects
- Improperly installed service lines
- Pre-existing conditions

This graphic shows what a typical water service line looks like and the ownership of facilities. In Owatonna, the property owner owns the water service from the main in the street to the meter in the house.

*(This drawing displays a typical service and is not to scale)*



# CITY SPOT

HIGHLIGHTING: CITY OF OWATONNA FINANCE DEPARTMENT

## OWATONNA CITY COUNCIL



### CITY OF OWATONNA 2022 BUDGET

BY RHONDA MOEN, FINANCE DIRECTOR

Each year, the City Council has a strategic planning session to set goals for the upcoming years. Based on these goals, the City's management team develops the next year's budget. So, with the goals of Infrastructure, Economic Vitality, Quality of Life and Efficient, Effective Government in mind, the 2022 budget was developed.

Your tax dollars pay for many different services. City services include items such as 24/7 police and fire protection, plowing of City streets, code enforcement, a municipal airport, the Owatonna Public Library and Owatonna's many parks and recreational amenities. To name a few of those amenities, we have the new Daikin soccer complex, River Springs Water Park, Brooktree Golf Course, the Tennis & Fitness Center, the new Miracle Field at Manthey Park, several miles of trails and numerous park facilities.



City  
Levy  
Provides

Some of the enhancements the City added to its 2022 budget include the investment in a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution, the investment in the City's downtown area with the streetscape project and additional staff in the areas of communication, park maintenance and community development.

The ERP will allow for contactless interactions with the community and will improve our communications, transparency and efficiency. The streetscape project will aid in the downtown economic development and improve quality of life. The addition of staff will touch upon all four focus areas of the City's strategic plan.

In 2022, the city will be allocating resources as follows on city services:

- \$8.3 million on public safety which includes police, fire, and building inspection
- \$5 million on public works which includes engineering, streets, and airport
- \$1.2 million on the public library
- \$4 million on parks and recreation

A detailed 2022 budget report is available on the City's website at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov).

### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

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



### LEARN ABOUT CITY PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Find out about the City of Owatonna's biggest projects and initiatives from 2021 and what's being planned for 2022 by watching a video presentation of Mayor Kuntz and Administrator Busse delivering the annual State of the City Address. Just visit [owatonna.gov](http://owatonna.gov).



## Does your home have a space that needs extra heat?

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.



## BEWARE OF UTILITY SCAMS

***If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.*** Scammers are constantly trying to get personal information from people. If ever in doubt, hang up or slam the door, and call us directly at 507-451-2480. ***Never*** give personal information to someone you did not initiate the conversation with.



## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Make the switch to COLD water for laundry. Modern laundry detergents are just as effective cleaning clothes using COLD water as using warm or hot water while reducing your natural gas\* bill.

\*Customers with electric water heaters will reduce their electric bill.



## 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.

# This Valentine's Day... Remember...Metallic Balloons and Power Lines Don't Mix

Mylar balloons are metallic and can cause problems when coming in contact with a power line. To reduce the risk of fire and potential injuries, here are some important tips on how to safely and properly handle Mylar balloons:

- Never release a Mylar balloon outdoors
- Keep Mylar balloons away from power lines
- Use balloon weights
- Never use a metallic ribbon with metallic balloons
- Always deflate metallic balloons and dispose of them properly when no longer in use
- Never touch balloons entangled in power lines



*Love should be the only thing in the air this Valentine's Day*



# 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.

Learn more about  
Gas Safety at

[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)



### Does your business provide winter maintenance services?

Deicing salt accounts for approximately 75% of chloride found in our waterways. During precipitation events and snowmelt, stormwater gathers excess salt and washes it into our nearby streams and lakes. The remaining 25% of chloride in surface and groundwater is from water softeners. Chloride in water has major negative impacts to wildlife, the environment, and us.



Knowing how much salt to use and the best time to apply is critical to keeping the balance between safe roads, drive-ways, parking lots, and sidewalks and a healthy sustainable environment.

The City of Owatonna is proud to say all winter maintenance crew members are Smart Salting Certified from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. To view the Winter Parking Lot and Sidewalk Maintenance Manual, visit <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/p-tr1-10.pdf>

### Ways your company can make a difference:

- 1) Get your crew Smart Salting Certified. Visit <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/smart-salting-training> for more information.
- 2) Familiarize your crew with proper application techniques such as applying the right methods or tools given weather conditions, measuring pavement temperatures, and equipment calibration.
- 3) Make sure to properly store the salt undercover, away from storm drains, and on a hard surface.

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

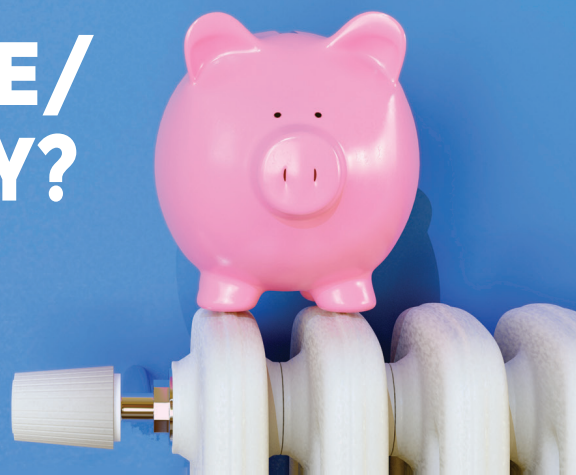


# HOW CAN YOUR FURNACE/ BOILER SAVE YOU MONEY?

With rising fuel costs, it's more important than ever to have your furnace or boiler inspected. Regular preventative maintenance performed by a professional HVAC technician is the best way to ensure trouble-free and energy-efficient operation.

Owatonna Public Utilities offers a  
**\$25 REBATE**  
FOR A RESIDENTIAL  
FURNACE/BOILER  
2-YEAR CLEAN & TUNE.

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



## WORD SEARCH

FURNACE  
BOILER  
REBATE  
EFFICIENCY  
MAINTENANCE  
CLEAN  
TUNE  
SAVINGS

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

# CONSERVE & \$AVE®

Owatonna Public Utilities offers a  
**\$50 REBATE**  
PER BOILER OR 25% OF  
THE COST, UP TO \$250  
FOR A COMMERCIAL  
BOILER TUNE-UP.

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





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



OPU will be closed Monday, February 21, 2022 in observance of Presidents' Day. We will reopen on Tuesday, February 22 at 8:00 a.m.



*Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association*

## Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Program

It is the time of year again when OPU is accepting scholarship essays and applications for the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship. MMUA splits the scholarship fund into \$2,000, \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500 scholarships. Essays are due to OPU by March 28, 2022.

For more information visit our website at <http://www.owatonnautilities.com/residential-customers/energy-education/>

## 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.

## Gas Leak?

If you smell gas and can't find the source immediately, go to a neighbor's house and call OPU at 451-2480 option 1.

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)