



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

VOLUME 33 | ISSUE #2  
FEBRUARY 2023

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



*Brush it Off?*

*Learn why it's important...*

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# OPU MEMO



Josh Prokopec,  
Manager, Facilities, Gas/  
Water Operations

## OPU Commission

Matt Kottke  
Kent Rossi  
Randy Doyal  
Jay Johnson  
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 \$400-\$12,000 making this a valuable program.

### Enrollment Process/Eligibility:

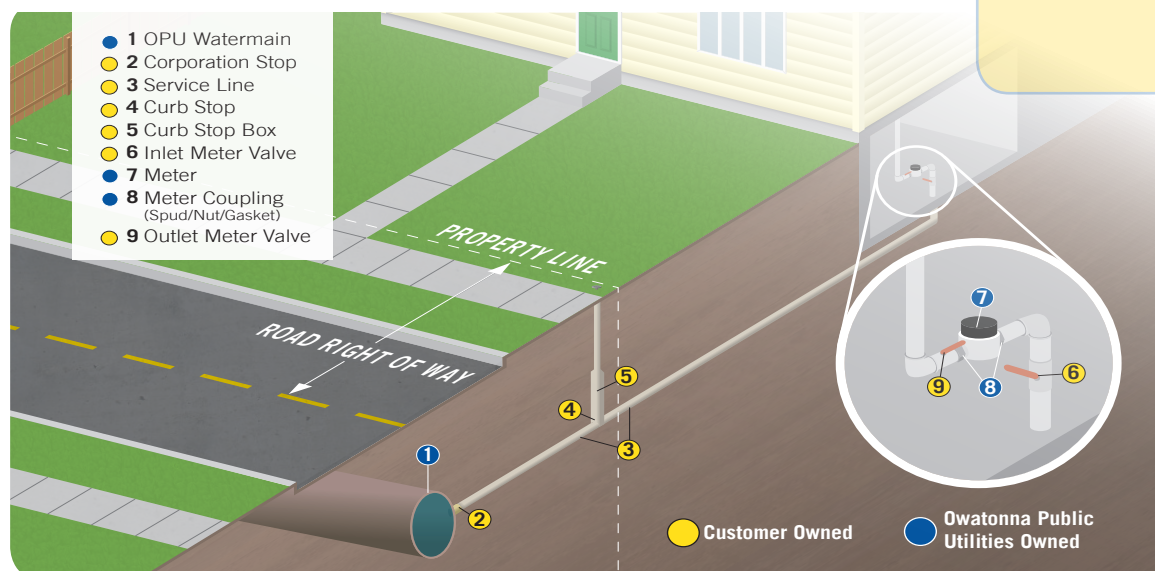
- Customers who are single-family homeowners are automatically enrolled in the Water Service Line Protection Program.
- Single family homeowners and building landlords are eligible for the Water Service Line Protection Program. All homes must be served by a single residential water service line and must 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 house
- 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)*

## State of the City Address recaps 2022 & looks ahead at 2023



Mayor Thomas Kuntz and City Administrator Kris Busse are making the rounds, once again, to deliver the annual State of the City Address to the community. It includes work done in 2022 by all departments and the work that is planned for 2023. The presentation demonstrates how the work being done supports the City's Strategic Plan's



four key focus areas: Economic Vitality, Infrastructure, Quality of Life and Efficient Effective Government.

It includes updates on new commercial, retail, industrial and housing projects as well as new infrastructure being developed, recreational amenities library, police and fire services being provided. It also looks ahead at new library and recreational programming that will be offered and at the new online services that will be provided for City services.

The presentation is being given in person at civic club meetings. To request the presentation be given at an upcoming meeting, please email [info@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:info@ci.owatonna.mn.us). This presentation will also be available to watch at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) and, for cable subscribers, on Owatonna's Public Access, Education & Government Channel.

## Openings on City Boards & Commissions *Apply online in March to serve!*

The City of Owatonna encourages community members to attend public meetings and serve on any of its 12 boards and commissions. The terms of 26 current board or commission members will expire April 31. Of these, 15 are eligible for reappointment. This leaves 11 seats to fill with new members assuming those who are eligible for reappointment opt to serve another term.

Applications will be posted in March at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) for all open seats. This will include the following openings: Airport Commission, Fire Civil Service Board, Human Rights Commission, Public Library Board, Public Utilities Commission and the Shade Tree Commission.

Notice of all public city meetings and agendas are available at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) including meeting times for City boards and commissions:

- AIRPORT COMMISSION
- CHARTER COMMISSION
- CITY COUNCIL
- FIRE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
- HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
- HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
- PARK & RECREATION BOARD
- PLANNING COMMISSION
- PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
- PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
- WEST HILLS COMMISSION

### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

**City Buildings  
Closed for  
President's Day  
February 20**



# Brush it Off?

The winter of 2022-2023, so far, has been a good old-fashioned winter. With the continued cold weather comes the prospect of snow piling up, and the constant clearing of your sidewalks and driveways. The one thing you might not think of when cleaning up snow around your house, is the natural gas meter. This is the one that helps keep our homes warm in the winter and also run some other appliances in your home.



Gas meter sets have a vent that regulates the pressure (circled) but needs to be free of obstruction to work properly. So, when the snow begins to pile up, it's very important to keep this vent on the regulator free of obstruction. If the vent becomes obstructed, it could lead to service interruption, which isn't very desirable in the cold of winter! At

worst, the blocked vent on the regulator, could lead to a gas leak and the possibility of causing a fire or even worse an explosion.

To avoid these awful situations, when you're outside clearing your sidewalks and driveways, take a broom, your hands or the brush from your car windows and gently brush the snow off your gas meter set. After you clear the snow from the meter, take a look up and make sure the icicles, snow drifts and ice dams are removed also. If they fall from the roof and land on the gas meter set, it can cause unwanted damage and leaks. If the ice or

snow doesn't come off with your hands or brush, call the Owatonna Public Utilities. Do not try to kick, chisel, or use any force to clean the meter off. This can cause damage to the meter. Call OPU to dispatch a professional to clear the vent properly.



With a couple grueling months of cold, snow and ice still in front of us, you'll want to stay warm inside the comfort of your home. Following the proper precautions above, and keeping your meter set obstruction free, can keep you safe and warm through the worst winters!





# ATTENTION CONTRACTORS

**Keep Yourself and Our  
Community Safe!**

**Sign up today for the Damage  
Prevention Meeting**

**WHEN:** Friday, March 10, 2023 9:30a

**WHERE:** Owatonna Eagles Club  
141 E Rose St., Owatonna

**Space is limited, sign up today!**

## **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.

## **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\$**

Save money on your utilities by letting leftover food cool down, then covering them, before placing them in the refrigerator. Extra humidity released into your refrigerator from warm and uncovered foods cause it to work harder costing more money to operate. You can even place your leftovers outside in the winter months to pre-chill before placing them in the fridge to save even more money!





# DANGER

Owatonna Public Utilities reminds you:  
**DO NOT store flammable liquids near natural gas appliances such as furnaces or water heaters!**

The most common types of flammable liquids homeowners have are:



**Gasoline**



**Solvents**



**Paint Thinners**



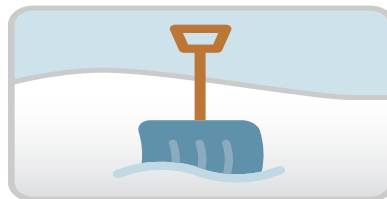
**Adhesives**



## Pledge to be Salt Smart



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).



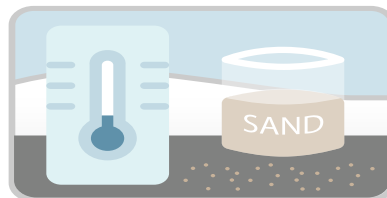
### 1. Shovel

Clear walkways before snow turns to ice. Apply salt only if needed.



### 2. Scatter

Use salt only where critical. Aim for 3 inches of space between salt granules.



### 3. Switch

Salt doesn't melt ice below 15 degrees. Use sand for traction when it's too cold, or a different de-icer.



### 4. Sweep

Clean up leftover salt, sand, and de-icer to save and reuse as needed.



# Give your valentine the gift of lower utility bills by having your furnace or boiler cleaned and tuned.

A clean and tune-up will keep your furnace or boiler running efficiently, save you money, and reduce energy use. **Plus, you can qualify for a \$25 REBATE\* from OPU!** Visit [www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com) to download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions.



\*Customers are eligible for a clean and tune-up rebate every two years.

## FURNACE & BOILER CLEAN & TUNE-UP REBATE 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®**

## Commercial Boiler Control Rebates

OPU offers rebates on updating controls for commercial boilers. Rebates include: modulating burners, turblators, stack dampers, cut-out controls, and outdoor reset controls.

**By upgrading all these controls,  
you can save up to 15% of the natural gas  
used to operate your boiler!**

For rebate amounts and qualifications, visit [www.owatonnautilities.com/business-customers/rebates/](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/business-customers/rebates/) and click on Natural Gas.







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



OPU will be closed Monday, February 20, 2023 in observance of Presidents' Day. We will reopen on Tuesday, February 21 at 8:00 a.m.

### 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.



*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, 2023.

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

### 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)