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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.

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. This presentation will also be available to watch at 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 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 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

City Buildings Closed for President’s Day February 20
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!

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.

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.

CONSERVATION TIPS

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!
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

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.

**Commercial Boiler Control Rebates**

OPU offers rebates on updating controls for commercial boilers. Rebates include: modulating burners, turbulators, 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!**

**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

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**Payment Options**
- Online at 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

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

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**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.

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**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/

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**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.**