



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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# CUSTOMER UPDATE



**SAVE WATER**

**EVERY DROP COUNTS!**

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# OPU MEMO



Jared Hendricks,  
Key Accounts & Energy  
Conservation Officer

## OPU Commission

Kent Rossi  
Randy Doyal  
Jay Johnson  
Doug Zirngible  
Greg Vetter

This month, I am taking time to provide some important information about Electric Vehicles (EVs), chargers and how they can impact our system, as well as updates on EV rates, and incentives. I hope this information is helpful to customers who are looking at purchasing or already own an EV.

### **Types of EV's:**

There are two main categories for EV's: Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV), and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV). Both BEV's and PHEV's can be charged with Level 2 (L2) chargers, while generally only BEV's can take advantage of the quick charging, DC Fast Charging (DCFC) infrastructure. PHEV's will operate on battery only for a short distance before they switch to hybrid mode, running a gasoline engine to charge the battery while driving.

### **Home Chargers:**

Most EV charging, over 85%, is done at home with a L2 charger. These chargers are designed to fill a battery over the course of many hours. Level 2 chargers, like air conditioners and electric dryers, require 240 volts but can have greater electric demand. It's encouraged to notify OPU when you plan to install an EV charger to assist with system planning. As EV charger concentrations increase, OPU will need to upgrade some of our transformers to ensure they don't become overloaded and fail, causing an avoidable outage. Knowing which customers have an EV charger is an important part of keeping our system up to date.

### **Charging Time:**

Because of the higher demand and stress EV chargers can put on OPU's distribution system, charging at the right time is extremely important. Charging during off-peak hours not only keeps our rates down, but also ensures greater reliability of our electric system. Most EV's allow the owner to program a charging start time, allowing the car to be plugged in but charging to be delayed. OPU recommends setting the charger to start after 8:00 pm.

### **Rates:**

A lot of customers have asked if OPU has an EV charging rate. Currently we do not, however, OPU staff are diligently working on creating one! OPU has been working to develop a Time-of-use (TOU) rate option for residential customers, including EV owners. This rate, when available, will have a lower cost during off-peak periods (including weekends) and a higher cost during on-peak and critical-peak periods. This TOU rate structure is designed to encourage off-peak energy use, allowing EV's to be charged off-peak for a lower cost, but will have some conditions that are still being worked out. Keep your eye out late this year or early 2024 for this optional rate to be available!

### **Incentives:**

OPU does not yet have an EV incentive available for customers, though a program is being developed in cooperation with our wholesale power provider. Look for more news late this year or early 2024! EV owners do have access to a number of State and Federal incentives that will assist in reducing the cost of EV ownership.

While my memo likely didn't address every question you may have as you look into buying an EV, I intend to get more information on our website over time to provide additional resources and I'm also available to speak to customers one-on-one to answer additional questions.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Cooking with your oven during the hot summer days makes your air conditioner work harder costing you more on your bills. Taking advantage of nice weather to grill instead is not only a fun way to cook your food with more flavor, but also helps keep your utility bills down!





## **Council Chambers Being Renovated**

A significant construction project is underway at City Hall. The Council Chambers is being renovated to update accessibility, heating/ventilation, technology and safety features. The demolition was completed on schedule and the walls for the new addition are in place. Despite a few project setbacks, the project is still on track for September completion so the City Council can begin meeting in the new Chambers this fall.



During the demolition of the previous Chambers, the 100-plus year-old stage was dismantled. City staff discovered a way to reuse the stage front in the final design of the remodeled Council Chambers space. This reduced costs and provides a way to honor the room's historical significance. A three-dimensional, four-panel historical display will be created in the new Chambers to showcase the history of the State Public School and the City's efforts to preserve the historical site.

The City Council is considering naming the new Chambers after Charles Crandall due to his influence in getting Minnesota's new State Public School located in Owatonna in 1885. For additional information about the historic City Hall building where the Chambers are located, visit [orphanagemuseum.com](http://orphanagemuseum.com).



## **West Hills Social Commons Seniors Outings**

City staff plans year 'round outings designed for seniors. Sign up now to join the Fall Sightseeing River Boat Cruise Trip October 12 or Canterbury Park Horse Races July 29.

Check out all the upcoming activities at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov), stop by West Hills Social Commons or call 507-444-4321 for details.

## **Summer Weekend Out**

Mark your calendar for July 21-23 for the City of Owatonna's annual Summer Weekend Out! We'll offer a variety of activities including the following:

- July 21 Movie in the Park at sunset at Darts Park Chuck Fuller Field. Come out and watch 'Angels in the Outfield' with us in a baseball outfield! Outdoor activities begin at 8 p.m. Sponsored by Southeast Minnesota Relators. The rain date is July 22.
- July 22 Enjoy free kayaks, canoes and paddleboards at Lake Kohlmeier.
- July 23 River Springs Water Park's Super Splash Special, admission is only \$3.50 per person from noon until 8 p.m.!



## **Stay Informed on City of Owatonna News!**

Check out the weekly Owatonna Update e-newsletter at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) to find out about City news, projects and decisions. Just click on "City Services" then "Communications" and "Stay Informed". Sign up to automatically receive each issue of Owatonna Update at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov), click on "Notification Sign-up".



# SAVE WATER

# EVERY DROP COUNTS!

Drought is defined as a period of abnormally dry and/or unusually hot weather sufficiently prolonged for the corresponding deficiency of water to cause a serious hydrologic imbalance.

When a serious hydrologic imbalance occurs, soil moisture reserves, groundwater supplies, lake levels and stream flows are negatively impacted. Water-dependent industries including agriculture, public utilities, forestry and tourism are profoundly affected.

Currently, Steele County is considered in an abnormally dry situation and there are not any watering restrictions. However, while conserving water is particularly important during extremely dry conditions, it's also a good habit to be in at all times. Try to do at least one thing each day to conserve water.

## **Indoor Water Conservation Tips**

### **General**

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. Use it to water your indoor plants or garden.
- Make sure your home is leak-free. Take a reading of the water meter. Wait 30 minutes without using any water and then take a second reading. If the meter reading changes, you have a leak!
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons of water per year!

### **Bathroom**

- Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, the color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. Leaky toilets usually can be fixed inexpensively by replacing the flapper.
- Take shorter showers. Turn the water on to get wet; turn off to lather up; then turn the water back on to rinse.
- Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.

- Don't let the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.

### **Kitchen**

- Operate dishwashers only when they are full.
- When hand washing dishes, save water by filling two containers - one with soapy water and the other with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.
- Don't use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator, or use the defrost setting on your microwave.
- Don't waste water waiting for it to get hot or cold. Capture it for other uses such as plant watering.
- Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water. Start a compost pile as an alternate way to dispose of food waste.

### **Laundry**

- Operate clothes washers only when they are full or set the water level for the size of your load.

## **Outdoor Water Conservation Tips**

### **Lawn Care**

- Don't overwater your lawn. Lawns only need to be watered every five to seven days in the summer. A heavy rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks.
- Water in several short sessions rather than one long one for your lawn to better absorb moisture.
- Position sprinklers so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly. Set a timer to remind yourself to turn manual sprinklers off. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons in only a few hours.
- Raise the lawn mower blade to at least three inches, or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system, and holds soil moisture.

*Information for this article obtained from [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)*



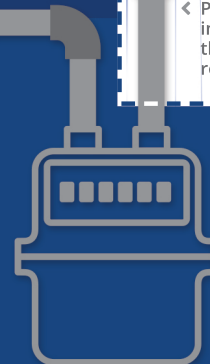
# Customer Owned BURIED GAS PIPING NOTIFICATION

*In compliance with the Department of Transportation, Pipeline Safety Regulations, Part 192.16,*

Owatonna Public Utilities is notifying customers about their responsibility for customer-owned gas piping. Owatonna Public Utilities DOES NOT own or maintain gas piping downstream (house side) of the natural gas meter. Gas piping after the gas meter is customer-owned. Maintenance and inspection of customer-owned piping is the customers' responsibility.

**To ensure safe and reliable operation, customer-owned buried gas piping should be:**

- Periodically inspected for leaks
- Periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic
- Repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered, or flow of gas should be shut off
- Located and marked in advance when excavation is performed or is about to be performed near the buried gas piping
- Carefully excavated by hand when work is performed near the piping



< Piping coming into the home is the customer's responsibility

- Check usage
- Contact our office
- Pay your bill
- Manage notifications
- Report a service interruption



**Sign Up Today!**

OKAY!

## Natural Gas Fire Pit Safety

Natural gas fire pits are a great way to enjoy your outdoor space without the mess of ashes from wood.

**Remember these safety tips before firing up your fire pit.**

- Always have a fire extinguisher nearby and know how to use it.
- Inspect your firepit before each use.
- Never leave the gas on when not in use.
- Keep children and pets 3 feet away from the pit.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Consider the weather before igniting a fire.
- Maintain a 10' perimeter away from any structure or combustible surface.

*Do gardening and...*



**Pay your utility bill with Auto Pay!**



Enroll at [OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://OwatonnaUtilities.com)



# ELECTRICAL SAFETY: DOWNED POWER LINES

Here are some important, life-saving safety tips from Owatonna Public Utilities:



- Call us at 507-451-2480 if you see a downed power line.
- Always assume a downed power line is energized.
- Stay 10 feet away from a downed power line.
- Don't drive over a downed power line.
- If a power line falls on your car, stay inside the vehicle, warn people to not touch the car, and call 911.
- If the car is on fire:
  - Open the door, but do not STEP out of the car.
  - With hands at your side, jump completely free of the vehicle so you are not touching the car when you land on the ground.
  - Never make a connection between your body, the car's shell, and the road.
  - Keep both feet close together and shuffle away from the vehicle WITHOUT picking up your feet.
- Never climb a tree with power lines running through it.



## Don't Feed The Fowl!

Feeding ducks and geese is often perceived as a harmless and fun activity, but many people don't realize the negative effects it has on wildlife and the environment.

Unfortunately, an activity many of us enjoyed as children actually has damaging impacts not only for the waterfowl themselves but also for local water. While ducks, geese, and other waterfowl love to eat the bread, chips, and crackers we offer them, it causes them to congregate in high numbers.

This results in large, concentrated quantities of waste in and along the community's water resources. Waterfowl waste also makes your parks and trails dirty and unusable. In addition to the environmental issues, feeding them can cause long-term health problems and other nutritional consequences for the waterfowl and other wildlife as they become overcrowded and dependent on humans for their food.

Instead of feeding wild ducks and geese, make a trip to a zoo, county fair, or wildlife preserve where you can still enjoy the beauty of our state's waterfowl.

For further information regarding our City Stormwater Management Program send us an email at [stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us) or visit <https://owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management>





Due to new federal lighting standards

# **TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR LED BULB REBATES!**

**Rebates for screw base  
LED bulbs for all  
residential and  
commercial  
customers  
will end  
Dec 31, 2023.**

Apply before they  
are gone! Download  
a rebate application  
with complete terms  
and conditions:  
[owatonnautilities.com](http://owatonnautilities.com)

**CONSERVE & \$AVE<sup>®</sup>**







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

### 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.



## 2023 Safety Camp

Several OPU employees helped with this year's Safety Camp. Safety Camp is held each year in June for students coming out of 3rd grade. For two days, students learn about safety for a variety of topics including electric and natural gas safety. Thank you to employees Joe Bellomy, Jeff Wencil, Dalton Meier, Jake Perdue, Jared Hendricks, Megan Smith and Roger Noble for taking the time to help with this important camp!

### 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)