

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



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# OPU MEMO



Jon Blough,  
Gas Engineer

## OPU Commission

Mr. Kim Cosens  
Mr. Dale E. Simon  
Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal

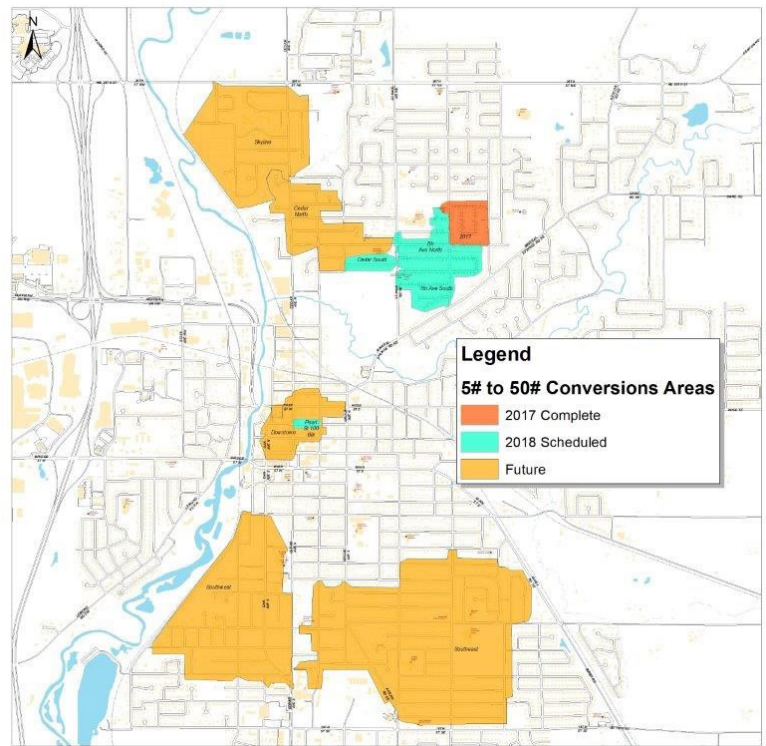
OPU began conversion of the 5PSIG (pounds per square inch gauge) gas distribution system to our standard 50 PSIG system in 2017. We replaced or pressure tested mains and services for 69 homes. We chose a relatively small area to test our process and methodology. The specific area chosen had a high concentration of the oldest meters and regulators in our system. Along with replacing the meter and regulator, the conversion includes installation the new bypass meter bar highlighted in our equipment series article last March. Having achieved good success last year, we increased the size of the project this year to include 259 homes. The project boundaries are shown on the included map. The block of Pearl St. between Cedar Ave. and Elm Ave. was included this year in order to provide service to proposed building construction in that block.

Benefits are many. At the top of the list is our ability to provide reliable service. The popularity of tankless water heaters has risen in recent years. These units are advertised as being

more efficient than traditional heaters. Since they only heat the water while it is flowing, they are not subject to standby losses typical of traditional tank style water heaters. While the amount of gas consumed in a year's time may be less for a tankless unit, the rate of flow while heating is typically five times higher. This higher flow rate can be difficult to achieve from OPU's 5 PSIG distribution system. To compound this problem, many tankless units require a higher gas inlet pressure than conventional units.

Just as water runs downhill, gas flows from high pressure to low pressure. In the OPU gas distribution system, the equipment that controls this flow is commonly referred to as a district regulator station. Within the areas proposed for conversion, OPU operates 7 of these stations. When the conversion is completed these stations will be removed eliminating the maintenance expense.

Completion of the conversion work will increase gas deliverability, reduce maintenance expenses, and simplify system operation.



## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Ceiling fans keep us cool through the wind chill effect, not by cooling a room. Don't forget to turn them off when you leave the room this summer.

Go to [www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips](http://www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips) for more conservation tips.





# CITY SPOT

HIGHLIGHTING: OWATONNA PUBLIC LIBRARY

OWATONNA  
CITY COUNCIL



**WELCOME!**  
**¡BIENVENIDO!**  
**NYOB ZOO!**  
**KU SOO**  
**DHAWOOW!**

A warm welcome and hello from your Owatonna Public Library! Warmer weather is here and we have returned to staffing the building for you every day except Sundays. Owatonna Public Library is open 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, & Thursday, open 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday. We are closed on Sundays, May through September. If you have Internet access, the website and online resources are available 24/7 at [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info).

## OPL Mobile

If you have a smart phone or a tablet you can take your library with you! Find the free OPL Mobile app in the app store for your device. You can also go to [owatonna.boopsie.com](http://owatonna.boopsie.com) to install OPL Mobile or to preview it. With OPL Mobile you can search the library catalog, check your account, find OPL events, take a look at monthly Staff Picks, ask a question, check out and download eBooks or eAudiobooks. Use your card to download or stream music from Freegal (Free + Legal!).

## Hoopla

The Owatonna Public Library is now offering Hoopla to its Patrons. What is Hoopla? Hoopla is a digital media service that allows you to borrow movies, music, audiobooks, ebooks, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, or phone – and even your TV! With no waiting, titles can be streamed immediately, or downloaded to phones or tablets for offline enjoyment later. We have hundreds of thousands of titles to choose from, with more being added daily. hoopla is like having your public library at your fingertips. Anytime. Anywhere. If you have any questions please contact the library.

## New Hours Start September 1

The Owatonna Public Library will have new hours that will go into effect September 1st.

The Library will be open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Friday and Saturday 9:00 to 5:00 and Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 (starting in October).

## Children's Programs

Tuesday mornings are **Tale Time** for preschoolers in Children's Services, at 9:30 a.m. and again at 10:30 a.m. Your preschooler ages 0-6 sings, rhymes, and reads. No need to register, and Mom, Dad, Grandparents, big sister or brother, and any other family or friends are invited to join the fun.

Our Children's Services Summer Program is ramping up! June 1st we held our summer kickoff in Children's Services. We will be featuring a Book Fair in June, July and August so please plan to attend. Activities being held at the Library this summer are a Petting Zoo, Create-a-craft, a Magician, LEGO Mania, RADZOO and the National Eagle Center. So many things to see and do at the Owatonna Public Library!

## Movies offered at OPL

**Movies at the Library** are presented on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, with showings at 2:00 p.m. and again at 7:00 p.m. in the 3rd Floor Gainey Room.

## Building Maintenance

The storm water project is kicking off. This project entails re-grading the parking lot so that excess storm water will be contained in a retention pond at the east end of the parking lot. If all goes well, the project should be completed in about 3 weeks' time. The first step is the removal of trees around the future retention pond. That work started this week. Our parking lot will be in disarray for the next few weeks.

## [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info)

For more information, visit your Owatonna Public Library in person at 105 North Elm Ave. or call 507-444-2460. Visit us without leaving your couch via the OPL Mobile app or online at [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info). Find us on Facebook and @owatonnalibrary on Twitter.

## MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank  
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Brent Svenby  
Doug Voss



# WORK ZONE SAFETY

*Information for this article obtained from information provided by the US Department of Transportation and the National Safety Council*

This month we are focusing on work zone safety. Work zones play a key role in maintaining and upgrading our nation's roadways as well as keeping utility services reliable. In Minnesota, drivers are required to slow down or move over for emergency vehicles parked or working on the side of the road with their emergency lights activated. "Emergency vehicles" brings to mind police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, and tow trucks. What you may not know is this also includes utility company vehicles, freeway service patrol vehicles, road maintenance vehicles or other construction vehicles with warning lights activated.

Work zone incidents impact everyone. Nationally, in the past 5 years, 4,400 people have died in work zone crashes on roads with speed limits greater than 50 mph. 660 of those fatalities were workers.

Worker fatalities in road construction sites is increasing. In 2016, distracted driving in total, not just in work zones, claimed 3,450 lives. Distracted driving first brings to mind texting on your phone. However, it also includes talking on your phone, eating or drinking, talking to other people in your vehicle, or fiddling with the radio, entertainment or navigation system. It is anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Our utility workers may be your friend or family member so we're certain you want them to come home safely each and every evening. We do too! Safety is one of our most important goals at OPU. Each year our workers take work zone safety and coning classes to stay abreast of the most up-to-date requirements. They use proper coning techniques when working in roadways and place a cone behind their work vehicles when parked. The cone serves as a reminder to walk around the vehicle before leaving a work zone to ensure nothing has changed since arriving on site. Our workers also wear

high-visibility vests and clothing to ensure they are seen. Yet, with all the precautions our employees take, they still report near misses from drivers not paying attention in the work zone. We take the safety of our employees very seriously, and ask that you do, too.

## So what can you do?

- Expect the Unexpected. Work zones change often. The area you drove yesterday may look different today.
- Avoid Distractions. Distracted driving in a work zone can have deadly consequences. Put down your phone and keep your eyes on the road.
- Pay Attention to Other Drivers. Narrowed traffic patterns provide less ability to maneuver around other vehicles safely. Paying attention can prevent the need for evasive actions in work zones.
- Don't speed or tailgate. Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you and don't speed. Tailgating and speeding lead to crashes with other vehicles and field workers.
- Obey Road Crews and Signs. Flaggers know how best to move traffic safely in work zones. The warning signs are there to help you and other drivers move safely.
- Be Patient and Stay Calm. Work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your future driving better. Stay calm and drive safely.

**Remember:** Work zone safety is everybody's responsibility. When you see the orange "Utility Work Ahead" signs, please stay alert, slow down and give our workers a brake!



# EQUIPMENT SERIES



VAC-TRON is a brand name commonly used to refer to a larger class of vacuum excavating equipment. OPU owns and operates three vacuum excavating machines. These use a high pressure water spray to loosen soil & debris and a powerful vacuum to collect & deposit this "mud" in a tank for later disposal. With a total investment exceeding \$100,000,

these three pieces of equipment don't come cheap, but they safely perform tasks that other methods cannot accomplish.

Our smallest unit is used primarily for cleaning valve boxes. Over the years, winter road sand can enter the box over a water or gas valve and prevent access to the top of the buried valve. OPU routinely operates system valves to insure they will function in an emergency. The middle unit is used to expose phone lines, cable TV lines and electric cables that must be crossed when installing new gas mains and services. Vacuum excavation is recognized within the industry as being the safest method to expose these lines without damaging to them. The largest unit, used primarily by the electric crew, is capable of excavating a hole large enough to replace a power pole. It has the added benefit of longer hoses so that pole replacement on a back lot line can be accomplished without driving the vehicle across the yard.

## GET OUTDOORS



Now that Spring/Summer has finally overtaken winter, get outside and enjoy the great outdoors. Go fishing, hiking, flying a kite, or any other activity you enjoy.

Remember, before you cast that fishing line or release that kite, be sure to look up. There may be power lines overhead. Contact with overhead power-lines can be deadly.

Please call us at 507-451-1616 if your kite does get caught in the power lines.

## OPU HIGHLIGHT



**Rick Hager,**  
**Building & Grounds**  
**Maintainer**

Rick Hager has worked at Owatonna Public Utilities for a little over a year in Building and Facilities Maintenance. He takes care of OPU's HVAC (Heating, ventilation, air conditioning) unit as well as all inside building maintenance including the substations and pump houses. Prior to coming to OPU, Rick did a lot of traveling with his previous employer so he likes the schedule and variety of work he does here at OPU.

Rick is a long time member of the Medford community where he has been a member of the Medford Fire Department for 33 years. The last 22 years he has been the Fire Chief. He and his wife, Laurie, have three children and six grandchildren. Rick enjoys spending his free time with his grandchildren and keeps himself busy the rest of the time on his hobby farm in rural Medford where he raises beef cattle.

Thank you, Rick, for all that you do!

# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Law **REQUIRES** homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, excavators and contractors contact Gopher State One Call two business days prior to digging, driving stakes, or performing any other activities that involve disrupting the ground. ***Never assume the depth of a utility or that the depth of the utilities are consistent.***

Gopher State One Call will contact the utility companies in the area to have underground lines marked. Once all utility lines are marked, digging may begin. Proceed with caution and avoid the tolerance zone or hand dig with a shovel within 2 feet of the marked utility lines.

Watch for private facilities such as sprinklers, power lines to garages or out buildings, gas grill lines or invisible fencing as these will not be located by Minnesota utility companies.

Visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org) to learn what information will need to be given when contacting Gopher State One Call.

The service is **FREE**. Call toll free at 800-252-1166 or simply dial 811.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**



## **Clean H2Owatonna Community Service Opportunity**

The City of Owatonna seeks stewards, volunteers and organizations to participate one of our CleanH2Owatonna Stormwater Programs. This is a perfect way to enjoy the beautiful spring weather and get involved in the community while having a positive impact on your environment and community. Gather your friends, family, and organization groups for this excellent volunteer opportunity!

## **Storm Drain Marking Program**

Participants will check out a Storm Drain Marking Kit with all needed supplies to stencil a "No Dumping Drains to River CleanH2Owatonna" message near the catch basin. The City will also provide a storm system map your area of interest. It is best to participate as a group.

## **Catch Basin Adoption Program**

Participants will select nearby catch basins to adopt. Responsibilities of the adoptee include ensuring the catch basin remains clear of debris, periodic grate cleaning, and stenciling of the catch basin. Participants will receive a complimentary CleanH2Owatonna rake.

**Remember:** the distance between your yard and the water's edge is as close as the nearest storm drain or ditch.

The City Engineering Department offers several other community programs, including Rain Garden Cost Share.

*Interested in our programs? Contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist, (507)-774-7300 or [Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us)*



# REBATES

It's time to schedule some

# Spring Cleaning!



Complete a  
Central Air Conditioner  
Clean & Tune  
and apply for a

**\$25 REBATE!**

Regular preventative  
maintenance is  
the best way to  
ensure trouble-free,  
energy-efficient  
operation.

Visit [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

# CONSERVE & \$AVE®



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

### Payment Options

- Online at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://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.

# Phone Down. Eyes Up.



Tell Us How We're Doing

Your opinion matters to us. Please take a few minutes to tell us how we did by visiting our website at [owatonnautilities.com/customer survey](http://owatonnautilities.com/customer survey) or simply scan the QR code above.

### From the Editors

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. Feel free to give us a call at 451-2480 or send an email to [schmolli@owatonnautilities.com](mailto:schmolli@owatonnautilities.com).

### 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.



[WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM](http://WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM)