

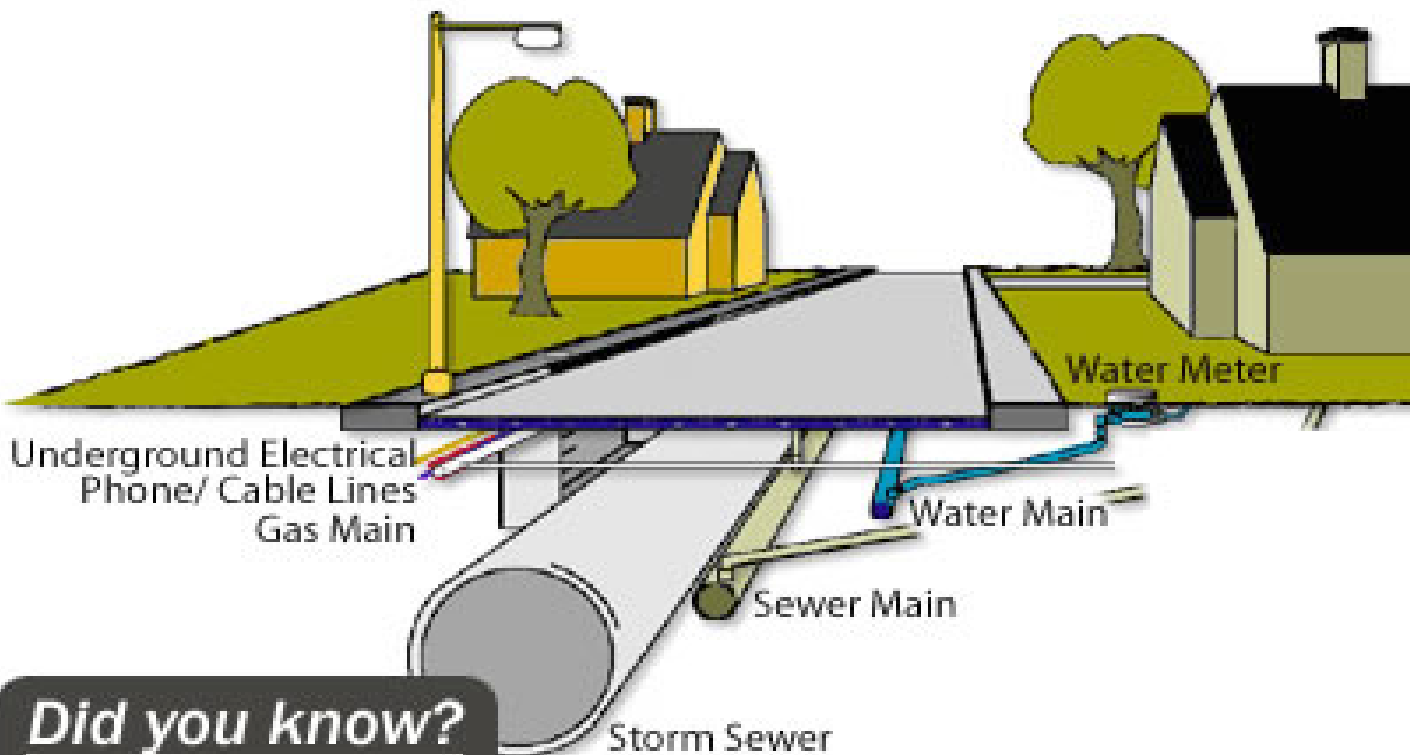


OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

VOLUME 31 | ISSUE #6
JUNE 2021

CUSTOMER UPDATE

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES



Did you know?

More than 60%
of all underground
lines are privately
owned.

FEATURING: WHAT'S UNDER YOUR STREET

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connects a customer to its water system, the intention is for the water to flow from the water system to the customer, and not the other way around. OPU doesn't want it back, because it's our responsibility to provide clean safe water. A backflow event occurs when water is unintentionally pulled or pushed back into a public water source. The problem is, the water could contain anything from generally offensive pollutants to fertilizer, animal waste or pests from the irrigation system. Residential irrigation sites are a frequent source of water contamination.

In response to this, OPU is extremely dedicated to creating tools and programs to protect our public water supply systems. These tools, like backflow prevention, function as public health protectors. They protect you, your family, friends and neighbors.

Simply put, backflow prevention is to protect our drinking water. So, the good news for people with irrigation systems is, contamination can be contained with adequate backflow prevention assemblies, and a better understanding of backflow prevention.

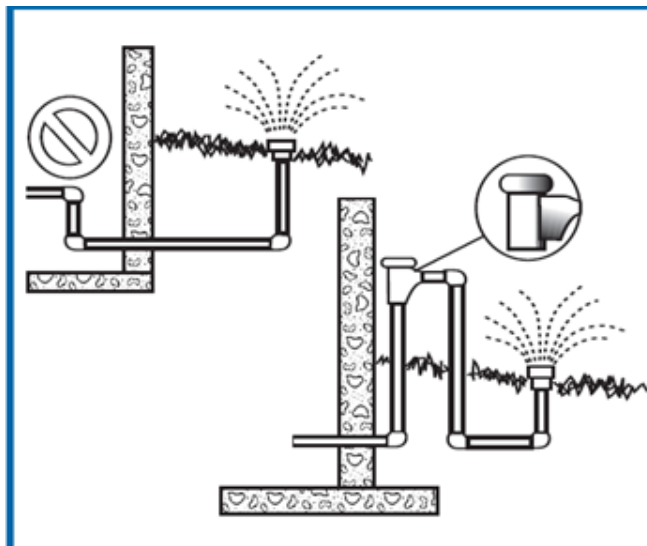
(This article was written by Korey Koziolk, OPU Gas/Water Engineering Technician)

Summer is upon us and irrigations systems are working overtime to shower lawns with water to help keep their green color. With more and more people doing improvements this time of year, it is ever so important to understand how you can keep your lawn beautiful and keep our drinking water safe.

For the inexperienced irrigation owner, turning on the system sounds like a simple enough task but there might be more to it than you think. For starters, every residential irrigation system in Owatonna that is connected to city-supplied water requires backflow preventer testing at least once a year. The backflow preventer has to go through an annual inspection per Owatonna Public Utilities specifications.

The backflow preventer keeps irrigation water from entering and potentially contaminating drinking water lines. You need to have a certified person install, maintain and test it, they should have paperwork for you to fill out that they'll turn into Owatonna Public Utilities. Not every irrigation contractor is a certified backflow tester, so it's important to ask to see the contractor's certification number.

What is backflow? Backflow is the reversal of water flow from its intended direction. Whenever a water utility



Lawn irrigation systems need a vacuum breaker backflow preventer to protect against lawn chemicals being drawn into the drinking water supply.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Did you know...lawns and gardens require only 5 millimeters of water per day during warm weather. Less is needed during spring, fall and cool weather. For smaller gardens and potted plants, capture rain water, using a rainbarrel, to use for watering during dryer times.



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Summer Hours at Owatonna Public Library (OPL) begin June 1, 2021:

- Monday 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
- Tuesday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Wednesday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Thursday 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
- Friday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Saturday 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
- Sunday Closed

Summer Guidelines at OPL

Per State guidelines, remaining capacity and distancing limits came to an end the weekend before Memorial Day. In addition, face coverings are no longer required in the library. All people who have not been vaccinated are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in accordance with MDH and CDC recommendations until they are fully vaccinated.

Beginning June 1, there will be no appointments or time limits in place at OPL for the summer. Children aged 11 and under must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian through the end of August.

Also beginning June 1, items on hold will return to the 2nd floor in adult services. You can find your items and then use the self-check machines or bring items to the Check Out desk. (Items will no longer be automatically checked out to patrons.)

"Tails and Tales" Summer Reading Program

Kids of all ages, join us for the 2021 Summer Reading Program! Please Note: OPL staff had to book our summer performers months ago, before we knew what type of capacity limits and other restrictions would be in place. For this reason, most of our programs will continue to be virtual this summer, available online via the OPL Children's Services and the Blooming Prairie Branch Library's Facebook pages.

In addition, because children under 12 do not yet have access to the COVID-19 vaccine, we will continue to post preschool storytimes for both locations via Facebook Live, at least through June and possibly longer. Stay tuned for updates as we are continually evaluating and adding to our in-person services.

Read at least 20 minutes per day for 10 days each month this summer to earn one book per month! We will hold a Book Fair toward the end of August (dates TBA) during which kids can choose the books (up to 3) they earn. Paper forms will be passed out at schools or can be picked up in OPL Children's Services beginning June 7. If you'd rather track your progress online, go to owatonna.beanstack.org!

Beginning June 8, catch Storytime Online With Darla at 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays & Thursdays on the OPL Children's Services Facebook page. Blooming Prairie's Branch Library will offer storytimes at 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays beginning June 8. Weather permitting, this will be held at Blooming Prairie's Central Park with children present. All storytimes will also be presented on the BPBL Facebook page; on rainy days that will be the only way to see them.

Go to the Summer Reading Program page on our website for all of the details on our virtual summer programs including The Zoo Man (June 7), the National Eagle Center (June 23), music group The Bazillions (July 7), and Mystifying Magic with Greg Skillestad (July 21).

Finally, we are planning Story Walks in Owatonna and Blooming Prairie in June, times and locations TBD. Library Director Mark Blando encourages the public to stay tuned for updates as OPL staff are continuously evaluating and adding to in-person services. For details and more information about the Summer Reading Program and OPL services call 507-444-2460 or go to www.owatonna.info.

WHAT'S UNDER YOUR STREET?

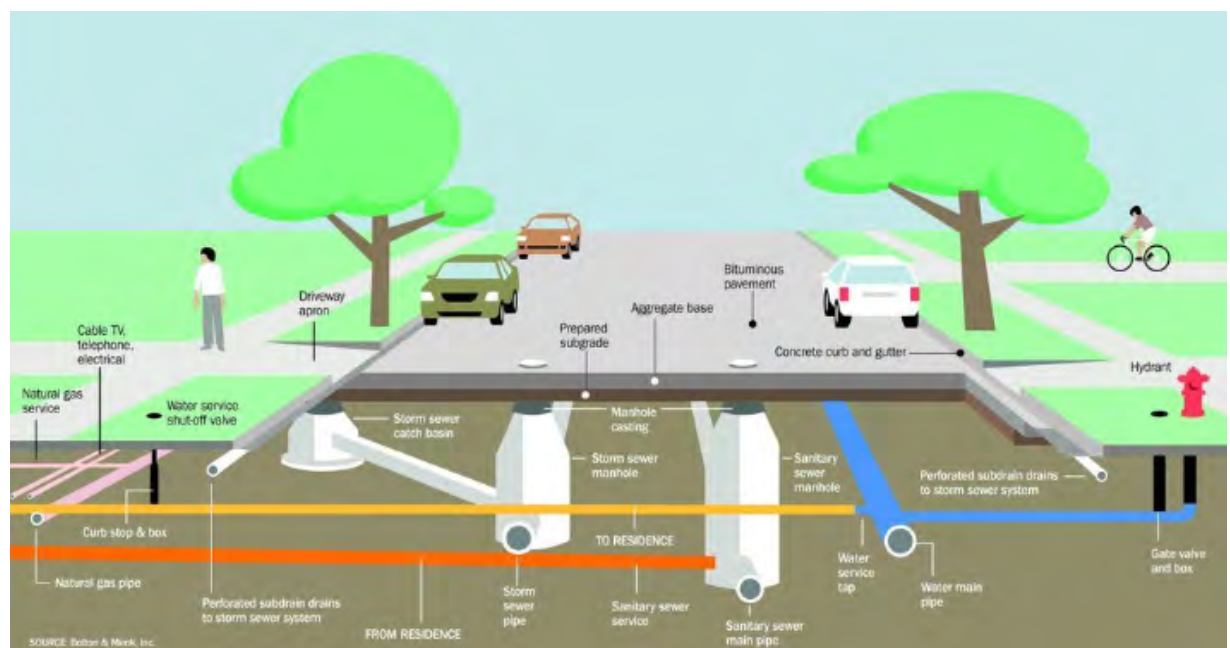
When thinking about road construction, most people think about: road closures, detours, extra traffic, and inconvenience. Why does it take so long to redo a road when it's just some packed dirt and pavement? Why are there so many different crews on scene? Does it really take that much work to re-do a road?

Although it might seem like a simple project, it can be quite a bit more complicated and require crews from many different businesses. As a driver, what we see before and after the construction are just the changes to the visible portion of the road but there is much more underground than the blacktop and concrete we drive on.

The below image is just one example of what might be found under a road. There are service lines, water mains, sewer lines, natural gas mains, catch basins, and many other utilities often found below the road surface. Each of these services may be owned by a different business, or operated by different departments within a utility or City. Each of these underground utilities are also at different depths.

When a road needs to be reconstructed, it is beneficial to replace the aging infrastructure under the road itself at the same time. Because road repairs can be some of the most expensive portions of utility infrastructure replacements it makes sense for everyone to take advantage of the reconstruction to save cost for customers and reduce the chances that a brand-new road has to be torn up in just a couple years for utility repairs.

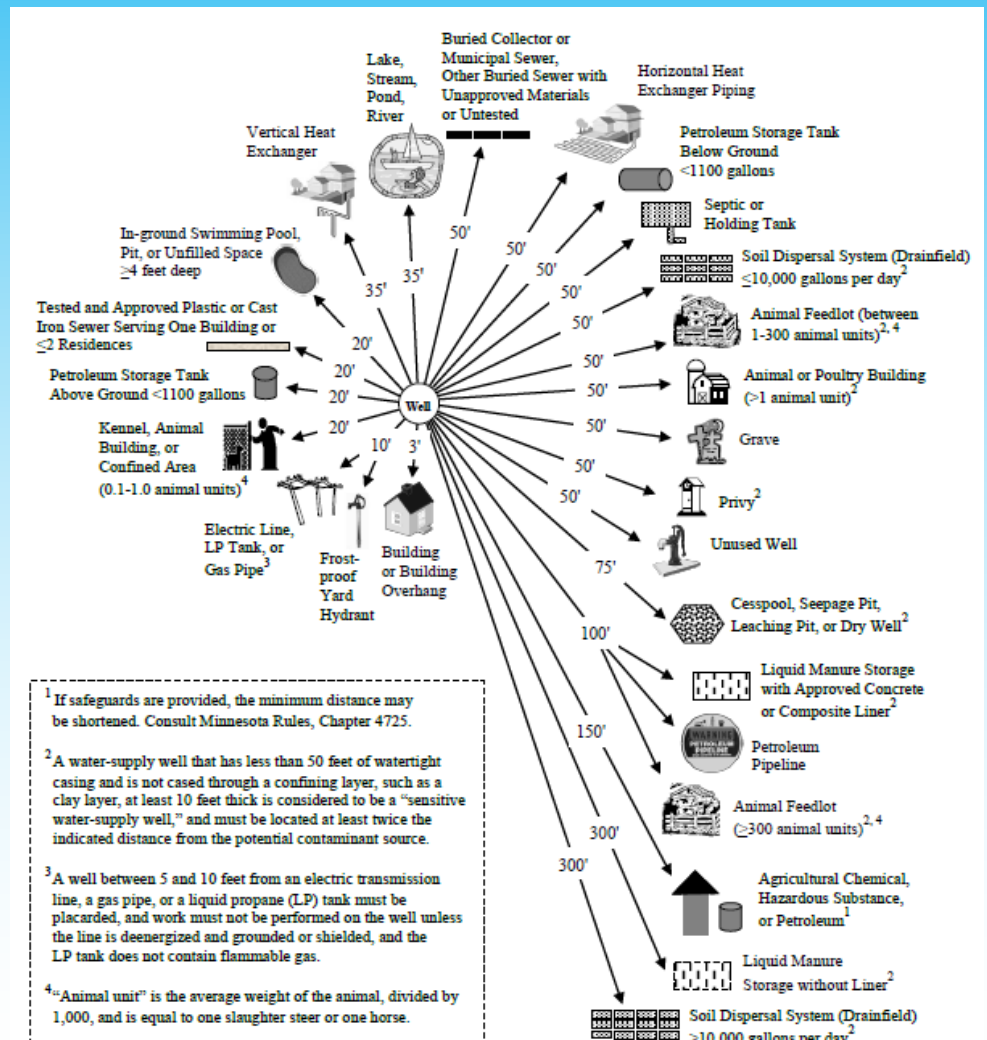
It might be inconvenient as a homeowner on that road, or someone who drives that route to work, but all the extra coordination and effort up front is done to ensure it's done right the first time at less cost to the community and utility customers.



Important Information For Private Well Owners

As a public service, OPU is providing the following information from the Minnesota Department of Health for private well owners:

- Water with nitrate levels of more than 10mg/L should not be given to infants less than 6 months of age. Doing so may be fatal.
- You can minimize your exposure to lead and copper in your drinking water by letting the water run for 30-60 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking.
- At a minimum, private wells should be tested for Coliform Bacteria once a year and for nitrates once every two or three years.
- Test your well water at least once for arsenic.
- Private wells and public water supplies may not be interconnected. If you have a private well for lawn irrigation make sure it is not hooked up to your potable water supply in your home if your potable water comes from a public water supply.
- Steele County has a cost share program available for residents that have an abandoned well to help cover the cost of well sealing. Only a licensed well contractor may seal a well. For details call Katie Barden at 507-444-7487.
- A copy of the [Well Owners Handbook](#) and other brochures, pamphlets and fact sheets pertaining to wells and water systems may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) at no charge by calling 651-201-4600 or by visiting their web site at; www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/index.html



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.



Stay Safe This Summer

Remember these safety tips this summer!

- Never tether your pet to your gas line or meter
- Never attach electric grounding wires to gas pipes
- Be careful not to hit your gas meter when mowing lawn or trimming
- If you smell gas, leave the area immediately and then call 911 or OPU
- Call 811 before pulling shrubs or trees out of the ground -- roots can grow around pipes
- Call 811 before doing ANY digging in your yard
- If a natural gas line is damaged, leave the area immediately and then call 911 or OPU



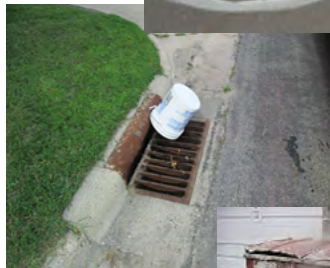
Water Quality and Responsible Business Ownership

Grease, oils, detergents, trash, lawn waste, and other pollutants from operations have the potential to enter the stormwater system and ultimately a nearby body of water.

Simple measures can be implemented at your place of business to ensure operations do not negatively affect your community's water resources.

1. Routinely check dumpsters, storage areas, and grease containers for leaks or overflow.
2. Sweep your parking lots and sidewalks often. Make sure to remove trash, especially debris that has accumulated in snow piles over winter.
3. If you have a private stormwater treatment system onsite (thumbs up!), make sure you are performing routine inspections and maintenance.
4. If you do not have a stormwater treatment system, consider constructing one.
5. Ensure your business has adequate spill kits and a spill response plan.
6. Check your equipment and vehicles for leaks.
7. Make sure people responsible for property maintenance collect grass, leaves, and debris from hard surfaces.
8. Avoid dumping anything, including wash water, down catch basins. Only rain down the drain!
9. Remember: Anything exposed to weather can become a stormwater pollutant.

Schedule a site visit to discuss possible preventative measures at your location! Learn more about our Stormwater Program at ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater or contact Brad Rademacher, Stormwater/Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300 or stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us.



You Can Save Water When It Rains!

Replacing a standard clock timer with a WaterSense® Weather-Based Irrigation Controller can save an average home nearly 8,800 gallons of water annually from not overwatering lawns and landscapes.

To encourage our customers to conserve this precious resource, we offer a 50% rebate per controller (not to exceed \$75 per controller).

KIDS CAN
ENJOY THIS
WATER
SAVING
COLORING
PAGE!



Visit 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

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
- 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.



SCHOOL IS OUT!

Keep your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road and pay extra attention for kids on bikes or ones that may run into the street after a ball. Don't drive distracted!

EMERGENCY EXIT

THIS SCHOOLBUS STOPS AT
ALL RAILROAD CROSSINGS

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.

