

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



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# OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal  
Mr. Jay Johnson  
Mr. Doug Zirngible

"Rolling blackouts in Minnesota? Are you kidding me?" That was the sentiment from one of the city council members when I briefed the council last month about risks we face this summer after an announcement by our transmission operator, MISO, stating that electric generating supply for 2022/23 is short of projected demand. MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator) is the organization that operates the electric transmission grid in Minnesota, 14 other states, and Manitoba, Canada. Rolling blackouts is something we associate with California or Texas, but not the Midwest.

Hot weather, a growing economy, and the retirement of coal plants are contributing factors to the projected shortage. Within the MISO territory, demand is expected to increase 1.7% compared to a year ago, while available generation capacity has decreased 2.3%. While those may not seem like significant changes, they are enough to tip the balance so that the level of reserve capacity is now less than what MISO requires. So, while we do have enough generating capacity for normal conditions, we have less safety margin. More extreme temperatures, unexpected generator failures, and low wind conditions could make maintaining system reliability much more difficult. Adding to our concerns here in Owatonna is that severe windstorms in April took out one of our two major transmission feeds into town. Due to supply chain issues, it will be out of service all summer and into the fall.

When I informed our commission about steps we are taking to prepare for potential issues with transmission reliability this summer, they asked if what we are preparing for is a matter of "if" or "when." I believe it is still an "if," but we need to prepare for it none-the-less.

Asking customers to reduce demand on peak days is nothing new for us. However, this year it may be an even more important request. Traditionally our Peak Alert messages have been for the purpose of lowering costs. This year, though, we may be calling on you to reduce your load because we have been instructed to do so by the transmission operator in order to maintain the stability of the electric grid. This is more serious.

If we are not able to reduce the load through voluntary actions, we may have to resort to involuntary load shedding by turning off circuits. This is what is known as a rolling blackout and it is something we have never had to do during my 18 years at OPU. In the coming weeks, we will be reviewing our procedures and walking through them with staff to make sure we are prepared. In addition to load shedding procedures, we will be reviewing the complicated procedures required to run our local generation when we have been completely disconnected from the transmission grid. We don't expect to have to do this, but we must be prepared.

We will do everything we can to keep the lights on, even though there will always remain the risk of electric outages whether they be from an overload of the transmission system or severe weather. This month's feature article is about preparing yourself for an outage and what to do when an outage occurs.

That's enough doom and gloom for now. Summer is finally here! Get out there and enjoy it to the fullest! We at OPU are working hard to ensure your summer is a bright one.





# 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! OPL is open 9 a.m. – 8 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, and open 9 a.m. – 12 noon on Saturdays. The website and online resources are available 24/7 at [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info).

#### **Children's Summer Reading Program**

After two "hybrid" summers, we are returning to all in-person activities for the 2022 Summer Reading Program. This summer's theme is "Oceans of Possibilities." Join us when the program kicks off June 3 from 9 a.m. until noon in the Owatonna Public Library's (OPL's) first floor Children's Services area. Pick up a reading log, ice cream and tattoos. Join the Zoo Man at 10 a.m. for some reptile and amphibian fun!

Read for at least 20 minutes at least 10 days during June and note it on your reading log. The June Bookfair will be June 23 from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Bring your completed reading log to the Bookfair and pick out a free book!

Fun programs are planned throughout June including Amazing Science with Professor Norm, The Bazillions, Greg the Great Magic Show and more! Go to [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info) for all the Summer Reading Program details.

#### **Makerspace and Teen Space**

Also this summer, exciting renovations are beginning with the construction of a new Makerspace and Teen Space at OPL. The new Makerspace will include two 3D printers, a laser cutter, a paper/vinyl cutter and podcasting equipment for use by the public. It will occupy the former Teen Room. A new Teen Space is also in the works with new furniture, tablet computers and shelving to hold an expanded young adult book collection. These exciting projects are funded by a \$37,000 T-Mobile Hometown Grant awarded to the City and the Owatonna Public Library in March.

#### **Movies offered at OPL**

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

For more information, visit your Owatonna Public Library in person at 105 North Elm Ave, call 507-444-2460, or find us online at [www.owatonna.info](http://www.owatonna.info). Find us on Facebook and @owatonnalibrary on Twitter.

#### **MAYOR**

Tom Kuntz

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**


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



## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Cooking with pots and pans that have warped bottoms use up to 50% more energy than flat-bottomed pot or pan to cook the same thing. Taking steps to keep your pans from warping, or replacing warped cookware, will save you money on cooking. To keep pans from warping, don't run cold water on hot pans or heat pans without food, water, or oil in them.





# BE PREPARED FOR A POWER OUTAGE

Information for this article obtained at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A POWER OUTAGE THREATENS



### Prepare NOW

- **Take an inventory now** of the items you need that rely on electricity.
- **Talk to your medical provider** about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity and refrigerated medicines.
- **Plan for batteries and other alternatives** to meet your needs when the power goes out.
- **Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup.**
- **Determine whether your home phone will work in a power outage** and how long battery backup will last.
- **Review the supplies that are available in case of no power.** Have flashlights with extra batteries for every household member. Have enough nonperishable food and water.
- **Keep mobile phones and other electric equipment charged and gas tanks full.**



### Survive DURING

- **Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.** The refrigerator will keep food cold for **about four hours**. A full freezer will keep the temperature for **about 48 hours**. Use coolers with ice if necessary. Monitor temperatures with a thermometer.
- **Use food supplies that do not require refrigeration.**
- **Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.** Generators, camp stoves, or charcoal grills should always be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.
- **Check on your neighbors.** Older adults and younger children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.
- **Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment or electronics.** Power may return with momentary “surges” or “spikes” that can cause damage.



### Be Safe AFTER

- **When in doubt, throw it out!** Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- **If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medicine that should be refrigerated**, unless the drug's label says otherwise. If a life depends on the refrigerated drugs, consult a doctor or pharmacist and use medicine only until a new supply is available.

**Experiencing an outage?  
Report it on your  
SmartHub account or  
visit our website at [www.owatonnautilities.com/  
outages](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/outages).**



# Watch a movie and...



## Pay your utility bill with Auto Pay!

Authorize regularly scheduled payments to be made from your checking account or credit card.

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

## DO NOT HANG SIGNS ON POWER POLES

Even though there is equipment to help linemen reach lines on power poles, as long as there are power lines on a pole, there may very well be a need to climb the pole. Signs (and more importantly the staples used to hang the signs) on power poles present a hazard for our linemen and their flame-retardant clothing. If their clothing gets even a tiny rip while climbing, they could be seriously injured or killed.



## HOME GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS:

Know the risks of using a portable generator.



- Generators should be used in well ventilated locations outside at least 5 feet away from all doors, windows, and vent openings. Measure the 5-foot distance from the generator exhaust system to the building.
- Never use a generator in an attached garage, even with the door open.
- Place generators so that exhaust fumes can't enter the home through windows, doors or other openings in the building. The exhaust must be directed away from the building.
- Make sure to install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home. Follow manufacturer's instructions for correct placement and mounting height.
- Turn off generators and let them cool down before refueling. Never refuel a generator while it is hot.
- Store fuel for the generator in a container that is intended for the purpose and is correctly labeled as such. Store the containers outside of living areas.



**Remember to keep meters clear of brush and other obstructions!**

Keep at least an 18 inch clearance around all sides of your electric and natural gas meters. Unobstructed access is critical in protecting your life and property in the event of an emergency.



# Did you “Gnome” you must call 811 before you dig?

Call 811 or visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org) at least 48 hours in advance, not including weekends and holidays.



*Do not remove flags or stakes from your yard until the project is complete.*



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



## Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE)

As part of the community's MS4 Permit, the City administers an IDDE Program. This program aims at tracking and eliminating sources of pollution that include illegal connections to the storm system, spills, illegal dumping, and other sources of contamination. Keeping pollutants from entering the storm system where it may reach a nearby waterway. All illegal connections and illicit discharges are strictly prohibited by City Stormwater Management Code 52.00. Never dump or dispose of anything in the storm sewer or storm drain.

### Keep an eye open for IDDE!

#### What should I look for?

- Unusual colors, odors, suds, or stains
- Persons dumping liquids, oils, leaves, grass clippings, or anything unidentifiable into the storm drain
- Dead or distressed fish and wildlife near surface waters
- Storm pipes and outfalls with high flow during dry weather periods
- Excessive sediment accumulation in water bodies near outfalls

#### How do I report suspected illicit discharge or water pollution?

- If the suspected pollution or contamination is a major spill, unknown, or dangerous to human health and safety, the Fire Department should be contacted immediately at 911.
- To report any suspected illicit discharge or water pollution, visit the City of Owatonna's stormwater website <https://owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management> and click on "Report Pollution" where you will be taken to an anonymous form submission.



For further information regarding the City Stormwater Management Program, contact Bradley D. Rademacher Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist, (507)-774-7300 or [Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us)



# *Rain, Rain, Don't Go Away!* **I'LL USE MY SPRINKLERS ANOTHER DAY**

Weather-based irrigation controllers (WBICs) are one option for homeowners and businesses to achieve water-efficient irrigation scheduling. By using local weather data and landscape conditions to tailor watering schedules, WBICs determine when and how much to water. If every home in the United States with an automatic sprinkler system installed and properly operated a WBIC, we could save \$2.5 billion in water costs and 220 billion gallons of water across the country annually from not overwatering lawns and landscapes! To encourage our residential and business customers to add a WBIC to their sprinkler systems, Owatonna Public Utilities is offering a

## **50% REBATE**

up to \$75 per controller.

**Go to [www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)**  
to download a 2022 Water Efficiency Rebate  
Application with complete terms and conditions.

### **WBIC WORD SEARCH**

AUTOMATIC	OVERWATERING
CONSERVE	REBATE
CONTROLLER	SCHEDULE
IRRIGATION	WATER
LANDSCAPE	WATERSENSE
LAWN	WEATHERBASED

F Q B C Y C N Z T P X W F O C  
I F C H I R R I G A T I O N O  
H R N J G U F B S B O R E X N  
A U T O M A T I C S Q L L E S  
C Y U S U T V D Z M Y S A R E  
O L W A T E R S E N S E W E R  
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L N H L F U F G K T B P P L W  
E E P D B D E M W A T E R X A  
R V L E Q F O O F P K R B P F  
R R V E L A N D S C A P E O P



# **CONSERVE & \$AVE®**





P.O. Box 800 208 S. Walnut Ave.  
Owatonna, MN 55060

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

PRSR STD  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
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Owatonna MN

## POSTAL CUSTOMER ECRWSS

### 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.



**DON'T BE A DAREDEVIL.  
STAY AWAY FROM  
POWER LINES.**

Whether you're casting your favorite  
lure or moving a ladder, be safe and  
stay clear of all power lines. Elec-  
tricity is something you don't want to  
tangle with.

**STAY AWAY FROM POWER LINES**



### 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)