



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

VOLUME 33 | ISSUE #6
JUNE 2023

CUSTOMER UPDATE

Midcontinent Independent System Operator

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OPU MEMO



Jared Hendricks,
Key Accounts & Energy
Conservation Officer

OPU Commission

Kent Rossi
Randy Doyal
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As interest in rooftop solar grows, I've been receiving many questions from customers who are considering solar energy. This month, I'd like to answer some of the common questions I often receive.

The first question customers usually ask is whether OPU buys back excess solar energy. The answer is yes, in most cases. When customers have solar panels, energy flows back and forth between their home and the utility. We measure this energy in both directions and determine the net amount at the end of the billing period. If customers have used more energy from the utility, they will be billed for it. But if they have given the utility more energy, we pay them. This type of billing allows customers to use the grid as a battery.

Another common question is whether rooftop solar is a good investment. The answer varies for each customer, depending on factors like utility rate changes, shading on their roof, installation cost, federal tax credits, and home energy usage. To determine the financial payback of rooftop solar, most solar contractors can help customers estimate these factors and put together a payback estimation.

Based on the actual energy generated by solar arrays in Owatonna, I estimate that most solar customers will have a payback period between 10 and 20 years. However, there are a few arrays that may not break even before their expected lifespan

of approximately 25 years. Some customers have chosen not to install solar because the estimated payback exceeded 35 years.

Now, let's address another important question: which contractor do I recommend? While I can't endorse a specific contractor or maintain a comprehensive list of installers, I recommend using the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) as a helpful resource. CERTs has a wealth of information about solar energy, including a list of known solar installers in Minnesota. Since solar installation involves significant costs, it's advisable to obtain quotes from at least two different contractors to ensure you get a fair deal. Also, do some research on contractors, such as checking their Better Business Bureau ratings, to ensure they are reputable.

While this memo doesn't cover all questions about rooftop solar, I hope it provides a helpful starting point for interested customers. If you'd like more information, please refer to the additional resources provided below, or feel free to contact me directly.

Resources:

- <https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/tools-guides>
- <https://www.bbb.org/local-bbb/bbb-of-minnesota-and-north-dakota>
- <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/>



CONSERVATION TIP\$

Save water by using a soaker hose in your landscaping. It slowly releases water, allowing it to soak into the soil around your plants without excessive runoff. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations, including reducing water pressure by partially opening the valve, and placing the hose close to the base of the plant.



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)! OPL is open from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and 9 a.m. until noon Saturdays. The website and online resources are available 24/7 at owatonna.gov/library.

Children's Summer Reading Program

The theme of the 2023 Summer Reading Program is "All Together Now." Join us when the program kicks off June 2 from 3 until 6 p.m. in the OPL's first floor Children's Services area. Pick up a reading log, ice cream and tattoos. Rock out to the band Big and Tall at 3:30 p.m.

Read for at least 20 minutes daily at least 10 days during June and note it on your reading log. The June Bookfair will be June 29 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 Schiffelly Puppets, Amazing Science with Professor Norman, the Enso Daiko Drummers and more! Go to Owatonna.gov/library for all the Summer Reading Program details.

Makerspace and Teen Space

Later this summer we will unveil our new 3D printers, laser printer, fabric cutter and Podcast equipment.

We also have new furniture and expanded shelving for our Young Adult collection. These exciting projects are funded by a \$37,000 T-Mobile Hometown Grant.

Movies offered at OPL

Movies at the Library are presented the fourth Thursdays of each month with showings at 2 p.m. in the third floor Gainey Room.

For more information, visit OPL in person at 105 North Elm Ave, call 507-444-2460 or visit us online at owatonna.gov/library. Find us on Facebook and @owatonna-library on Twitter.

MAYOR
Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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



Stay Informed on City News!

Visit Owatonna.gov
Follow us on Facebook
Email info@owatonna.gov

Tune in to *Talk of the Town* the third Wednesday of each month on KRFO (1390 AM or 94.7 FM) at 9:40 a.m. and KOWZ (100.9 FM) at 10:10 a.m.

Watch the Public Access Cable Channel 181 on Charter/Spectrum or 900 on Jaguar/MetroNet

Sign up to Receive City News!

The City of Owatonna has launched a free e-newsletter as the primary source of information about City news, projects & decisions. View the *Owatonna Update* newsletter at Owatonna.gov, click on "City Services" then "Communications" and "Stay Informed". Sign up to automatically receive the *Owatonna Update* newsletter at Owatonna.gov, click on "Notification Sign-up".





Midcontinent System Independent Operator

Grid Alerts versus Peak Alerts...Part 3

In the world of utility services, terms like “Grid Alert” and “Peak Alert” can often create confusion. Understanding the differences between these alerts and knowing how to respond can greatly benefit both individuals and the larger community. In this final article of our MISO series, we aim to provide clarity on what a Grid Alert entails and how it differs from a Peak Alert as well as the importance of energy conservation.

What is a Grid Alert? How is it different from a Peak Alert? A grid alert is called by MISO when the **regional** electric grid is reaching a point where demand may exceed supply. This means more electricity is being used than what has been produced or stored. This type of event can happen in summer or winter and may be caused by situations happening several hundred miles away from us here in Minnesota. If the regional grid gets overloaded, it automatically shuts down as a protection measure, leading to region-wide outages. However, before reaching that point, rolling blackouts may be implemented as a control measure.

In contrast, a Peak Alert is a **local** notification, specific to Owatonna and is directly tied to electricity rates. It is called when electrical usage in Owatonna reaches its peak, indicating the highest point of consumption. SMMPA (Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency), our wholesale provider, uses this peak to determine the rates for the following year. Peak Alerts typically occur during the summer and may or may not coincide with a Grid Alert.

What can you do to help during these events? The most significant contribution customers can make during Grid or Peak Alert events is to reduce their electricity usage. Small actions taken by everyone can have a significant collective impact. Here are some suggested ways to cut back on electricity usage:

- Turn off non-essential lighting.
- Unplug electronic devices not in use, such as TVs, game consoles, and radios.

- Adjust your thermostat by raising it 2 or more degrees in the summer and lowering it by 2 or more degrees in the winter.
- Limit the frequency of opening your fridge or freezer.
- Use window coverings to prevent sunlight from heating your home in the summer and uncover them in the winter to utilize the sun’s heat.
- Avoid doing laundry during these events.
- Opt for using a microwave or toaster oven instead of your regular oven to prevent additional heat in your home during the summer.

What happens if you do nothing? Each person’s circumstances and abilities may vary, but if all customers choose to do nothing during these events, rolling blackouts become a real possibility. Once rolling blackouts are initiated, the opportunity for conservation is lost, and customers can only prepare for and endure the outages.

What is OPU doing about this? OPU is actively engaged in educating customers about the importance and benefits of energy conservation, not only during high usage events but also throughout the year. We also provide rebates to assist customers in purchasing more energy-efficient appliances and lighting. Additionally, our team is available to answer any questions you may have regarding energy conservation or related topics.

What is the likelihood for grid alerts and rolling blackouts in Minnesota? While we maintain an optimistic outlook that rolling blackouts will not affect our region, the potential for Grid Alerts is more likely. Staying informed and prepared is crucial in these situations.

We conclude our three-part series on MISO and the regional grid with hopes you have found these articles informative and beneficial.

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



Sign Up Today!

OKAY!

Work Zone Safety




WORK ZONE CRASHES, INJURIES, AND FATALITIES ARE **AVOIDABLE**.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **SLOW DOWN**
2. **DON'T STOP TO WATCH THE WORK**
3. **KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOUR VEHICLE AND THE ONE IN FRONT OF IT**

**DRIVE SAFE IN WORK ZONES, SO
WE CAN **ALL** GET HOME SAFELY**

Get Your Grill On ... Natural Gas!

-  **Cheaper than propane**
-  **Never run out of gas**
-  **Portable models available**

Check with your favorite local retailer for available natural gas models and Get Your Grill On... Natural Gas!*

*Natural gas grills require installation of gas line with shut off to the grilling area. Professional installation required.



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

Call 811 or visit 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

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
to download a 2023 Water Efficiency Rebate
Application with complete terms and conditions.

WBIC WORD SEARCH

WEATHER
IRRIGATION
CONTROL
WATER
CONSERVE
SAVE

REBATE
LANDSCAPE
LAWN
SPRINKLER
SYSTEM

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

look for



CONSERVE & \$AVE®



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
- 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 to kids on bikes or ones that may run into the street after a ball. Don't drive distracted!

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