



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

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CUSTOMER UPDATE



EPA
WaterSense

March 19–25, 2018

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OPU MEMO



Brian Clausen
Water Design Engineer

OPU Commission

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

Water, Water Everywhere! With Minnesota being the Land of 10,000 Lakes (actually 11,842), 92,000 miles of rivers and 10.6 million acres of wetlands it can sure seem that way.

In keeping with that theme, here in Owatonna, there is enough underground water pipes to stretch from here to the Canadian border. There is over 164 miles of public water main and 180 miles of private water services and mains serving our approximate 10,000 water customers.

The water that comes to the faucet in your home is quality water. It originates from eight deep wells that range in depth from 700' to 1325' below the surface. This water is not processed through any special treatment plants and is continually tested to ensure its safety and quality. These wells pump 1.3 billion gallons annually to meet the needs of Owatonna. Numerous towers, booster pumps and other facilities scattered throughout the City have state-of-the-art monitoring and management equipment to ensure water is at your fingertips in the quantity, quality and pressure you need.

This vast water system is a reliable one considering the harsh environment in which it exists. The frigid Minnesota winters cause frost and ground shifting while damp and corrosive soils cause rusting. All these items play a part in damaging our water infrastructure by shortening pipe life and causing breaks. Because of this, OPU aggressively combats these contributors. We annually replace thousands of feet

of aging pipes and update our materials and construction practices to give us greater life cycles and value.

Even with our proactive approach to managing our infrastructure, we still experience around 17 water main breaks per year. Our dedicated water crew repairs these breaks. At OPU, we track the time a water outage takes to repair from the time the water is shut off to when it is restored. It takes, on average, less than 100 minutes to complete the repair. This is an impressive number considering most breaks happen in the winter in very difficult conditions.

We know our customers view water is as a precious and treasured natural resource, as do we. Another of our proactive practices involves scrutinizing water meter readings to discern if there are any abnormally high readings. These high readings will usually tip us off to a potential water leak. Our Meter Department contacts the customer to have them check for any leaks that will cause lost water and high water and sewer bills for the customer.

In the next 3 years, we will be completing a large project in the southwest portion of Owatonna to increase pressure and volume. This project will provide for increased water availability, future expansion of the City limits, increased fire safety protection and increased economic potential that will allow our community to prosper for many years to come.

We are truly blessed we live where water is everywhere. As a utility, we do not take this for granted and strive to be stewards of this precious resource while providing quality and value to you, our customer.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Use a timer to help take shorter showers. Each minute you cut from your shower time will save you 550 gallons a year!

Go to www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips for more conservation tips.



The Owatonna Parks and Recreation Department transitioned to a new, user-friendly system on February 20th. Max Galaxy includes registration, membership, facility scheduling and more.

Enhancements include the ability to use your 'credit on account' when registering online and no more midnight online registrations.

We want our users, including those with current memberships (such as Tennis & Fitness Center and SeniorPlace members) and those registering for programs, to help during the transition. Please take a few moments to create an account in our new system. Please use this link to create your account: <http://owatonnaparksrec.maxgalaxy.net> Spring registration began on February 22. We appreciate your help in making this a smooth transition.

We are now hiring for part-time, seasonal positions for spring and summer. Keep checking the website, <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/owatonnamn/default.cfm>, for a complete listing and application deadlines. Many positions offer a variety of duties and shifts available, including grounds, maintenance and guest services at nearly all of our facilities.

Spring registration is underway; if you did not receive our brochure, stop by our office to pick up a copy. We strive to offer new programs each quarter, if you have a suggestion for something new, let us know! We have a Virtual Suggestion Box on the Parks and Recreation website, give us those new ideas, suggestions for improvement, or tell us we are doing a good job!

We All Play

There is a silent auction to benefit the We All Play Inclusive Playground and Miracle Field! It's Saturday, March 17 from 3pm-5:30pm at the Owatonna Eagles Club. During the Mike Hansen Memorial Washerboard Tournament. Public is welcome!

39th Annual Corky's Early Bird Softball Tournament

This annual tournament will be held May 4, 5, and 6 at the Owatonna Fairgrounds and other local fields. Proceeds benefit the Owatonna Youth Scholarship Fund. This tournament features the top two teams in the United States playing the first game on May 4 at 7:30 PM at the Fairgrounds.

Communication is very important to us, and we use a variety of outlets:

- Owatonna People's Press – Wednesday's article has SeniorPlace happenings, and Saturday's article has upcoming Parks & Recreation events and focuses

on different areas each week.

- Steele County Times – monthly calendar of events, and quarterly Park & Rec happenings.
- KRFO radio shows – Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8:40 a.m.
- Website - www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation
- Facebook Pages – Parks & Recreation, Brooktree Golf Course, River Springs Water Park, SeniorPlace, West Hills Tennis & Fitness and Owatonna Dog Park

How to reach us:

Office Hours – Monday through Friday – 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. – 540 West Hills Circle

Main office line: 507-444-4321 (extension 2 for cancellations, 3 for office staff)

E-Mail: parkrec@ci.owatonna.mn.us

Message us on Facebook

2018 Important Dates:

- March 8 – Deadline - Youth Soccer, Little League/Minor League, Youth Softball
- March 14 - Adult Softball team registration deadline
- March 17- Washer board tournament benefitting Parks & Recreation Scholarship Fund
- April 3 – Coaches meeting for Youth Soccer at Four Season's Centre
- April 7 - Pre-season evaluations for Little League
- April 9 - Youth Soccer begins
- April 23 - Adult Softball schedule handout, Annual Meeting, mandatory managers meeting
- April 24 - Summer Brochure released
- April 26- Summer registration begins
- May 4-6- Corky's Earlybird Slowpitch Softball Tournament
- May 10 - Deadline for Youth T-ball, and Squirrt ball
- June 16 – Young Life tournament at Brooktree Golf Course
- July 7 – Ken Bey tournament at Brooktree Golf Course

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss



Be a Leak Detective for



Fix a Leak Week

March 19–25, 2018

CHECK FOR LEAKS

Information and graphics for this article obtained from WaterSense® for Partners

Did you know...that easy to fix water leaks account for more than 1 trillion gallons of water wasted each year in U.S. homes? In fact, the average household leaks more than 10,000 gallons of water per year, or the amount of water it takes to wash 270 loads of laundry, and could be costing you an extra 10 percent on your water bills.

In just 10 minutes, you can search your home for leaks and crack down on water waste. Many common household leaks are quick and easy to fix. Worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and leaking showerheads are all easily correctable and can save on your utility bill expenses and water in our community.

Put on your detective hat, lace up your shoes and take a quick inventory of clues to water waste. Start by checking your utility bill or taking the toilet test. Check your January or February utility bill. It is likely a family of four has a serious leak problem if its winter water usage exceeds 12,000 gallons (or 16 ccf) per month. You can also look for spikes – is your water use a lot higher than last month? Put a few drops of food coloring in the tank on the back of your toilet and let it sit for 10 minutes. If color shows up in the bowl, you have a leak. Be sure to flush it right away to avoid staining your bowl. You may also stop down to OPU to pick up a leak detection kit the whole month of March.

Other areas to look for clues:

In the bathroom

- **Faucets:** Listen for drips and turn on the tap to check for water going in the wrong direction.
- **Showerheads:** Turn on and look for drips or stray sprays that can be stopped with tape.
- **In the tub:** Turn on the tub, then divert the water to the shower and see if there is still a lot of water coming from the tub; that could mean the tub spout diverter needs replacing.
- **Under the sink:** Check for pooling water under pipes and rust around joints and edges.

In the laundry or utility room

- **Under the sink:** Check for pooling water under pipe connections.
- **Clothes washer:** Check for pooling water, which could indicate a supply line leak.

In the kitchen:

- **Faucet:** Listen for drips and tighten aerators or replace fixtures if necessary.
- **Sprayer:** Check to make sure water is spraying smoothly and clean openings as needed.
- **Under the sink:** Check for pooling water under pipes and rust around joints and edges.
- **Appliances:** Check for pooling water underneath dishwashers and refrigerators with ice makers, which could indicate a supply line leak.

In the basement or utility room:

- **Water Heater:** Check beneath the tank for pooling water, rust, or other signs of leakage.
- **Water softener:** Listen for running water outside the unit's normal cycle.

Don't forget to go outside:

- **At the spigot:** Ensure tight connections with the hose and see if the hose washer needs replacing.
- **In-ground irrigation system:** Check for broken sprinklers or nozzles spraying in the wrong direction. You may want to consult an irrigation auditor certified by a WaterSense labeled program to improve system efficiency.

Throughout the house:

- Check for signs of moisture and mold on your walls, ceilings or floors. This could indicate a pipe is wreaking havoc behind the scenes and requires the attention of a professional.

If you want to do a more detailed investigation for leaks, check of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association Smart Home Water Guide at www.smarthomewatguide.org.

If any of your fixtures need replacing, remember to look for the WaterSense label when purchasing plumbing products. WaterSense labeled products are independently certified to use at least 20 percent less water and perform as well or better than standard models.



For more information, visit <http://1.usa.gov/1Qqw75T>.

EQUIPMENT SERIES



Routinely, natural gas meters are changed to check for accuracy. Previously, this task involved turning off the natural gas to the home. Last year, OPU began installing a new product called a residential bypass meter bar on natural gas meters. The new bar features two valves that allow the flow of natural gas to be directed through the bar instead of through the meter allowing the meter to be changed safely and without interrupting service to the home. For safety reasons, whenever natural gas service is interrupted it is critical to check and relight all appliances. One benefit of the new procedure is work can be completed without the need to enter the home to relight appliances, eliminating the need to schedule an appointment with the homeowner upon their return.

SEWER EDITS

The Meter Services Department audits and edits all meter readings. High and low readings are checked in order to insure their correctness on a daily basis. Sewer charges are calculated using an average of the December, January and February water usage and are “reset” for the first billing run in March. During these months, special attention is given to monitor water consumptions. Customers who have experienced a larger than normal water consumption are contacted by phone, letter or door hanger. A second review takes place during the month of February after the February reading is gathered. The February usage will indicate if the customer has taken corrective action. If it is obvious the leak has been corrected, and the usage has returned to normal, an adjustment will be made to the average to override it. A final attempt to contact customers who have not taken corrective action is made at this time. Water leak detection kits (blue tablets) and water conservation pamphlets are distributed along with a breakdown of the financial impact.

Customer feedback has been very positive. Most customers are extremely thankful their hometown utility makes a special attempt to warn them of potential leaks which could affect them financially. In many instances, we will aid the customer in determining what appliances are leaking if it's not readily apparent to them.

By adding this level of customer service, we demonstrate our commitment to stewardship of our precious resources, our commitment to excellent customer service and accountability of our billing.

OPU HIGHLIGHT



Tammi, Brase
Supervisor, Accounting

Tammi Brase is Owatonna Public Utilities Accounting Supervisor who joined the accounting team as a specialist in October of 2016. Tammi recently accepted her new role in January of this year. Prior to working at OPU, Tammi worked many years in accounting in the construction industry. She has a commitment and passion for the work she does, she enjoys the people she works with and she likes learning about the many different facets of the utility industry.

Tammi and her husband of 29 years, Layne, have raised twin sons in Owatonna. They live in rural Owatonna and have called this their home for the past 25 years. Tammi is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Accounting from Concordia University in St Paul.

When Tammi is not studying or working, she enjoys spending time with family and friends. She also enjoys traveling and downhill skiing. The most beautiful place she noted skiing was at Whistler Blackcomb in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada.

Thank you, Tammi, for all you do.

ICE ON METERS

When your gas meter is covered with ice and snow, it can cause a potentially dangerous situation. If there is snow on your meter, brush it off. If it's covered with ice, give us a call at 451-1616 and we'll take care of it for you.

In addition, snow and ice should be cleared from exhaust and combustion air vents for gas appliances to prevent the accumulation of carbon monoxide in buildings and to prevent operational problems for the combustion equipment. Monitor the accumulation of snow or ice blocking regulator or relief valve vents which could prevent regulators and relief valves from functioning properly. Use caution in cleaning snow from around the piping on service regulator set as it is susceptible to damage that could result in failure of the equipment. Where possible, use a broom instead of a shovel to clear snow off regulators, meters, and associated piping.

As always, 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 a spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.



Be Smart About Salt

As snow and ice melts it collects and washes surface pollutants into our lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater. One of the major pollutants carried into our waterbodies during the winter months is road salt. Once in the water it becomes very difficult to remove the chloride. At high concentrations, it can harm aquatic life and contaminate drinking water.

A recent study found 47 waterbodies in Minnesota that tested above the water quality standard for chloride and estimated Minnesotans dump over 350,000 tons of salt on roadways and parking lots annually.

How does it get in our water? Two main sources:

1. Winter road application
2. Water softeners

How to make a difference:

1. Hire a Smart Salting Contractor, visit pca.state.mn.us to find certified contractors.
2. Educate your family, friends, and coworkers on the importance of proper and safe use.
3. Apply minimum amount necessary. Never use more than 4 pounds/1,000 sq. ft.
4. Sweep up any excess salt, if visible on pavement it will just wash away.
5. Be patient, more salt does not result in faster melting.

Learn more about our Stormwater Program at ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater or contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300 or stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us.

REBATES

Clean Up with Great Rebates!

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\$25



WaterSense Showerhead Rebate*

If you shorten your shower one minute, you can save 550 gallons per year.

But if you switch your showerhead, you can save 2,900 gallons per year!

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*Rebate will not exceed the purchase price.



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
- 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.

March 18th is National Gas Utility Worker Day



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 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 schmoltt@owatonnautilities.com.

Gas Leak?

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