

CUSTOMER UPDATE



FEATURING: WATER MAIN BREAKS

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OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,
General Manager

OPU Commission

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

It's March, and if the groundhog was right, winter should be ending very soon. However, in this memo I am keeping our thoughts focused on winter a little longer as I reflect back on the extremely cold temperatures we experienced the last week of January.

With the impending cold temperatures that week, my worries were primarily along the lines of frozen water pipes and spiking daily natural gas prices. Neither of those worries turned out to be warranted as we got through the week with little difficulty. The surprising, untold story was what happened with electric generation on January 30 and 31, 2019.

MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator) is the organization that assures reliable delivery of electricity in our region. When generation is operated, it has been called for by MISO. At 2:38 am on January 30, MISO called an emergency event ordering all available off-line generation resources to be started. This emergency event stayed in effect until 10 am on January 31.

Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA)'s member utilities local generation units played an important role in keeping the lights on during the emergency event. These smaller units don't run often, and more commonly they are called on to run on the hottest days of summer. Collectively, SMMPA members ran 43 local generators on diesel fuel for 30 hours through the night.

What was most interesting about this event was learning that it was caused because the wind stopped blowing, and there was not enough natural gas generation available to make up the difference. Wind generation, which was producing 13,000 MW before the event, dropped to under 4,000 MW during the event. There was 5,000 to 10,000 MW of natural gas generation (which would normally be used to back up the wind power) on the sidelines because it had been curtailed due to the fact that natural gas was needed for heating.

This event should give us pause as our state legislature debates increasing the Renewable Energy Standard (RES) to higher and higher levels. The current RES calls for 25% of our electricity be generated by renewable sources by 2025, and we are on track to meet this goal. Proposals for increasing the RES include 50% by 2030, 80% by 2035, and "100% carbon free" by 2050.

As a municipal utility, we support the desire to transition our electricity to cleaner sources. At the same time, we focus on maintaining reliability and affordability for our customers. For that reason, we support the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association's recommendation to the legislature that before increasing the RES, it ensures that a comprehensive study is conducted as to the feasibility, costs, and other likely impacts of doing so. This study should be designed with extensive input from the utility industry and MISO to help make sure that our electricity remains reliable and affordable.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Save electricity by turning off your dishwasher's dry setting and allowing dishes to air dry instead. Opening the door will allow dishes to dry more quickly and provide moisture to your home during the dry winter months.



Youth Spring registration began on February 21. Register for the following programs:

- Spring soccer (ages 5-6th grade)
- T-ball (entering Kindergarten-1st grade)
- Squirt ball (entering 1st grade-2nd grade)
- Little league baseball (grades 2-5)
- Girls Fastpitch (grades 1-4)
- Girls Lacrosse (grades 1-4)
- Boys Lacrosse (grades 1-2)
- Spring Swimming lessons
- Spring tennis lessons
- Munchkin Market Booths
- New youth golf programs

Ways to Register:

- On-line at <http://owatonnaparksrec.maxgalaxy.net>
- In person at the Parks and Recreation office – 540 West Hills Circle - Monday – Friday from 7 am-5 pm.
- Over the phone - 507-444-4321 - Monday-Friday from 7 am- 5pm.

Registration deadline is March 7th for soccer, little league and Fastpitch Softball. Save \$10.00 on each program by registering before the deadline.

Adult Softball Team registration deadline is March 14.

2019 Brooktree Season Passes are available for purchase at the Parks & Recreation Office. Specials are available through March 15th, purchase this year's pass at last year's price.

River Springs Water Park - Opening Day is Thursday, June 6 at 12pm with a school's out admission special of only \$4.00. River Springs features a Lazy River, Climbing Wall, Body Slide, Tube Slide, Zero Depth Pool Area, Activity Pool, Lily Pad Walk, a large concessions area and new this year a Zero Depth Play Feature. River Springs is open 7 days a week from 12:00-8:00pm. We are located at 3065 St. Paul Road on the north side of Owatonna, just off of 26th Street. River Springs Water Park offers Daily Pass Punch cards as well as Season Passes, both are now available for purchase online or in person at the parks and Recreation office. You can find out more information by checking out the Parks and Recreation website @ ci.owatonna.mn.us/parkrecreation, becoming a Fan of the River Springs Water Park Facebook page or by calling us at 507-774-7370. We look forward to spending the summer with you!

West Hills Social Commons- The new year brings a new name for SeniorPlace. The building will now be called West Hills Social Commons. The address and

phone number will remain the same and your favorite programs will still be offered along with new, exciting programs! Come see what we have to offer!

Therapeutic Recreation -

The newest Therapeutic Recreation group, Special Rec, is looking for members! This group is for children ages 4-10 with disabilities who want to play and learn with other children their age. Special Rec meets on Wednesdays from 5-6pm at the West Hills Social Commons. Call Dani Bakken at 507-774-7110 for more information.

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.

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

Owatonna People's Press – Wednesday's article has West Hills Social Commons information, 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

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

Message us on Facebook

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss



WATER MAIN BREAKS

Water Mains

Owatonna Public Utilities maintains 166 miles of water main beneath our city streets. Since the 1970s we have been installing plastic water mains which are less susceptible to breaks and corrosion. Approximately 60% of our mains are now plastic. We have some mains that are nearly 120 years old. However, the oldest mains are not necessarily the worst in terms of water main breaks. Most water main breaks occur on main that was installed in the 1960s. Our largest water mains are 16" in diameter, but the majority of our water mains are 6" diameter.

Water Main Breaks

Water main breaks happen for various reasons as a normal part of operating a water utility. Weather plays a part as freezing and thawing can cause the ground to shift and shear older pipe. Breaks can also occur when there is a sudden increase in water pressure in the main, such as when a fire hydrant is closed too quickly. The number one cause of water main breaks at OPU is electrolysis. Without getting too technical, electrolysis is essentially a type of corrosion.

In a typical year, OPU experiences between 15 and 20 water main breaks. Breaks are inevitable and unpredictable. We have had stretches of 2-3 months with no breaks. By Valentine's Day this year we had already had 6 breaks, 3 of which occurred in the same weekend.

Leak Detection

A very large break may be detected by our operators who notice an unusual pressure drop in the system. However, most times water main breaks are reported to us by citizens who notice a larger than normal amount of water in the street or nearby yard. When a potential leak has been reported one of our crew members will be dispatched to investigate. Sometimes it is obvious to them that it is a water main break. Other times they may test the water for chlorine to determine if the water is from our water system or from a ground water source such as melting snow.

If the water main break is significant, they may partially close valves to the area to reduce the amount of flooding damage but keep some water service to customers until the repair crew can be assembled.

Where the water is coming out of the ground is not necessarily where the water main break is located. It is possible for water to surface more than 100 feet from the actual main break. Ultrasonic technology is used to pinpoint the exact location of the leak. This technology only works on metallic mains so it is fortunate that very few leaks occur with plastic main.

Break Repair

Most breaks are repaired within a few hours of discovery. Before excavation can occur, emergency locates must be called in so that all nearby utilities (electric, gas, sewer, telecommunications, etc) can be marked in accordance with law. Once locates have been completed, the valves that deliver water to the broken water main will be closed. This may cause a temporary disruption of service to the nearby customers. OPU's goal is to complete the work in less than three hours to minimize this disruption.

The crew will then begin digging to expose the broken water main. Once exposed, the crew will determine what type of repair can be made or if a section of the water main will need to be replaced. A trenchbox is lowered into the hole to protect the workers from an excavation cave-in while they work to repair the damage.

Once the repair has been made, water service is restored. The final step is filling the hole and preparing it for the restoration process. OPU uses a sand slurry to fill the hole; this method completely fills the hole and minimizes settling. Repair of the road occurs at a later date.

After the Crews Leave

After a main repair, you may see a reddish discoloration in your water caused by small amounts of iron compounds flushing out of the system. These iron compounds pose no threat to health; they are merely unpleasant. You can get rid of the discoloration by running cold water for a few minutes through a tap without an aerator, such as the bathtub or outside spigot. If discoloration or low pressure continue for an extended period of time, contact us. We will send someone out to perform additional flushing.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS

In an attempt to ensure we continue to provide excellent customer service to you, our customers, we contract with an agency every other year to collect opinions on how we perform our jobs. Client Research Services of Owatonna will be making outbound calls to approximately 350 customers between the end of February and the end of May. If you receive a call, please take the time to answer the satisfaction survey questions, because your opinion really does matter to us. The survey should only take about 5 minutes.

SEWER EDITS

Recognition to our Meter Services Department! They audit and edit **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.

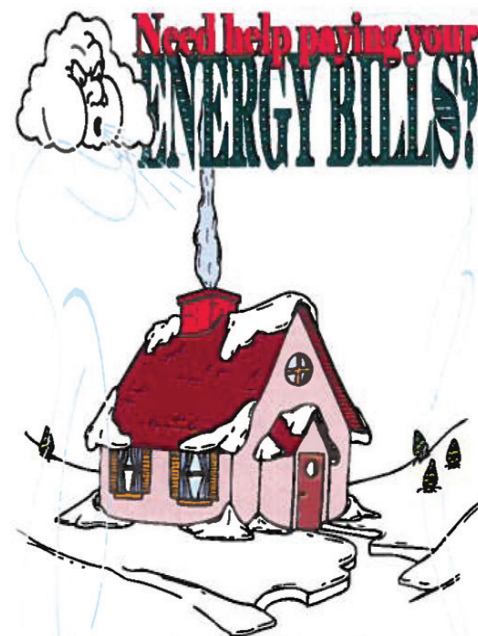


Fix a leak week is March 18 – March 24, 2019

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.

For more information on how to be a leak detective, visit <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week>.



Semcac's Energy Assistance Program
may be able to help you with winter energy bills.
(Eligibility is based on household income.)

Serving Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Steele
& Winona Counties

Call SEMCAC!
800-944-3281

The Energy Assistance Program is funded by the State of Minnesota
Department of Commerce through a block grant from the Federal Health and
Human Services Department

ADOPT A FIRE HYDRANT

IN AN EMERGENCY, EVERY SECOND COUNTS

- Remove snow and ice from the hydrant
- Clear a 3 foot wide perimeter around the hydrant for firefighters to work
- Clear a path from the hydrant to the street

In case of a fire, firefighters need to be able to get to the hydrants quickly to protect people and property.



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, sidewalk, driveway, and parking lot 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

CONSERVE & \$AVE® HOUSE CALL RESIDENTIAL ENERGY AUDITS



- **STANDARD AUDIT:** \$50 co-pay (\$300 value!)
- **PERFORMANCE AUDIT:** \$125 co-pay (\$380 value!)

EXCLUSIVE HOUSE CALL REBATES AVAILABLE

Learn more at OwatonnaUtilities.com

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

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?

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