

CUSTOMER UPDATE



TAKE CARE WHEN SELECTING A SOLAR CONTRACTOR

- 2 OPU Memo
- 3 City Spot
- 3 Conservation Tips
- 4 Choosing a Solar Contractor

- 5 5#-50# Gas Conversion Update
- 5 Downed Power Lines
- 5 Natural Gas Firepit Safety
- 6 Call Before You Dig

- 6 Clean H2Owatonna
- 7 AC Clean & Tune
- 8 Consumer Confidence Report
- 8 General Information



OPU MEMO



Christian Fenstermacher,
Director, Engineering &
Field Operations

OPU Commission

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

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we all have experienced some affect from supply chain issues. From toilet paper and mask shortages to high lumber prices, we have experienced how every piece of our world is intertwined. I heard an analogy recently from OPU's Director of Information Technology, Damian Baum, which likens the pandemic to a motorist slowing down in heavy traffic. When that one motorist slows down, it triggers a ripple effect causing all the other drivers behind them to slow down. Even once that one driver gets back up to speed, the ripple continues leaving a longer lasting traffic jam. We are in the midst of that traffic jam, hoping and waiting for the world economy to start moving at the pace it once did.

OPU has also been affected by this worldwide slowdown centered on supply chain issues. We generally have seen lead times double or extend tenfold in some cases. Prices have increased fluctuated dramatically, with some products triple the normal price. The reason for these increases in price and delivery times are not due to one issue, the reasons are multifaceted.

We have been receiving regular updates from our suppliers and here are some of the major factors affecting the supply industry:

Labor Shortage – Aside from the layoffs from the pandemic, the job participation rate is the lowest since the mid 1970s. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,

roughly 62% of working age adults in the U.S. participate in the job market. This is coupled with the "Great Resignation" where workers are leaving their jobs to pursue their own business endeavors. Currently, nationally there are over 11 million job openings, unemployment is at 3.6% and wages have increased 5.6% compared to this time last year.

Raw Materials – Major raw or crude materials are up in multiple categories including wood, oil, copper, aluminum and steel. All these materials affect various components in electric, water and natural gas utilities including conduit, water main, meters, poles, wire, cable and transformers.

Shipping/Freight – The labor shortage has greatly affected the trucking industry with a national shortage of 80,000 truck drivers. At the ports, there continues to be a backlog of shipping containers to be processed, though container prices have improved recently.

Russia/Ukraine Conflict – Worldwide, Russia's market accounts for roughly 12% of crude oil, 24% of natural gas, 6% of aluminum, 5% of copper and 10% of crude steel - when you add Ukraine. The semiconductor shortage could also be affected by the conflict with major raw material for chips coming out of Russia.

Increasing Demand – With all else going on, there is an ever-increasing demand for raw materials. With technology evolving at a rapid pace and population increasing exponentially, demand is at an all-time high.

With all this market volatility, we are staying on top of these issues by getting creative. We are prioritizing projects, developing closer relationships with other utilities to pool resources, collaborating with our state and national trade associations, developing strategies for utilizing data analytics, and keeping stakeholders informed of the supply issues. At the same time, we remain confident we will succeed through this tough time with even greater efficiency in place so we may continue to provide a highly reliable service to you, our customers.

Keeping the Community Beautiful *Melting snow reveals junk ordinance violations*

As the weather gets warmer and everyone spends more time outdoors, remember that there are ordinances related to exterior property maintenance that need to be followed. Here are a few items to keep in mind:

- Mow the lawn regularly – try to keep it under the 8-inch height restriction for lots that have been built upon. Undeveloped lots need to be kept below 18-inches. (City Code § 93.061)
- Weed and spray regularly to control weeds and keep them from spreading to other properties. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture maintains a list of noxious weeds that are prohibited. More information is available on their website: mda.state.mn.us. (City Code § 93.002; Minn. Stat. § 18.77 and 21.72)
- Keep household trash in a container designed for such use, ensuring that it doesn't leak and that it is always covered. Have regular pickup service scheduled and only put containers by the street on designated pickup days. Containers should be stored in the side or rear yard, or in the garage. (City Code § 117.09)
- Personal property should be stored within a building or fully screened so that it is not visible from adjoining properties and public streets. Wood for a wood burning stove or recreational fires needs to be stacked in a neat pile. (City Code § 157.044)
- Don't place unwanted items, such as furniture or appliances, on the right-of-way or in the yard. Disused or discarded items stored outside are considered refuse or junk. Garbage haulers need to be contacted to pick up these items and properly dispose of them. (City Code § 93.004 and §157.043)

To report a violation of the weed or nuisance ordinances, visit owatonna.gov and submit a weed ordinance violation complaint form or a nuisance ordinance violation complaint form. Anonymous submissions are accepted; however, it may delay the processing of the complaint if any additional information is needed. Make sure the full address is included; failure to provide the correct address will delay the processing of the complaint. It's up to everyone to keep Owatonna beautiful!

More code information is available on the City of Owatonna website.

MAYOR
Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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



CONSERVATION TIP\$

Bushes and yard debris around your air conditioner condenser can reduce airflow causing it to work harder to keep your house cool. Keeping the area around your condenser clear keeps your A/C working more efficiently, saving you money on your utility bill.





SELECTING A SOLAR CONTRACTOR

Article obtained from the Clean Energy Resource Team's website at cleanenergyresourceteams.org.

We're all used to blind mailings, cold calls, and emails from salespersons to buy this new thing or refinance that old thing. These same sales pitches extend to clean energy technologies like solar, small wind, and biomass as well.

While these technologies may be well-suited for residential homes and many rural businesses and farms, it is important not to get swept up in a sales pitch or the novelty of the technology without a little due diligence.

Doing Due Diligence

Most solar technology and renewable energy vendors operate ethically, because honest service is in their long-term business interests. Nonetheless, there are a few bad apples who ruin the bunch by being pushy and over-stating energy production or financial performance. Just like selecting a contractor for a construction project or remodeling job, a little research is warranted in selecting solar contractors.

In Minnesota, installing racking, placing and securing solar modules, and installing electrical wiring and electrical equipment must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor or their registered employees. Before hiring a contractor, signing anything, or paying any money, ask for the contractor's license number and call the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to verify that the renewable energy vendor is licensed and that they do not have a disciplinary history. You can also visit the DLI License Lookup Tool (<https://secure.doli.state.mn.us/lookup/licensing.aspx>) or call 651-284-5069.

Key Questions

Be sure to ask about the installer's credentials. For example, the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (nabcep.org) requires that NABCEP-certified solar PV installers receive training before being certified and that they receive ongoing training to maintain certification. This NABCEP training often dovetails with Minnesota's electrician licensure requirements and offers the benefit of specialized knowledge in the State Electrical Code's solar requirements and solar technology.

Don't be afraid to request references. You should feel free to call references and ask about their experience with the solar or renewable energy installer. Did the installer meet their expectations? How were issues with permitting and interconnection resolved, if there were any? Did the installer work hard to resolve any issues? Were they responsive in the years after installation? A few short conversations with references can tell a lot. And if the vendor can't offer any references, well, then you have your answer.

Code of Ethics

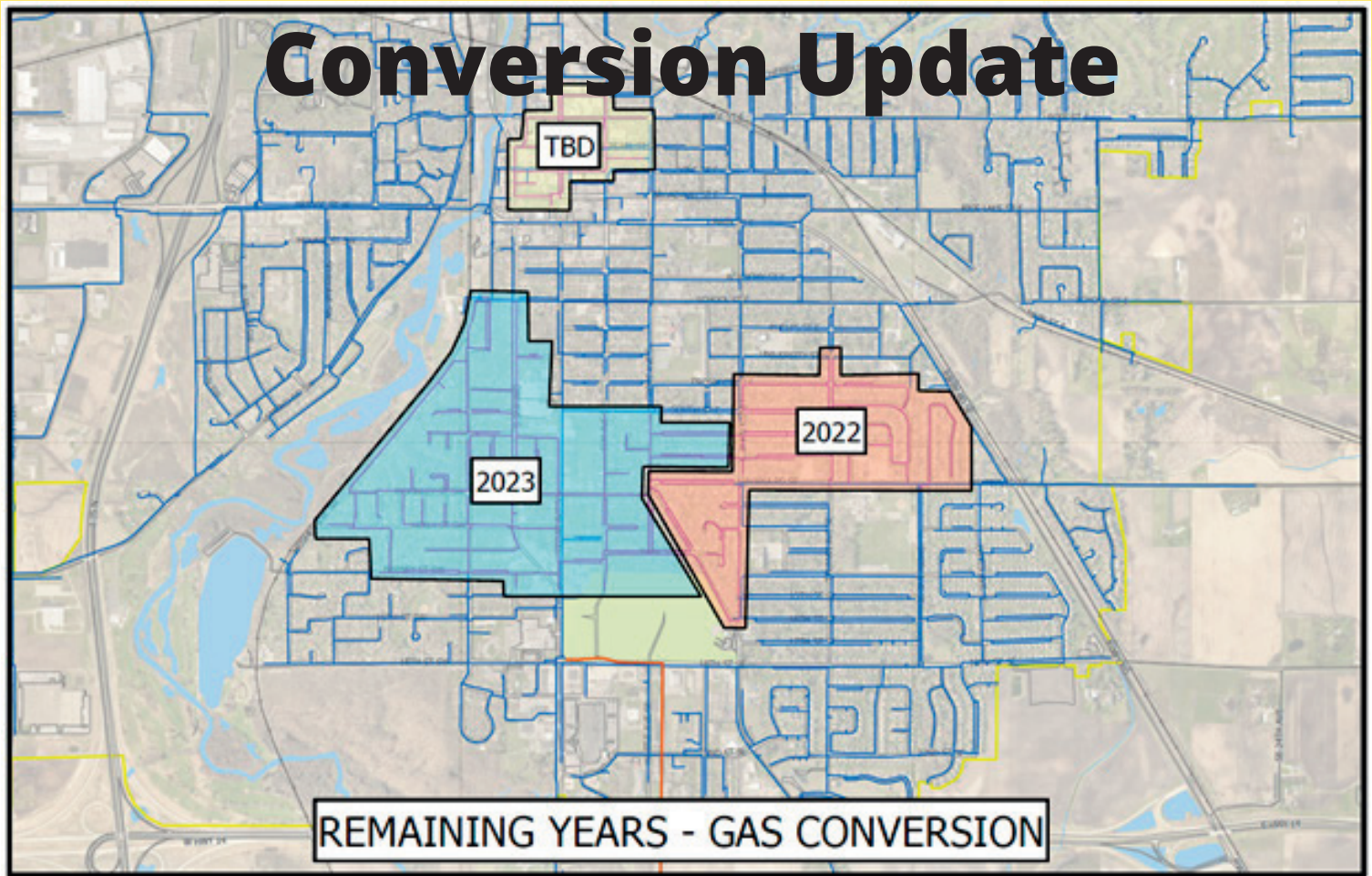
In addition to state licensure and legal requirements, many renewable energy vendors also affirm the code of ethics adopted by their business associations. For example, members of the Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association (MNSEIA.org) abide by a code of conduct with ten fundamental canons. A few of these customer-oriented canons include maintaining high ethical standards when advertising, selling, and installing solar equipment; presenting honestly, the capabilities, performance, and energy savings potential of solar products; offering clear and understandable warranties of the equipment and installation service; and being professional and faithful agents for each client. Perhaps most importantly, MNSEIA members avoid all practices that are likely to discredit the solar profession or deceive the public.

Take Your Next Step

If you are considering a renewable energy project, lists of installers are available on MNSEIA's Find an Installer page (<https://www.mnseia.org/find-installer>), CERTs' Solary Director (<https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/tools-guides/directory>), or the MN Department of Commerce's Solar Business Director (<https://mn.gov/commerce/industries/energy/solar/solar-business-directory.jsp>).

You are also welcome to contact CERTs staff at 612-624-2293 with any questions about solar and renewable energy matters.

5# to 50# Natural Gas Conversion Update



The picture above is a visual of OPU's remaining years on our 5# to 50# natural gas conversion project. The 2022 project will get underway on May 9. NPL Construction is our primary contractor for 2022 and remaining years of the project. The project consists of replacing aging steel gas main with polyethylene gas main and moving the mains out of the street surface and into the boulevards. The purpose of this is to eliminate interference with future street improvements. The project also includes replacing aging meters and regulators with new equipment. By increasing the pressure to the natural gas system and removing problematic steel pipe, OPU can provide a much more robust system serving the community for many years to come.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY: DOWNED POWER LINES

Here are some important, life-saving safety tips from Owatonna Public Utilities:

- Call us at 507-451-2480 if you see a downed power line.
- Always assume a downed power line is energized.
- Stay 10 feet away from a downed power line.
- Don't drive over a downed power line.
- If a power line falls on your car, stay inside the vehicle, warn people to not touch the car, and call 911.
- If the car is on fire:
 - Open the door, but do not STEP out of the car.
 - With hands at your side, jump completely free of the vehicle so you are not touching the car when you land on the ground.
 - Never make a connection between your body, the car's shell, and the road.
 - Keep both feet close together and shuffle away from the vehicle WITHOUT picking up your feet.
- Never climb a tree with power lines running through it.



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.

You “Gnome” you wanna 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.**



Swimming Pool Discharge

As summer fast approaches people are preparing for some fun in the sun. Water from swimming pools and hot tubs contains organic matter, low pH, and high levels of chlorine, bromine, and copper. Discharging untreated pool/spa water into the storm sewer is harmful to fish and other aquatic life. This is strictly prohibited by City Stormwater Management Code 52.00.

Remember: the storm system is separate from the sanitary system. Water reaching your nearby catch basin or drain does not get treated by the City's Wastewater Treatment Facility.

So, what do you do when you need to discharge your pool or spa?

The most environmentally friendly way to dispose of your pool discharge water is to a vegetative surface, where it can soak into the ground. This should only be done after de-chlorinating the pool.

When can pool or spa water be discharged to the storm sewer?

Only after it has been de-chlorinated (less than 0.1mg/L), has a pH range of 7-8, and consists only of water. It must be run through vegetative buffer and not cause any nuisance conditions. In no case should it be discharged directly to the system.

How can I get rid of chlorine?

Chlorine will naturally dissipate overtime. This process usually takes a minimum of 3 days. Chlorine and pH test kits are widely available and should be used to verify.

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



COMPLETE A CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING CLEAN & TUNE AND APPLY FOR A \$25 REBATE*

Regular preventative maintenance is the best way to ensure trouble-free, energy-efficient operation.

Visit www.OwatonnaUtilities.com to download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions.

**Customers are eligible for a tune-up rebate every two years.*

CENTRAL A/C CLEAN & TUNE WORD SEARCH

AIR CONDITIONING
CLEAN AND TUNE
INSPECTION
MAINTENANCE
SERVICE

TWENTY FIVE
REBATE
EFFICIENT
TROUBLE FREE
HVAC

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

CONSERVE & \$AVE®

Business customers may apply for an:

**A/C CLEAN & TUNE REBATE
UP TO \$60[^]**

**ELECTRIC CHILLER
CLEAN & TUNE REBATE
UP TO \$5 PER TON[#]**

Visit www.OwatonnaUtilities.com to download applications with complete terms and conditions.

**Customers are eligible for this rebate every three years.*

*#Customers are eligible for this rebate every five years.
Rebate not to exceed cost of tune-up.*



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

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

PRSRT STD
US Postage
PAID
Permit No 41
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
- 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.



2021 CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT

City of Owatonna, PWSID 1740007

In a continuing “Go Green”, effort, a 2021 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) regarding our community water supply system is available for your review on-line at the following address:

www.owatonnautilities.com/consumer-confidence/

Please take a few minutes, read the CCR, and be aware of the water quality of your drinking water!

Current MCL violations: **NONE**

State and Federal Safe Drinking Water Regulations require all Community Public Water Systems to distribute an Annual Water Quality Report, officially known as the Consumer Confidence Report, by June 30th of each year. This report is available at the above link, however, if you would prefer a paper copy of the report, please feel free to call 507-451-2480.

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