



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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OCTOBER 2021

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



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# OPU MEMO



Josh Prokopec,  
Gas/Water Design  
Engineer

## OPU Commission

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

Hydrants are a very important part of our water system and hydrant maintenance is a much larger undertaking than one may realize. Maintenance of hydrants consist of painting, flushing, repairing, and winterizing.

Every year OPU paints one fourth of all hydrants in our water system. This equates to roughly 350 hydrants every year. This is required to keep the hydrants looking good and visible for our fire department to easily identify them in an emergency. Normal wear and tear along with being exposed to the everyday elements can cause the paint to deteriorate rather quickly.

A second important area of hydrant maintenance is yearly flushing. Every spring OPU operates all hydrants in our water system. Flushing annually helps maintain water quality by removing mineral sediments from the water main lines that can affect water taste, clarity and/or color. It also helps identify malfunctions of the hydrants and related valves and helps determine weaknesses in the water distribution system. A lot of thought goes into this process. OPU has three pressure zones and proper valving is very important to get the most out of the flushing process. It's also very important to open and close hydrants properly to eliminate water hammer which can create water main breaks. Opening and closing hydrants is almost an art and attention to detail is a must. When opening and closing the hydrants improperly, water main breaks can happen inadvertently becoming very expensive.

After flushing in the spring, typically a few hydrants will need minor repairs. Those repairs are completed over the months following flushing and as time allows. Another repair needed from time to time is damage caused by vehicles. Every now and then, cars will veer off the road and collide with a hydrant. For these circumstances, especially in the Midwest, hydrants are designed with a dry barrel and breakaway bolts. When a car collides with the hydrant, the part of the hydrant above ground is made to break away at ground level causing the least amount of damage and no water loss. So, when you see the shooting water coming out of the broken off hydrant in the movies, this isn't typically the case, and will not happen in most areas of the country!

One aspect of hydrant maintenance most people are unaware of is winterizing. Most hydrants have weep holes in the bottom of the hydrant that are in place to drain any remaining water out of the barrel after use. When the weep holes are plugged or the ground is saturated and not letting the remaining water escape, water will remain in the barrel. Every fall before winter approaches, OPU crews remove any water in the hydrant barrels to make sure they are dry, eliminating the chance of any water freezing in the barrel and causing damage to the hydrant.

Another important item related to fire hydrants is keeping the area around them clear of snow in the winter months. We ask customers' helps with this. If you have a hydrant in your yard, please clear a 3' perimeter around it and make a path to the street. This is a huge help, and saves precious seconds, to the Fire Department in quickly spotting the hydrants and providing immediate access in emergency situations.

Even though most of these tasks go unnoticed, you can see a lot of thought and work goes into keeping our hydrants presentable, working properly at all times and visible for emergency personnel.





## “Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety™”

The Owatonna Fire Department is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®)—the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 90 years—to promote this year’s Fire Prevention Week™ campaign, “Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety™.” This year’s campaign, October 3-9th, works to educate everyone about simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe.

With all the working from home we’ve done over the last year, there have been times I’ve been on a web-conference meeting with other remote workers and have heard an occasional ‘beep’ in their background.

What do these sounds the alarms make mean? Is there a beep or a chirp coming out of your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm? Knowing the difference can save you, your home, and your family.

It’s important to learn the different sounds of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. When an alarm makes noise—a beeping sound or a chirping sound—you must take action! Make sure everyone in your home understands the sounds of the alarms and knows how to respond. To learn the sounds of your specific smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, check the manufacturer’s instructions that came in the box, or search the brand and model online.

The Owatonna Fire Department wants to share safety tips to help you “Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety”

- A continuous set of three loud beeps—beep, beep, beep—means smoke or fire. Get out, call 9-1-1, and stay out.
- A single chirp every 30 or 60 seconds means the battery is low and must be changed.
- All smoke alarms must be replaced after 10 years.
- CO alarms have an average effective life of 7-10 years, then they should be replaced.
- Chirping that continues after the battery has been replaced means the alarm is at the end of its life and the unit must be replaced.
- Make sure your smoke and CO alarms meet the needs of all your family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.

And here are a few additional tips related to your smoke and CO alarms:

- Test smoke and CO alarms monthly.
- Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed within 10 feet of each sleeping room or inside each sleeping room.
- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement.

If you have questions or concerns about smoke or CO alarms and/or alarm installation, please contact the Owatonna Fire Department at 507-444-2454 for more information.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Blinds reduce heat loss through windows by acting as another layer of insulation. As the temperature falls, open blinds during the day to let the sun help heat your home but make sure to close them as the sun goes down.



### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dan Boeke

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

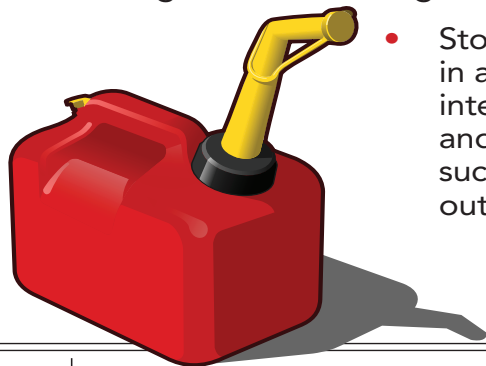
Doug Voss



# Generator Safety

**Downed utility lines, power company blackouts, heavy snow falls or summer storms can all lead to power outages. Many people turn to a portable generator for a temporary solution without knowing the risks.**

- Generators should be used in well ventilated locations outside at least 5 feet (1.5 metres) away from all doors, windows, and vent openings. Measure the 5-foot (1.5 metres) 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.

## Just Remember...

When plugging in appliances, make sure they are plugged directly into the generator or a heavy duty outdoor-rated extension cord. The cords should be checked for cuts, tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin.

If you must connect the generator to the house wiring to power appliances, have a qualified electrician install a properly rated transfer switch in accordance with the National Electrical Code® (NEC) and all applicable state and local electrical codes.

## FACT



A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time.



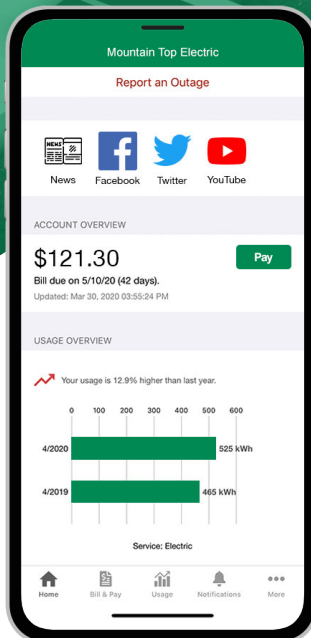
**NATIONAL FIRE  
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**  
The leading information and knowledge resource  
on fire, electrical and related hazards

[nfpa.org/education](http://nfpa.org/education) ©NFPA 2017





# SMART PAYMENT



**Save time. Eliminate late fees.  
Avoid service interruptions.**

With SmartHub, you'll be notified when your bill is due and you can pay securely online or in the app, anytime, anywhere.

Sign up for auto payments, set up your secure preferred payment method and let account management go into autopilot.

...all in the palm of your hand and online.

**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**

Need help paying your  
**ENERGY BILLS?**



**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



## What is HeatShare?

HeatShare is a voluntary non-governmental program of The Salvation Army that has been in existence since 1982. When you give to HeatShare, you are helping to warm the lives of the elderly, people with disabilities, and others who have nowhere else to turn. HeatShare provides financial assistance on a year-round basis and is used for electricity, natural gas, oil, propane, or wood.

## Who does HeatShare help?

- Seniors with low income and no alternate source of help.
- People with disabilities who are limited in their ability to maintain income to adequately cover energy costs.
- People who have an unexpected crisis and as a result cannot pay for household energy bills.

## What can you do to support your neighbor?

You can give the gift of heat by sending a tax-deductible donation to:

The Salvation Army, HeatShare Program, 2445 Prior Ave., Roseville, MN 55113

\*Please make checks payable to Heatshare

[www.heatshare.org](http://www.heatshare.org); 1-800-842-7279

# SMELL GAS?

# GET OUT!

**THEN CALL OPU • 24 HRS  
507-451-2480**



- Smell gas? (odor is like rotten eggs)
- Can't immediately find the source?
- DO NOT turn on a light switch or use the phone because the potential spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion!
- Get out and call OPU from your mobile phone or a neighbor's house.

**Learn more about Gas Safety at  
[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)**

## Clean Streets for Clean Water!

In urbanized areas, stormwater carries phosphorus and other pollutants directly into Minnesota's water resources through the drainage system. Unlike Owatonna's household wastewater, stormwater does not go through the Wastewater Treatment Facility. In many cases, stormwater is discharged directly to our rivers and creeks.



**Disposal of yard waste including grass and leaves is strictly prohibited by City Ordinance.**



## Fall Clean Water Tips

1. Have a storm drain near your home? Volunteer to adopt it through the City's Adopt a Catch Basin Program and receive a complimentary rake to keep it free of leaves and debris.
2. Sweep up your grass clippings, leaves, and other debris from driveways, sidewalks, and the street. Don't forget to keep the gutters cleared.
3. Clean up any excess fertilizer that has spread onto hard surfaces during application.
4. Even as the weather turns cold, continue scooping your pet's waste.
5. During routine fall tune-ups check your vehicle and outdoor equipment for leaks.

**Learn more about the Adopt-A-Catch Basin Program** by contacting Bradley D. Rademacher, Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist at (507)-774-7300 or [Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us)





# LED Light Bulbs

ON  
SALE  
NOW

R  
E  
B  
A  
T  
E  
S

*Reduced pricing through December while supplies last at these participating retailers:*



Alexander Lumber Co.  
Arrow Hardware & Paint  
Batteries + Bulbs  
Lowe's  
Walmart



## Financing Your Commercial Energy Efficiency Project

Efficiency upgrades can significantly improve the bottom line of your business, but they can also be a smart investment!

**Partnering In Energy Solutions** is a financing program administered by Owatonna Public Utilities that can help fund your energy reduction project up to \$25,000.

- It allows you to pay for the project on your utility bill over a one or two year period at 0% interest.
- The project must qualify for a CONSERVE & SAVE® rebate, and must be pre-approved by Owatonna Public Utilities. To see a full list of commercial CONSERVE & SAVE® rebates, visit [www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com).

To learn more about **Partnering In Energy Solutions**, call us at 507-451-2480.



Visit [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

# CONSERVE & \$AVE®

[www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) 7



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.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.

## Fall Checklist to Prepare for Winter

Fall is the perfect time to take advantage of the beautiful weather and start preparing for winter. Here's a checklist to help you get ready:

- Look up when cleaning gutters to ensure there are no power lines overhead
- Winterize your irrigation system
- Make sure all exhaust and intake vents for furnaces are clear and air is able to flow freely
- Plan to include any fire hydrants near you in your snow removal procedures
- Change your ceiling fans to move clockwise to push hotter air down
- Weather-strip and caulk doors and windows
- Replace filters
- Check carbon monoxide and fire alarm batteries
- Install a programmable thermostat to regulate temperature more efficiently



# DANGER

**Owatonna Public Utilities reminds you:**

**DO NOT store flammable liquids near natural gas appliances such as furnaces or water heaters!**

The most common types of flammable liquids homeowners have are:



**Gasoline**



**Solvents**



**Paint Thinners**



**Adhesives**



[WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM](http://WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM)