

CUSTOMER UPDATE

EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF UTILITY CAREERS

Discover the possibilities



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OPU MEMO



Roger Warehime,
General Manager

OPU Commission

Kent Rossi
Randy Doyal
Jay Johnson
Doug Zirngible
Greg Vetter

It's October, and while we enjoy the mild weather and falling leaves, we can't ignore that winter is on its way. That's why I want to talk to you about a specific concern we have for the upcoming cold months. There's a small chance we might need to call a "Grid Alert" to ensure our electric system stays reliable.

If you've been keeping up with our newsletters, you'll remember that we've discussed the possibility of a Grid Alert for the past two summers. Thankfully, we've been fortunate enough to go through another summer without needing to call one. But the conversation doesn't end there. As the seasons change, so do our challenges.

To clarify, a "Grid Alert" is not something we declare lightly. We only make such a call at the request of MISO, the Midcontinent System Operator. They're the folks responsible for keeping our regional power grid stable and reliable. And rest assured, if we're asked to call a Grid Alert, that means all utilities in the area are likely doing the same. So, don't be surprised if you hear similar messages from other local utilities; we're all working together to keep the lights on.

When it comes to getting the word out, we'll turn primarily to social media and local radio stations. Of course, participating in a Grid Alert is completely voluntary.

However, your cooperation is invaluable. By willingly reducing your electricity use, we can avoid more drastic measures like rolling blackouts.

You may be familiar with our "Peak Alerts" during the hot summer months. These alerts are mainly about dollars and cents; by reducing electricity use during peak hours, we all save money in the long run by lessening the need for new power plants. But "Grid Alerts" are a different animal altogether. These alerts are about maintaining the stability of our power system, ensuring that demand doesn't outpace supply. They aren't about cost-saving; they're about keeping the lights on for everyone.

Winter brings its own set of challenges that may necessitate a Grid Alert. Factors such as transmission outages from winter storms, constrained natural gas supplies affecting generators, and periods when the wind isn't sufficient for power generation can create a serious strain on the electric system. While our grid is robust enough to handle any of these factors on their own, it could be a different story if they happen simultaneously.

We understand that adjusting your electricity usage, especially during the chill of winter, can be inconvenient. But if we reach out with a Grid Alert, it's a proactive step taken by MISO and the utilities it serves, including us, to maintain the reliability of our electrical system. It's a collective effort to prevent reaching the point of mandatory load-shedding, or rolling blackouts. Your comfort and safety are our top priorities, and this is one way we can all work together to keep the system stable.

In closing, we want to express our gratitude for your continued trust in Owatonna Public Utilities. As we gear up for another Minnesota winter, let's also prepare to face new challenges together. Whether it's a Peak Alert in the sweltering heat of summer or a potential Grid Alert in the freezing cold, your voluntary participation makes all the difference. Thank you for being an engaged and responsible member of our community; your actions contribute to the greater good, ensuring a more reliable and sustainable future for us all.



As Fire Prevention Week approaches, Owatonna Fire Department reminds residents:

"Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention."

The Owatonna Fire Department is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) — the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week™ (FPW) for more than 100 years — to promote this year's FPW campaign, "Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention™." The campaign works to educate everyone about simple but important actions they can take when cooking to keep themselves and those around them safe.

According to NFPA, cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires and deaths.

"Year after year, cooking remains the leading cause of home fires by far, accounting for half (49 percent) of all U.S. home fires," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of outreach and advocacy at NFPA. "These numbers tell us that there is still much work to do when it comes to better educating the public about ways to stay safe when cooking." The Owatonna Fire Department offers these key safety tips to help reduce the risk of a cooking fire.

1. Watch what you heat. Always keep a close eye on what you are cooking. Set a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
2. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Always keep a lid nearby when cooking. If a small grease fire starts, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner.
3. Have a "kid- and pet-free zone" of at least 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove or grill and anywhere else hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

To kick off Fire Prevention Week, Owatonna Fire Department is hosting their annual chili / wild rice soup feed and open house on Sunday, October 8 from 4 to 7 PM at the fire station. Equipment and trucks will be on display and firefighters will be available to answer questions as part of the open house.

For more information about Fire Prevention Week and cooking safety, visit www.fpw.org. For fire safety fun for kids, visit sparky.org.

Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety: Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

What the beeps and chirps of a CO alarm mean:

- A continuous set of four loud beeps—beep, beep, beep, beep—means carbon monoxide is present in the home. Go outside, call 9-1-1 and stay out.
- A single chirp every 30 or 60 seconds means the battery is low and must be replaced. Even alarms that are plugged in have a battery back-up which needs to be replaced.
- CO alarms also have "end of life" sounds that vary by manufacturer. This means it is time to get a new CO alarm.
- 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 if it is over 7 years old. Don't remember how old the unit is? Replace it!



EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF UTILITY CAREERS

Discover the possibilities



The utility industry is full of thrilling career opportunities. In this article, we'll take you on a tour of the fascinating world of utility jobs, where there's something for everyone. Let's explore the wide range of utility careers you might find interesting.

The World of Utility Careers: From the friendly voices you hear when you call for assistance to the brave lineworkers who keep the lights on during storms, the utility industry is a bustling world with roles that suit various interests and skills.

- **Customer Service Representatives:** Excellent communication and problem-solving skills are essential in this role. Representatives must be able to assist customers effectively and resolve their issues. What better feeling than helping someone solve their problems.
- **Lineworkers:** Physical stamina, technical skills, and a strong commitment to safety are crucial for lineworkers. They work in challenging conditions to maintain power lines.
- **Welders:** Skilled in the art of welding, they play a crucial role in maintaining the infrastructure that delivers essential services like water and gas to your home. Precision and attention to detail are key.
- **Waterworks Operator:** Technical knowledge and an understanding of water treatment processes are necessary. Specialists use advanced technology to ensure safe and clean drinking water.
- **Natural Gas Technicians:** Technical skills and a focus on safety are vital for gas technicians. They maintain and repair gas lines, ensuring the safe distribution of natural gas.
- **Meter Serviceworkers:** Attention to detail and technical proficiency are essential for meter serviceworkers. They install, maintain, and read utility meters accurately.
- **Accounting Professionals:** Financial acumen and attention to detail are important for accountants. They manage budgets and financial transactions.

The utility industry is evolving rapidly, embracing new technologies and practices. Skills for these emerging positions vary but often include:

- **Data Analysts:** Analytical skills and proficiency in data analysis tools are crucial for data analysts. They help utilities make informed decisions based on data insights.
- **Information Technology Specialists:** Strong IT skills and cybersecurity knowledge are essential for IT specialists. They ensure the secure and efficient operation of systems.
- **Energy Conservation Experts:** Knowledge of energy-saving techniques and sustainability practices is key. These experts develop strategies to reduce energy consumption.
- **Communications and Advertising Specialists:** Creativity and strong communication skills are essential for these specialists. They help utilities communicate effectively with customers.

The utility industry is constantly evolving, with a growing demand for skilled professionals. As your child explores their career options, remember there's more to discover in the utility world than you might think.

What's Next?: Excited about these careers? Great news! This article is just the beginning. In the coming months, we'll delve deeper into specific utility jobs with our "scorecards" series. We'll explore their duties, salary ranges, and introduce you to individuals breaking barriers in traditionally male-dominated roles, like meter services and dispatch. Are you ready to uncover the secrets of utility careers? Stay tuned for our upcoming scorecards and get ready to be inspired!

The utility industry isn't just about keeping the lights on; it's about powering careers and making a positive impact in our community. Are you ready to be a part of it?

VAMPIRE POWER

Fight Vampire Power and save electricity!

If you're not using an electronic device, unplug it. Or, plug multiple items into a power strip and simply switch it off when you're not using the devices.



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; 1-800-842-7279

NOT EVEN HE CAN SNIFF OUT ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS HOME INTRUDERS

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can be deadly. Symptoms of CO poisoning can be similar to COVID.

If you, or your family, are experiencing headaches, dizziness, drowsiness, weakness, nausea, vomiting or convulsions call 911 immediately.



STAY SAFE! LEAVE IT TO THE PROFESSIONALS

There is no probably when working around electricity...as in, "it will probably be okay."

Metering equipment has the potential to create an arc flash and other hazards (see picture on the right). Meter sockets should only be opened by properly

trained professionals with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Do not cut the safety/security seal. If you notice electrical equipment that does not have a seal or you need to schedule work around your socket, please call OPU to make arrangements.

Eliminate the probably.



CONSERVATION TIP\$

October is Energy Awareness Month. We encourage customers to take the time to visit our website and review all our energy conservation tips!

<https://www.owatonnautilities.com/residential-customers/conservation-tips/>



HOW CAN YOUR FURNACE/ BOILER SAVE YOU MONEY?

With rising fuel costs, it's more important than ever to have your furnace or boiler inspected. Regular preventative maintenance performed by a professional HVAC technician is the best way to ensure trouble-free and energy-efficient operation.

Owatonna Public Utilities offers a
\$25 REBATE
FOR A RESIDENTIAL
FURNACE/BOILER
2-YEAR CLEAN & TUNE.

Download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions at www.owatonnautilities.com.

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Y M Z E C E B W R N F I X A W
N Q W M F T B O M O N E Y B T
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Download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions at www.owatonnautilities.com.





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.



LED Light Bulbs

FINAL YEAR!

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



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



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.



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