

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



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# OPU MEMO



Mark Fritsch,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

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

In last month's newsletter, we informed you of our plans to launch our new customer information system for billing, customer records, payments and an online customer portal on September 4th. This new system promises significant improvements to our billing system, work management processes, and cyber security related to credit cards.

Over the past several months our employees and our vendor, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), worked diligently and spent countless hours preparing for the September launch date. A software project of this scope has a great amount of complexity and requires significant time to migrate and test such a massive amount of data from over thirty thousand meters and processes. We knew from the start it was going to a long and difficult road, but we took on the challenge anyway. We made great progress, and got very close.

However, just days before the scheduled launch, our team made the difficult decision to delay the launch from September 4th to October 1st because there was too much risk that there would be problems which would negatively impact our customers if we went live as scheduled. While our team was disappointed, they felt they were making the right decision.

I am extremely proud of our team for making this decision and I do not see the delay as a failure. Instead, I see it as an indicator of how a customer-focused company operates and makes decisions. In the discussions leading up to the decision, one of our employees said, "It's close, but close isn't good enough – we want to do this right." Another said, "We are not going to deliver a poor quality experience to our customers."

We apologize for any inconvenience this delay causes and believe you will understand why we feel it is the right decision. The delay will give our team and our software vendor the time needed to deliver a quality system to you, our customers.

We continue to look forward to all the great things our new software will help us do to better serve you. We also appreciate the many positive comments we have already received from many of our customers complimenting us on our decision and on our candid, honest approach in communicating the decision.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Fix a leaking toilet to save up to 200 gallons of water a day, 73,000 gallons a year!  
Even toilets that don't sound like they leak should be checked periodically.

Go to [www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips](http://www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips) for more conservation tips.





### Brooktree Family Sunday Funday!

If you haven't already heard, Sundays are Family Funday at Brooktree Golf Course! Adults and children (ages 5 & up) can come and play together after 2 p.m. Green fees for nine holes are just \$15 per pair, and \$5 for a cart. Parent and child must each have their own sets of clubs. Please call ahead for a tee time!

### Brooktree Golf Course

On-Line Tee Times are now available! Check the Parks and Recreation website for the link!

**Brooktree and Master's Bar & Grille** is on Facebook! Be sure to follow Brooktree on Facebook for fall specials at the course and in the restaurant!

### Woofstock

**Friday, September 14th – 5:30-9:30PM**

#### Lake Chase Dog Park

We will be celebrating "National Dog Day" a little late this year at Lake Chase Dog Park! Bring your four-legged friend to visit local vendors, taste some food and drink from Master's Bar & Grille and stay to watch the movie "101 Dalmations"! Don't have a dog? That's fine! This event is for everyone! Be sure to bring a blanket or chair to sit on during the movie

### Archery Day

**September 15th, 10:00am to 12:00pm**

September will mark the first anniversary of the Archery Park being open. This will allow us for grand opening of the Archery Range at 711 Elm Avenue. This day will consist of demonstrations and learning session on how to shoot arrows, archery rules, games, and much more. We will have equipment available for use. Come see another great asset to our community.

### 4th Annual Trick or Treat Trail- Free Community Event!

**Saturday, October 27th – 2:00 – 4:00pm**

#### Manthey Park

Ghosts and Goblins of all ages grab your trick or treat bags and head to Manthey Park for our 5th Annual Trick or Treat Trail! Visit local businesses along the trail for treats, games, and a photo shoot. Take a ride on the kiddie train ride, find spooky treasures on the scavenger hunt and visit the cute animals at the petting zoo! We'll also have a bounce house, hot chocolate and food trucks. New this year- a Woof or Treat Trail! Dress your furry friends and visit the separate trail, with treats and goodies just for them. Mark your calendars!

### Youth Basketball Registration

Youth basketball registration (grades K-6) will begin September 20. Register on-line at <http://owatonnaparksrectest.maxgalaxy.net/Home.aspx> or by stopping at our office Monday-Friday 7 am-5 pm (540 West Hills Circle).

### West Hills Tennis & Fitness Center

– New fall and winter hours for West Hills begin on October 1st. Fitness Center is open Monday-Thursday 6am-9:30pm, Friday 6am-7pm, Saturday 8am-6pm and Sunday 11am-6pm. Pool hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 6-7:15am; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday from 7-9pm; Saturday and Sunday 1-4pm. Upcoming Specials: September – SERVE IT UP: It's Tennis Time...reserve a 1 ½ hour block of Open Tennis Court Time for \$5.00 per person (plus court fee) between 7:00 pm-8:30 pm, Monday – Thursday. October: Get Pumped for Fall: Purchase a one month membership and get entered into a drawing for a free month membership of equal or lesser value. \*Not eligible with any other specials or discounts

**The Park Passport is back!** Use the insert in the Fall Parks & Recreation brochure, find one online at [ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation](http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation) or stop in the office to pick yours up! In the 12 miles of trail used to complete a passport, you'll see the beauty of Owatonna's parks. Look for the signs, approximately 2-4 feet from the ground, at each park to complete a 12-word phrase. The first set of signs will be posted from September 7-20, and the second ones from September 21-October 7. Only one entry per household, but bring the whole family to search! Prize packages include a Brooktree Golf Course gift certificate, Cabela's prize package, bike package gift certificate from Straight River sports, and River Springs Water Park passes. So get those hiking boots out & get ready to hit the trail!

We want to hear from you! Parks and Recreation is Your Best Investment. Are there things you would like to see offered... let us know! Are there things we do really well...let us know! What's your favorite part of Parks & Recreation...let us know! What additions or improvements would you like to see...let us know! Although budget and time constraints limit what we can do...we'd like to know what you want to do!

Until next time, get out and enjoy your parks during this fine fall weather!

### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss



Information for this article provided by Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA)

## Owatonna Energy Station Open House

An open house at the Owatonna Energy Station (OES) drew about 75 people on Aug. 8 for a dedication ceremony and tours of the \$40 million plant. Several people spoke at the event including Owatonna Mayor Tom Kuntz and State Representative John Petersburg. The plant, which was completed \$4 million under budget, began commercial operation in March 2018. The plant is owned and operated by OPU's power agency and wholesale electricity provider, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA).

"In addition to further diversifying SMMPA's generation portfolio, OES significantly increases the local resources available to help our utility maintain reliability within the city", said Mark Fritsch, OPU General Manager and SMMPA Board President. "We had been relying on minimum backup emergency generation since 2010 when the Straight River flooded our facility and destroyed our power plant."

The facility features:

- 38.8 megawatts of generation
- Four reciprocating internal combustion engines fueled by natural gas, delivered via the Owatonna Public Utilities (OPU) gas distribution system
- A high-efficiency, low-emission design with the ability to quickly start, stop and adjust production, providing an ideal complement to intermittent wind and solar resources
- Oxidation catalysts that remove more than 90 percent of carbon monoxide
- Four SMMPA employees to run the station and a neighboring 16.5-megawatt OPU gas turbine under contract to the SMMPA
- A 3-acre pollinator prairie to support butterflies and bees

## Lemond Solar Center Shines in First Year

In its first year of operation, the Lemond Solar Center near Owatonna outperformed the industry average at turning sunshine into emission-free energy for SMMPA.

Lemond concluded its first year on June 30 with an annual capacity factor of 22 percent, exceeding the 15 to 18 percent for the typical solar array. The capacity factor varies day to day, depending on the length of day, angle of the sun, amount of cloud cover and occasional snow cover.

Under a 20-year agreement, SMMPA buys all output — up to 5 megawatts — from Lemond. However, the developer installed enough solar panels to generate 6 megawatts, which enables the station's output to reach 5 megawatts more time in the average day.

"Once it started production, Lemond has been humming along with no significant issues," says Mark Mitchell, SMMPA's director of Operations & Chief Operating Officer. "The sun doesn't shine all of the time so, as expected, this is an intermittent resource."

More than 20,000 pole-mounted, photovoltaic solar panels, which follow the sun for increased generation, produce an average of about 22,500 kilowatt hours of electricity per day — enough to power about 760 average homes. Lemond's solar panels track the sun's movement from east to west and can be set in a flat position to minimize wind damage.

"In our part of the country, solar energy is more expensive than overall energy market prices," Mitchell says. "We knew that going in, but we believe it is important to gain firsthand experience with a solar resource and to further diversify our energy portfolio."

The 35-acre site connects to OPU's distribution system, reducing the amount of energy that SMMPA must buy from the energy market.



# EQUIPMENT SERIES



Most new additions to the OPU gas distribution system consist of medium density polyethylene (PE) piping. We use this material for both our new and replacement projects for operating pressures up to 60 PSIG (pounds per square inch, gauge). For higher pressures, we use steel pipe. There are several advantages to using PE versus steel pipe. In addition to having a lower cost, corrosion does not affect PE pipe. To join the PE material together, a heat fusion technique commonly called "butt" and "sidewall" fusion is used. It involves cleaning of the parts to be joined, careful alignment, heating, pressing the heated components together, and holding them in place

while allowing them to cool. Heat fusion techniques produce joints that have very high integrity and reliability and are cost effective. These joints are stronger than the pipe itself in both tension and pressure conditions. The worker in the accompanying photo is installing a service tee on a main as part of a current upgrade project. The technique for the heat fusion joint is basically the same as it was in 1956...only the fusion equipment has evolved to gain efficiency, reliability, and convenience.

## PUBLIC POWER WEEK

*Please join us in celebrating...*

**PUBLIC  
POWER  
WEEK**

OCTOBER 7-13, 2018

Powering Strong Communities

**Thursday, October 11, 2018**

**8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

**208 S. Walnut Ave.**

Refreshments, Lineman Photo Prop,  
FREE Energy Star LED Bulb\*, Build-  
ing Tours (9am, Noon, 2pm, 5pm),  
SmartHub Assistance

\* limit 1 per household, while supplies last

**PUBLIC POWER: costs less, reliable, customer-focused**

learn more at [www.publicpower.org](http://www.publicpower.org)

## OPU HIGHLIGHT



**Mark Fritsch (r) with John  
Crooks, MMUA Board  
President**

Congratulations to Mark Fritsch, OPU General Manager, for receiving an Honorary Lifetime Membership to Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA). Mark was awarded this honor at MMUA's annual summer conference in Alexandria this past August.

Mark has undertaken two MMUA projects of great value to the organization.

- Mark was a key member of the small group that developed the concept and curriculum for the MMUA Leadership Academy.
- For the past several years, Mark has been leading MMUA's "Base Case" effort to provide municipal utilities with a well-thought-out starting point and road map for service territory negotiations with a co-op. Mark has been the intellectual driver of the effort, and his experience with negotiations has been extremely helpful to other members of the group. Mark has led the development of written guidance materials that will continue to provide value long after he retires.

While Mark did not spend his entire career with municipal utilities, he has made exceptional contributions to MMUA during his nearly ten years of involvement with public power.

# SMELL GAS? GET OUT!

## THEN CALL OPU • 24 HRS • 507.451.1616



- 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)



### Protect Groundwater and Conserve Your Fresh Water Source

Groundwater is by far the most valuable natural resource in our ecosystem. Life would be next to impossible without a clean source of fresh water. In the Cannon River Watershed, groundwater accounts for over 85% of water pumped to meet agricultural, industrial, and other uses. In addition, it accounts for 100% of the areas drinking water.

#### Did You Know?

- Only 1% of the water on earth is usable
- 99% of the usable water is groundwater
- Groundwater supplies 33% of all water used by municipalities in the U.S.
- Almost half of the U.S. population relies on groundwater for drinking
- Approximately 13 million households have their own well
- America uses 79 Billion gallons per day (enough bathtubs full of water to circle the Earth more than 60 times)
- US agricultural irrigation accounts for 53.5 Billion gallons DAILY, compared to 1950 where it was only 2.2 Billion gallons daily
- Worldwide groundwater use is estimated at 259 Trillion gallons annually

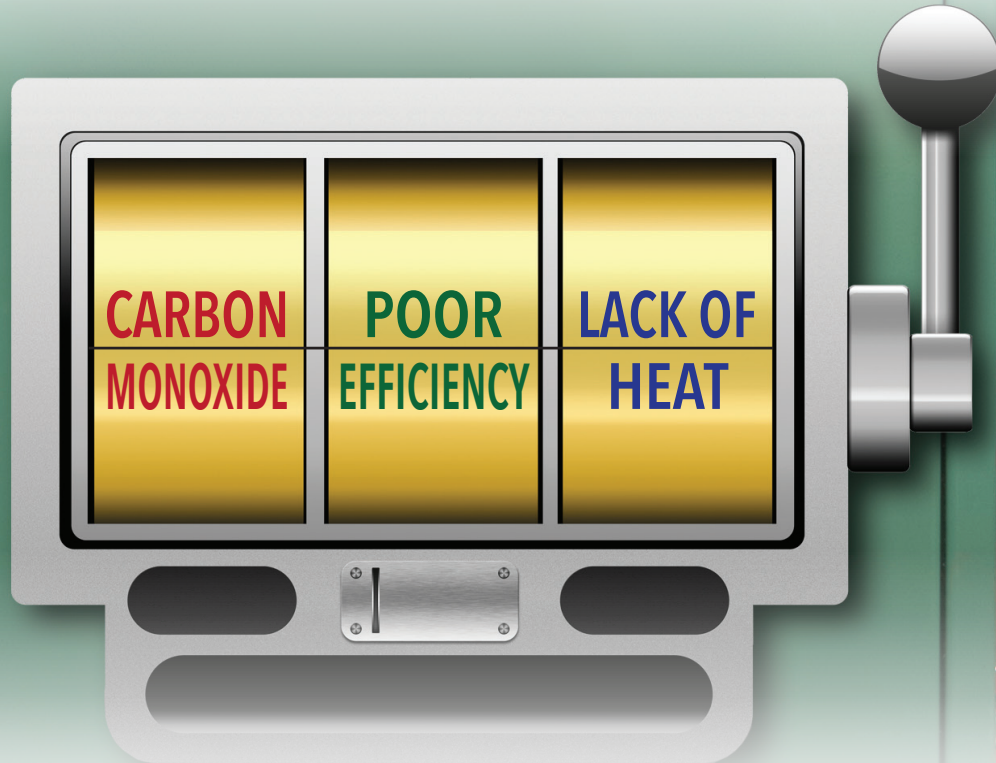
**Take time to think about water consumption in your daily life. Are you wasting or polluting your valuable resource?**

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](mailto:Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us).



# REBATES

## DON'T GAMBLE ON YOUR FURNACE OR BOILER!



October is HVAC System Awareness Month. Make sure your heating system is working properly and efficiently.

Complete a Clean & Tune and apply for a

**\$25 REBATE!**

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

**CONSERVE & \$AVE<sup>®</sup>**



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](http://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.

## UPDATED NOTICE!

### CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS CANNOT BE PROCESSED

### SEPT 27 – OCT 1, 2018

Due to the complex programming of our new and improved billing system, the rollout is postponed until Oct 1. Therefore, credit/debit card payments cannot be processed Sept 27–Oct 1. Cash or checks will still be accepted. Our apologies for any inconvenience this causes!

The new system will offer customers many benefits including paperless billing, enhanced web portal, and interactive voice response for credit card payments. Thank you for your patience – we believe it will be worth the wait!



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