



VOLUME 31 | ISSUE #9  
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# CUSTOMER UPDATE

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# OPU MEMO



Toni Van Esch,  
Supervisor, Customer Care

## OPU Commission

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

Earlier this year, we sent out a customer satisfaction survey to encourage feedback from our customers regarding different topics. The survey was sent via email and mail, to 1,000 randomly selected, residential customers.

We used an independent, third-party vendor called, Q Market Research, to send, analyze and report the findings of the survey. The purpose of the survey is to give us an indication of what our overall customer satisfaction level is. The survey contained benchmarking questions as well as questions related to recent happenings or other utility-related items.

Several comments we received expressed concerns about the unusual number of outages we have had this year. We have the same concerns and are working on several initiatives to continually improve our reliability. Your responses also confirmed that reliability and price stability are the most important issues OPU should be focusing on. We agree and are continuing to research different options in both areas.

One question on the survey may have seemed strange or irrelevant. The question asked was: 'On a scale of 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely), how likely is it that you would recommend Owatonna Public Utilities as a utility provider?' Since, OPU is the only local utility provider in Owatonna,

why is this question so important? It is important because it shows us what our customers' perception of us is and helps us arrive at our Net Promoter Score (NPS). The Net Promoter Score is a key loyalty indicator used by many companies across the US as the standard by which they measure overall customer satisfaction.

In the most recent survey, we received a score of 49.7. Nationally, utility companies generally score between -10 and +15. So, we are pleased with our above-average score.

We understand we are the sole utility provider in Owatonna. We also strongly believe in not ACTING like customers don't have a choice. We feel it is important our customers trust us and know we have their best interests in mind in every business decision we make. So, our question to you is, "If you had a choice, would you still recommend Owatonna Public Utilities as your provider of choice?" We hope your answer is Yes!

We want to thank all our customers who took the time to respond to the survey. We value your feedback and appreciate your taking the time to fill it out. If you receive a survey in the future, we encourage you to fill it out and send it back. By doing so, you help us better understand your experience, and you give us ideas for how we can better serve you in the future.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

As outdoor temperatures cool off and your urge to open windows strengthens, wait until the dewpoint (included in most weather apps) drops to 55°F or below before you turn off your AC and open windows. Your house will stay comfortable, and your AC and dehumidifier will work less.





### What a Celebration in Owatonna!

The Grand Opening for We All Play took place on July 19th. Owatonna got to celebrate the culmination of a grass roots project started more than five years ago by moms Missy Ahrens and Amanda Gislason, they had a dream. They worked tirelessly for We All Play! And now, their children Miley and Gunnar, played alongside hundreds of others and enjoyed the Grand Opening of the city's first inclusive playground and Miracle Field baseball field.



We enjoyed speeches by Missy and Amanda. Below is a part of Missy's speech (used with her permission) to explain how important of a project, and just how big of a deal, this really is.

Every child deserves the opportunity to play, and just as important, every parent and grandparent should have the opportunity to be able to play with their children and grandchildren.

Missy challenged each and everyone in the crowd of over 500 to find ways to build in inclusion in their lives, in our community and within our school system. Say "hi", extend the invitation, presume competence, celebrate differences, be conscious of the visible and invisible barriers and ask how do I remove them. Be intentional in planning, get creative and speak up! That Monday was that first step toward an inclusive community!



We. All. Play. Three simple words. Two amazing kids. Huge community support. One pretty awesome park!

How can we best understand what inclusion can look like? Enjoy the pictures of our community, together.

#### MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

#### COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

# WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A POWER OUTAGE

I'm sure quite a few of us remember the straight-line winds that came through Owatonna in September 2018 or the major flooding we had in September 2010. Even though the summer is winding down, September has historically proven severe storms are still a possibility.

During an outage, OPU's #1 priority, after safety, is to determine the source of the outage. The source of most outages is obvious; however, others are not so obvious and take longer to diagnose. In "not so obvious" outages, our linemen may have to physically walk the path of the powerlines to find the reason for the outage. This process is necessary and adds delays to restoration times. Once the reason has been identified, the next priority is to reconnect the most customers in the shortest amount of time possible. Sometimes it is necessary to switch loads to different circuits from one of our other substations. Again, this process takes time to ensure everyone is safe, no further damage to equipment will occur and no other areas of town will be affected.

In 2021, OPU was one of 27 municipal utilities in Minnesota, who received the American Public Power Association's award for Excellence in Reliability. This award is given to public power utilities who are in the top quartile (25%) of utilities nationwide. In 2020, OPU customers were out of power, on average, for 12 minutes when excluding major events and 27 minutes when including major events. To date in 2021, customers have been out of power, on average, 4 minutes when excluding our three major events and 84 minutes when including them. In comparison, the nationwide utility average is 139 minutes when excluding major events and 267 minutes with major events.

While we understand losing power can be a big inconvenience, rest assured we are doing all we can, as quickly as possible, to restore your power. We appreciate all our customers' patience, support and understanding during outages.

## What can you do in the event of a power outage?

### • REPORT YOUR OUTAGE

- If your outage appears to affect only your house, check your breakers first.
- Using your mobile device (after disconnecting from your WIFI), you can report outages three ways:
  - Log into your SmartHub account. This feeds directly into our outage management system for fastest notification and helps crews pinpoint the possible cause.
  - go to [www.owatonnautilities.com/outages](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/outages)
  - call us at 507-451-2480 option #1

### • KEEP REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS CLOSED

- A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened
- A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours half full) if it remains closed

### • PLAN AHEAD

- Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices
- If you need to use a generator, keep it outdoors and away from windows
- Use surge protectors, or disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges
- Have portable power banks charged and ready for cell phones
- Prepare an emergency kit with flashlights/candles and a weather radio.

### • STAY INFORMED

- You can check the affected outage area at [www.owatonnautilities.com/outages](http://www.owatonnautilities.com/outages)
- Like us on Facebook. Every 45-60 minutes updates are posted during a large outage

### • REMEMBER, IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS OR HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who stopped out to visit our booth at the Steele County Free Fair.

Our theme this year focused on the cost of OPU water versus bottled water. A single 16.9 oz. bottle of water costs approximately \$.50 when purchased in bulk. We showed, for the same price, you can get approximately 360 gallons of OPU water. If you were to purchase 360 gallons of bottled water, it would cost approximately \$1,363 (2,726 bottles) and would generate about 54 pounds of plastic waste.

This turned out to be a very fitting theme as our water tower seemed to be the hit of the Four Seasons building; especially through Friday when the temperature and humidity were high.

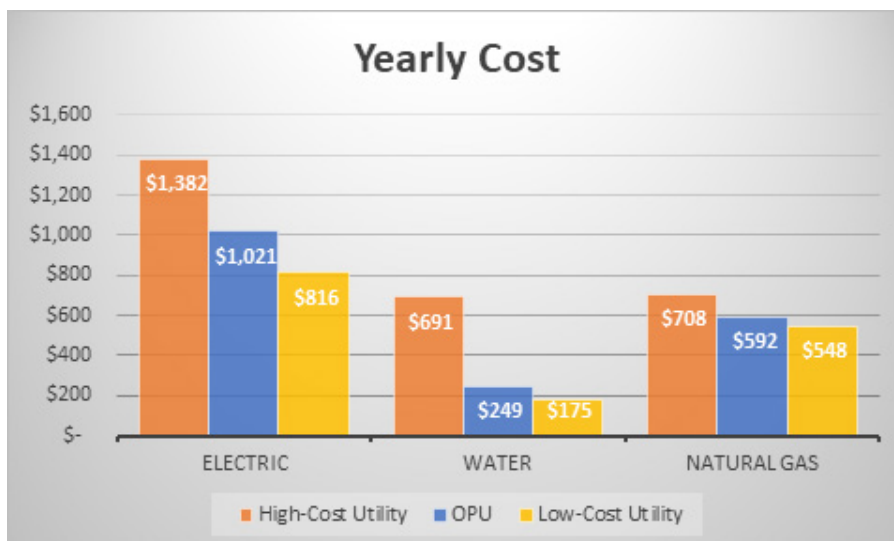
We look forward to seeing everyone next year!



## How do OPU rates compare to other utilities?

OPU compares how much the average residential customer pays for electric, water and natural gas for a year against other utilities in the area. Rates and fees from other area utilities are all applied to the same "average residential customer" in Owatonna to truly see how the total cost of utilities compares.

The chart to the right, using 2020 rates and fees, shows how the highest cost utility, lowest cost utility, and OPU compare. As you can see, OPU is not the lowest cost utility provider; however, we are closer to the low-cost providers than the high-cost providers for all three services we provide. Being in the middle is a balance between keeping rates low while ensuring we can invest in the maintenance, upgrades, and improvements to our systems.



# 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)



## Save Energy and Money. (definitely) Enjoy Household Chores. (maybe)

### ENERGY STAR® + ENERGY STAR® MOST EFFICIENT APPLIANCE REBATES

Clothes Dryers  
\$50

Clothes Washers  
up to \$90

Dehumidifiers  
\$15\*

Dishwashers  
up to \$40

Freezers  
\$25\*

Refrigerators  
\$25\*

Room Air Conditioners  
\$25\*

\*Plus Bonus Recycling Rebate  
up to \$15



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





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.



## NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS

**EFF: OCTOBER 1 THRU APRIL 30**

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has issued Cold Weather Rule (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 216B.097) as published by the Minnesota Legislature Session Law 2021.

This notice is to inform customers of their rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. The rule provides that from October 1 to April 30, Owatonna Public Utilities cannot disconnect a residential customer for non-payment if a payment arrangement is entered into, and keep current. If a customer chooses not to assert their rights or enter into a Payment Agreement, services may be disconnected.

### Your Rights:

- To declare your Inability to Pay
- To enter into a signed, mutually agreed upon Payment Arrangement.
- To appeal any proposed disconnection.

### Your Responsibilities

- To declare your Inability to Pay.
- To enter into a signed, mutually agreed upon Payment Arrangement
- To make timely payments as agreed, or promptly notify OPU of changes in circumstances..

### Where to Get Financial Assistance

SEMCAC-Energy Assistance at 1-800-944-3281 or 507-451-7134 for more information.

For more information, please call 507-451-2480 or visit our website at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com)



**WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM**