



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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SEPTEMBER 2022

# CUSTOMER UPDATE

WHY

## PUBLIC POWER BUILDS BETTER COMMUNITIES



COMMUNITY-OWNED AND  
CUSTOMER-FOCUSED



YOUR VOICE MATTERS



LOWER COSTS AND  
INCREASED RELIABILITY



PUBLIC POWER IS  
#COMMUNITYpowered

PUBLIC POWER?

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# OPU MEMO



Jared Hendricks,  
Key Accounts & Energy  
Conservation Officer

## OPU Commission

Matt Kottke  
Kent Rossi  
Randy Doyal  
Jay Johnson  
Doug Zirngible

A lot of discussion has been happening about the increased cost of utilities customers will be facing this winter. With both electricity and natural gas costs rising, I think it is important to discuss ways customers can reduce their costs through conservation efforts, as well as, encourage customers to consider more efficient appliances and equipment in their home.

While it is common to hear “energy conservation” and “energy efficiency” used interchangeably, there is a distinct difference between the two phrases. Energy conservation really gets down to the actions customers take to reduce energy consumption. Turning off lights when leaving a room, thermostat setbacks, and shorter showers are all examples of energy conservation. The only investment needed is a conscious change of habits or adjusting settings on equipment. Energy conservation can be looked at as using less energy with what we already have and is the first step to reducing utility bills.

Energy efficiency, in contrast, is the act of replacing older inefficient equipment with newer more efficient equipment. A great example of energy efficiency is replacing a 20-year-old furnace that is only 80% efficient with a new 97% efficient condensing furnace or replacing out a 3.0 gallon per flush (gpf) toilet with a 1.28 gpf toilet. Energy efficiency can be summarized as buying new equipment that uses less energy than old equipment while being used the same way and is the second step to reducing utility bills.

Unfortunately, energy efficiency is not free. Owatonna Public Utilities is doing another round of BONUS REBATES for specified natural gas equipment starting October 1, 2022. Bonus rebates are an additional incentive, on top of the standard rebate, to help reduce the cost for customers upgrading to more efficient equipment.

Bonus rebates will be available for the following programs:

- Furnaces (excluding new construction)
- Boilers
- Smart Thermostats
- Water Heaters
- Showerheads
- Attic Insulation
- Attic Air Sealing
- Rim Joist Sealing/Insulation

**For these bonus rebates, the following requirements must be met:**

- **Installed** between October 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023
- Must be **fully installed** during this timeframe, no exceptions
- Rebate form must be submitted within **3 months** of the date of final installation
- Equipment must meet all applicable rebate requirements, terms, and conditions
- Standard Rebate plus Bonus Rebate **cannot exceed purchase price** (excluding tax and labor)

Bonus rebates will DOUBLE what customers normally receive for rebates. For example, a 97% AFUE furnace will provide a \$800 rebate with the bonus when normally the rebate is \$400. To receive the bonus rebate, submit the standard rebate form and write “Bonus” next to the rebate category name.

Visit [OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://OwatonnaUtilities.com) for rebate forms with complete terms and conditions.

## **Pickleball**

West Hills Tennis and Fitness Center is preparing dual-purpose tennis and pickleball courts that will be ready this Fall. Pickleball will be on courts five and six. Courts one through four will remain designated for tennis only. Pickleball lines will be a blended dark blue color. Pickleball nets will be rollable and USA Pickleball approved. Pickleball paddles, balls and other accessories will be available for purchase at the West Hills Pro Shop.

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net set to a height of 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball and composite or wooden paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played indoors or outdoors and is easy to learn. It can also develop into a fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players. In recent years, Pickleball has developed a passionate following due to its friendly, social nature and its short learning curve. Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles. New players can learn the basic rules quickly in a single session. No special apparel is needed. Equipment is relatively inexpensive and easily portable. The game can be played by all ages.

Leagues, events, programs and competitive pickleball match opportunities will be available.

The sport of Pickleball is governed by the USA Pickleball Association which maintains the rules, promotes the sport, sanctions tournaments and provides player ratings. For more information, please visit [usapickleball.org](https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/). Source: <https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/>.

## **Trails & Parks Master Plan Update**

Everyone is invited to the October 13 Open House to provide input

Over the last few months, public input has been gathered to create plans for four recreational areas. The areas being planned include Morehouse Park, the Skate Park, Cashman property, Kaplan's Woods including Kaplan's Woods Parkway and Lake Kohlmier. Options for connecting the North Straight River Parkway and the Buxton Trail by Maple Creek are also included. Focus groups and open houses have been held and online surveys and forums provided to collect ideas to help create a new vision for these park areas.

The draft plans for potential park uses were displayed at the Steele County Free Fair in The Great Outdoors Building. They will also be available at an Open House October 13 from 5 until 8 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at 540 West Hills Circle. The public is invited to weigh in on these draft plans. It is anticipated the plans will be completed and adopted by City Council in January.

The Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department's vision is to be recognized as a quality parks and recreation operation and as a regional destination hub for innovative trends creating a vibrant park system that is welcoming for everyone in the community. In the spirit of that vision, the City Council approved a contract in March with WSB Engineering to help facilitate the planning for these parks. "Community input is essential as we reimagine these resources to ensure they serve today's needs," said Jenna Tuma, Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities. Working from the larger Parks & Trails System Plan created by WSB and adopted by City Council in 2020, this phase of planning is considering potential uses, development and redevelopment and will provide Park Master Plans.

Visit [wsb.mysocialpinpoint.com/Owatonna](https://wsb.mysocialpinpoint.com/Owatonna) to view interactive project maps, provide a comment, like other comments, voice concerns by pinpointing a certain area on the map or for information about ongoing engagement opportunities. For additional information, email [maryjo.knudson@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:maryjo.knudson@ci.owatonna.mn.us).

## **Owatonna Parks, Recreation & Facilities Fall and Winter Activity Guide**

The Fall and Winter Activity Guide is filled with various activities for all ages including archery, geocaching, water aerobics, youth sports, adult trips and weekly activities, adaptive recreation activities, snowshoeing, tennis, pickleball, special events and so much more! Register for programs online at [owatonna.gov](https://owatonna.gov), by phone at (507) 444-4321 or in person at City Hall during office hours.



## **MAYOR**

Tom Kuntz

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Dan Boeke

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

# PUBLIC POWER BUILDS BETTER COMMUNITIES

## Why Public Power?

*Information and graphics for this article obtained from the American Public Power Association.*

More than 2,000 cities and towns in the United States light up their homes, businesses and streets with “public power” -- electricity that comes from a community owned and operated utility.

Public power utilities are like our public schools and libraries: a division of local government, owned by the community, run by boards of local officials accountable to the citizens.

While each public power utility is different, reflecting its hometown characteristics and values, all have a common purpose: providing customers in the community with safe, reliable, not-for-profit electricity at a reasonable price while protecting the environment. All public power utilities share five basic tenets that comprise the public power business model:

### Public Ownership

Public power utilities are owned by and operated for the citizens they serve and therefore are accountable to their local owners.

### Local Control

Local, independent regulation and governance gives utility policymakers greater agility in decision-making and protects the long-term viability of the utility, while permitting customer involvement in the process. This ensures decisions reflect the values of the community.

### Nonprofit Operations

Community-owned electric utilities serve only the interest of their customers, avoiding conflicts between the interests of shareholders and customers because they are one and the same. Excess revenues stay in the local community and are invested in system improvements and utility reserves, shared with the local government, or returned to the customer in the form of lower rates. They are not distributed among outside shareholders, as they are in the case of for-profit utilities.

### Low-Cost Structure

Public power utilities have access to lower cost tax-exempt financing and generally have stronger credit ratings than privately owned utilities. Publicly owned utilities may have more efficient operations and access to less expensive federal hydro power.

### Customer Focused

Community-owned electric utilities are dedicated to the singular mission of delivering the highest level of service and value to their customer-owners for the long term. Public power utilities focus on the specific needs of customers, including high reliability and lower rates, as well as local priorities, which may include new technologies, environmental concerns or advanced communications.

To learn more about the benefits of public power, visit the American Public Power Association’s website at [www.publicpower.org](http://www.publicpower.org).

**Public Power Week is October 2-8.  
Please Join Us to Celebrate!**

**Thursday, October 6, 2022**

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

**208 S. Walnut Ave.**

Visit our Open House in the lobby for refreshments, Lineman Photo Prop, FREE Energy Star LED Bulb\*, coloring contest, and much more.

\* limit 1 per household, while supplies last

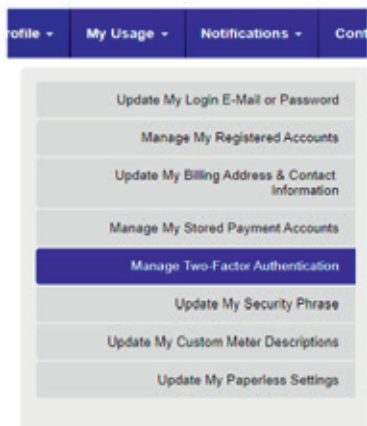




# DID YOU KNOW

## SmartHub has been Upgraded

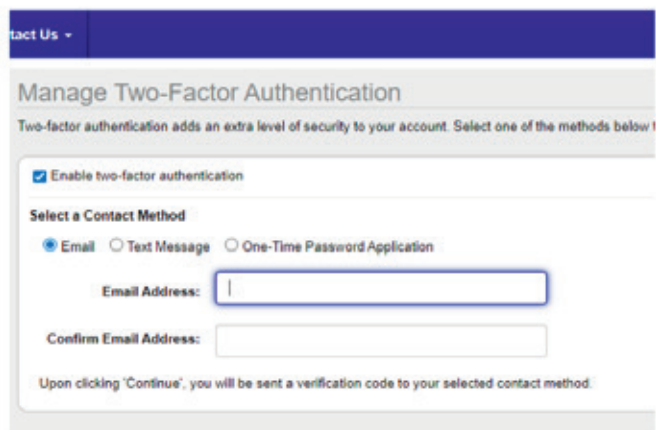
You can now set up your SmartHub account to ask for two-factor authentication when logging in. This helps protect your utility information by verifying it is actually you logging in. And...it's SUPER easy. Follow these easy instructions to activate two-factor authentication:



A screenshot of the SmartHub account management interface. At the top, there are four tabs: 'Profile', 'My Usage', 'Notifications', and 'Contact Us'. Below the tabs is a list of options: 'Update My Login E-Mail or Password', 'Manage My Registered Accounts', 'Update My Billing Address & Contact Information', 'Manage My Stored Payment Accounts', 'Manage Two-Factor Authentication' (which is highlighted with a blue bar), 'Update My Security Phrase', 'Update My Custom Meter Descriptions', and 'Update My Paperless Settings'.

1. Log into your SmartHub account.
2. Click on My Profile and then Manage Two-Factor Authentication.
3. Choose how you want to receive authentication.
4. Click Save.

It's that simple!



A screenshot of the 'Manage Two-Factor Authentication' form. At the top, it says 'Two-factor authentication adds an extra level of security to your account. Select one of the methods below!'. There is a checkbox labeled 'Enable two-factor authentication' which is checked. Below this is a section titled 'Select a Contact Method' with three radio buttons: 'Email' (selected), 'Text Message', and 'One-Time Password Application'. There are two input fields: 'Email Address:' and 'Confirm Email Address:'. At the bottom, a note says 'Upon clicking "Continue", you will be sent a verification code to your selected contact method.'

## Stay Safe from Scams

### Keep You and Your Family Safe

Scammers try all different kinds of tactics to trick people into giving them money or access to personal information. Review these items to stay safe from utility scams:

- OPU will not demand payment or other personal information over the phone.
- OPU will not ask for gift cards, prepaid cards or money transfers as a form of payment.
- OPU will not contact you by phone to threaten disconnection or ask for immediate payment. You will receive notification by mail.
- Scammers can fake emails or phone numbers. If you have any questions about your account, contact us directly at 507-451-2480.
- Have you noticed a scam? Let us know!

For more information regarding utility scams and how to keep yourself safe, visit [utilitiesunited.org](http://utilitiesunited.org).



## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Did you know that taking shorter showers reduces your natural gas (or electric) consumption, not just water? Every gallon of hot water used is a gallon of water that needs to be heated by your water heater. Try setting a 5-minute alarm on your phone to help keep your shower time down and save money on your utility bill year-round!



# SMELL GAS?

# GET OUT!

## CALL 911



- 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 911 from your mobile phone or a neighbor's house.

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



**Take Action for Water Quality in Your Community!**

**Save the Date**

**14th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up on 9/17/2022**

For over a decade, volunteers have combed the stream banks and waterways around Owatonna with the goal of cleaning trash and debris from the Straight River. With every passing year, more and more garbage is removed by hard working individuals and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference. Since 2009, residents of Owatonna and the surrounding cannon river watershed have volunteered cleaning up local lakes, creeks, the Cannon and Straight River.

The 14th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on September 18th from 9am to 12 noon at Morehouse Park. The event is hosted by the Clean River Partners, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event. This is the largest one-day clean-up event in Minnesota with over 200 volunteers working in 8 locations across the watershed!

**Get Involved!** If you are interested in helping or sponsoring the event, visit [www.cleanriverpartners.org](http://www.cleanriverpartners.org). Please come and join us to ensure our waters stay clean, safe and healthy!

**Learn more about the Stormwater Program** by visiting our stormwater management website at [www.owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management](http://www.owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management) contacting [stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us](mailto:stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us)





# CONSERVE & \$AVE® HOUSE CALL

## Residential Energy Audits

Request a home energy audit to learn where you can make energy efficient improvements, then apply for valuable CONSERVE & SAVE® rebates! In addition to our regular rebates, we offer exclusive House Call Energy Audit rebates. You may choose from two types of audits:

- **STANDARD AUDIT: \$50 co-pay** (\$300 value)
- **PERFORMANCE AUDIT: \$125 co-pay** (\$380 value)

To learn what is included in each audit, visit [owatonnautilities.com](http://owatonnautilities.com) and look under the tab "Conserve & Save/Rebates".

### HOUSE CALL ENERGY AUDIT WORD SEARCH

HOUSE CALL  
RESIDENTIAL  
ENERGY AUDIT  
STANDARD  
PERFORMANCE

CONSERVE  
SAVE  
REBATES  
EFFICIENCY  
IMPROVEMENTS

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



### CUSTOM NATURAL GAS REBATES

Are you one of our business customers who has an energy-saving project in mind, but don't see a standard CONSERVE & SAVE® rebate for it? It may qualify for a Custom Natural Gas Rebate! Examples include, but are not limited to, compressed air system upgrades, control systems, and various process equipment improvements.

Custom Natural Gas Rebates are calculated using the lesser of two methods: 1) \$0.50 per therm saved or 2) 25% cost of the project.

**Custom Rebates always require pre-approval.**  
**Contact us today at (507) 451-2480.**

# CONSERVE & \$AVE®





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](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**