



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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SEPTEMBER 2023

# CUSTOMER UPDATE



# Do you know the benefits?

**OF PUBLIC POWER AND  
NATURAL GAS**

**OCTOBER 1-7, 2023 IS PUBLIC  
POWER & NATURAL GAS WEEK**

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# OPU MEMO



Tammy Schmoll,  
Executive, Commu-  
nications & Administration  
Coordinator

## OPU Commission

Kent Rossi  
Randy Doyal  
Jay Johnson  
Doug Zirngible  
Greg Vetter

I wanted to take a few minutes to thank everyone who stopped by to visit us at the 2023 Steele County Free Fair. Each year our volunteer booth workers comment on how much they enjoy being able to visit with customers.

One of our biggest draws is our drinking water tower. Every year it seems to be a big hit, and this year was no exception. People often ask us how much water we go through. This year we wanted to know too, so we metered the tank.

Over the course of the six day fair, 341 gallons of water were dispensed through our little drinking water tower. That's 2,588 plastic water bottles saved!! Saturday proved to be the biggest water-use day, with 105 gallons consumed by visitors.



Speaking of Saturday, what an eventful day that was! And how about that heat? If you visited the Four Seasons building late morning or early afternoon you were

met with darkness (other than sunlight coming in from outside.) Unfortunately, a large, old, rotten tree decided to pick that day, of all days, to call it quits. When it fell, it took overhead lines with it which, of course, were ones feeding the Four Seasons Building. Our crews worked in that heat as fast as they could to clear the tree and restore power. Later in the afternoon/early evening, they restored power to the camping area, too. I'm sure that's not how they wanted to spend their Saturday at the fair.



Our feature attraction this year was a shadowbox of buried services. Several people stopped to check it out and ask questions. It now resides in the lobby of our building, so if you missed it, stop in and see it. **Remember, Call Before You Dig**, even if it's just to plant a bush...you never know what might be just below the surface.

In addition to the shadowbox, people stopped by for our main give away items of chapstick and cellphone fans. These were such a huge hit, they flew off the table and we ran out by end of day on Friday. Lessons learned...order more next year!

I cannot close without mentioning my appreciation for all the work that goes in to making the Steele County Free Fair a success every year. Hat's off to everyone involved. What an amazing event!

Here's to another successful year. We look forward to seeing everyone next year.





## **Indoor Play Space for Tots**

Welcome to Owatonna's new indoor play space! For children ages six and younger, this play space is in the Activity Room of the West Hills Tennis & Pickleball Center. Our play area is a safe and stimulating environment where kids can have fun, be active and explore new activities through play. The play space is

equipped with age-appropriate activities that encourage physical activity and development. Kids can enjoy shooting hoops on our child-sized basketball hoop, playing soccer with soft soccer balls and nets and crawling, rolling and playing on soft floor mats. Parents or guardians are required to supervise their children at all times and are responsible for ensuring that their children follow the rules and guidelines of the play space. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, children can also run around the gym. Visit [owatonna.gov](http://owatonna.gov) for details and to register to use this space at no charge. Registration for each day is required.

## **Open Basketball Returns**

Open basketball is back at the West Hills Gym! We are thrilled to have you here to play basketball in a fun and safe environment. Open to all ages. Children ages 12 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. During our open basketball sessions, you will have access to our indoor court to play games, practice shots and work on dribbling skills. To ensure the safety of all participants, we ask that you follow our guidelines and rules while playing. This includes wearing appropriate footwear and clothing, respecting your fellow players and following the directions of our staff. Visit [owatonna.gov](http://owatonna.gov) for details and to register. Registration is required. The daily cost is \$5.



## **Youth Programs at the Owatonna and West Hills Tennis and Pickleball Center** **Home to the Star Tennis Academy**

The Star Tennis Academy, established in 2021, is an after-school tennis program held weekly throughout year. The program is open to children with all abilities ages four through 18. More than 200 students have participated in the program.

Tennis Director Matt Hokanson and his staff run four classes by age/ability: Shooting Stars (ages 3-7), Young Stars (ages 7-10), Star Academy Intermediate (ages 10-18) and Star Academy Advanced (ages 10-18). Students learn how to play tennis by playing games, learning fundamentals and competing against one another in practice matches. If kids would like to play in official matches throughout the year, they can also compete in Sunday matches.

Once students are ready to play competitively, we offer a Universal Tennis Junior Club Team that represents West Hills/Owatonna. These monthly matches involve travelling and hosting teams from the metropolitan area and beyond.

All Star Academy Tennis classes are open for signup for Fall 2023. Fall classes begin the week of September 10 and run for eight consecutive weeks. Register at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov).

## **Stay Informed on City of Owatonna News!**

Check out the weekly Owatonna Update e-newsletter at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov) to find out about City news, projects and decisions. Just click on "City Services" then "Communications" and "Stay Informed". Sign up to automatically receive each issue of Owatonna Update at [Owatonna.gov](http://Owatonna.gov), click on "Notification Sign-up".

## **MAYOR**

Tom Kuntz

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Dan Boeke

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Join Us in Celebrating

# Public Power and Public Natural Gas Week October 1–7

During this week, we celebrate the benefits of living in a public power and public natural gas community.



**PUBLIC NATURAL  
GAS WEEK**  
OCTOBER 1-7, 2023



## Do you know the benefits of Public Power and Public Natural Gas?

When you switch on a light or adjust the thermostat, do you know who's providing that service? Generally, utilities come from one of three types of providers: investor-owned utilities (IOUs), municipal utilities, or cooperatives. All three have something to offer, but we believe municipal utilities provide a unique set of advantages, especially when compared to investor-owned utilities.

### **Sustainability: A Focus on the Common Good**

Both municipal utilities and cooperatives are deeply committed to sustainability. However, compared to IOUs, which often prioritize shareholder profits, consumer-owned utilities like ours can take a community-first approach. Being part of local governance means municipal utilities are especially well-positioned to focus on environmental stewardship, often aligning seamlessly with local sustainability goals.

### **Affordability: Serving You, Not Shareholders**

When it comes to cost, consumer-owned utilities like municipal and cooperatives typically come out ahead. IOUs, aiming for profits, often pass additional costs onto consumers. In contrast, municipal utilities and cooperatives function on a not-for-profit basis. That means any extra money goes back into improving the system, with a direct focus on community benefit.

### **Accountability: You Have a Say**

Consumer-owned utilities—be they municipal or cooperatives—are renowned for their accountability. They answer to you, the consumer. IOUs, on the other hand, are primar-

ily accountable to shareholders, which can sometimes lead to decisions that are not in the best interest of customers or the community. Municipal utilities often offer an extra layer of local oversight, which can be reassuring for many consumers.

### **Local Decision-Making: Tailored to Your Community**

Local control is a strong point for both municipal utilities and cooperatives. But what sets consumer-owned utilities apart from IOUs is their deep community integration. While cooperatives are member-focused, municipal utilities often benefit from close coordination with local government agencies, leading to comprehensive community planning.

### **Economic Impact: Community First**

All utility models contribute to local economies, but consumer-owned utilities often do so with a heightened focus on community development. Unlike IOUs, which may funnel profits out of the community, both municipal utilities and cooperatives are more likely to reinvest in local projects and jobs.

Investor-owned utilities, cooperatives, and municipal utilities all play vital roles in delivering essential services. However, the not-for-profit, community-oriented approach of consumer-owned utilities offers notable benefits. Among these, municipal utilities stand as a robust choice, providing a unique blend of affordability, community involvement, and long-term sustainability. As we tackle significant global challenges, the close-to-home solutions provided by municipal utilities offer a promising path forward.

**Please join us Thursday, October 5, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
as we celebrate Public Power & Natural Gas Week. Visit our open house  
for refreshments, FREE Energy Star LED bulbs, and much more!!**



# Ways to Prepare Your Home for Fall and Winter

## Clean out the gutters

If gutters and drains are not cleared of debris, ice dams can form and prevent proper drainage.

## Keep the outside air out and the inside air in

To save energy and cut down on your heating bills, seal any air leaks in your home. Gaps and cracks allow warm air to escape, causing your heating system to work harder than necessary. Prevent energy wastage by sealing any air leaks.

## Make sure your furnace is ready

It's likely been some time since you last turned on your furnace, but with the cold weather approaching, you'll need to turn it back on soon. Remember to clean your furnace every year and replace the filter regularly to ensure it runs properly.

## Get your ducts ready

Make sure your ducts are properly sealed and insulated. Tightly sealed and insulated ducts can potentially reduce your energy bills by \$120 or more!

## Drain and disconnect outdoor faucets and equipment so they won't freeze

Disconnect hoses from spigots and drain all outdoor equipment to prevent freezing during cold weather.

# 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). #StopScams

## UTILITIES UNITED

AGAINST SCAMS

# SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION!

Keep your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road and pay extra attention when in school zones or around buses. Red lights mean **STOP**. Stay at least 20 feet away from the bus.

# CONSERVATION TIP\$

As outdoor temps cool off, using dew point and temperature is the best way to determine when to open your windows to cool off your house. Once the dew point gets down to 55°F or lower it's a good time to turn off the AC and open windows. Opening windows with high dewpoints, even in cool temps, can make your house uncomfortable and cause your AC or dehumidifier to work harder.

Dew Point (°F)	How It Feels
<55°	Dry
55-60°	Comfortable
60-64°	Slightly Humid
65-69°	Humid
70°-75°	Very Humid
>75°	Oppressive

# 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)**



entering lakes and streams to keep them swimmable, fishable, and to support aquatic plants and animals. Many of the water bodies within the Cannon River Watershed are classified as impaired waters. Impairments are due to excess nutrients, sediment, and bacteria.

The City of Owatonna partnered with WHKS to develop a Pollutant Reduction Strategy to meet our total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) and waste load allocations (WLAs) goals for phosphorus, turbidity, and fecal coliform. View it here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0c138b1c453a43b39af2a49e4e2c3fa6>

### **Join us @ Morehouse Park! - 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up on 9/16/2023**

For over a decade, volunteers organized by Clean River Partners 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, Cannon River, and the Straight River.

The 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on **September 16th from 9am to 12 noon at Morehouse Park Chalet**. 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!

Visit [cleanriverpartners.org](http://cleanriverpartners.org) for additional volunteer and sponsorship information regarding this event.

Send us an email at [stormwater@owatonna.gov](mailto:stormwater@owatonna.gov) for further information regarding the City Stormwater Management Program or visit our website at [owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management](http://owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management)

### **Pollutant Reduction Strategy**

Our community is regulated under a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) Permit by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to discharge stormwater runoff to waters of the state. As part of the City's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) our community is required to identify sources of pollutants and develop a plan to make progress towards reducing and preventing pollutants





# HEAT PUMPS.

They're not just for home heating anymore!

An air-source heat pump can provide efficient heating and cooling for your home, but did you know there are also heat pump clothes dryers and heat pump water heaters? Owatonna Public Utilities offers valuable CONSERVE & SAVE™ rebates on all three!

- **Air Source Heat Pumps: up to \$2,000**
- **Heat Pump Clothes Dryers^: \$25**
- **Heat Pump Water Heaters^: up to \$400\***

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

## HEAT PUMPS WORD SEARCH

HEAT PUMPS  
EFFICIENT  
HOME  
HEATING  
COOLING  
ENERGY STAR

CLOTHES DRYERS  
WATER HEATERS  
CONSERVE  
SAVE  
REBATES

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



^must be ENERGY STAR® certified

\*not to exceed 50% of the cost,  
for electric-only retrofit or  
new construction

# CONSERVE & \$AVE™



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](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**