



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

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CUSTOMER UPDATE



FEATURING: DISTRACTED DRIVING

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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

I am passionate about safety and proud of the safety culture we have created at OPU. We want all of our employees to make it safely home to their family each night, and when our employees retire we want them to be able to enjoy their retirement free from injury, pain, or illness. Our goal is “Zero Injuries”.

When we set our goal of Zero Injuries a few years ago, we were experiencing several OSHA recordable injuries each year. An OSHA recordable injury is a work-related injury or illness that causes a fatality, unconsciousness, lost work days, restricted work activity, job transfer, or medical care beyond first aid. Given our track record and the hazardous nature of our work, there were some that questioned whether setting the goal at zero was even a reasonable goal. We said “yes”.

Since then, we have made it through a calendar year with no OSHA recordable injuries, and as I write this memo we are at 477 consecutive days without an injury. How did we accomplish this?

It wasn't through cheerleading, incentives or special one time programs. It was because OPU employees agreed to become part of something important: they devoted themselves to creating a habit of excellence. Safety is just one indicator that we were making progress in changing our habits across the entire company.

Simply ordering people to work safely doesn't work, and requiring that all safety rules be followed isn't enough. It requires more than just rules. It requires that people change their behavior (habits) and change how they think about the hazards they face each day. The first step is truly believing that all “accidents” are preventable. “Accidents happen” just doesn't cut it.

One of the first changes we made was to mandate that employees always wear safety head gear in the field. Previously, employees were only required to wear hardhats when heavy equipment was being operated or there were overhead hazards. That practice resulted in people forgetting because they were not in the habit of putting the hardhat on. Now, wearing a hard hat is a habit and a reminder to look for potential hazards.

Identifying potential hazards is another habit our employees have developed. A “job sight briefing form” is a tool our crews use to remind themselves to identify potential hazards at a worksite before the work begins. Hazards identified **before** the work begins are noted on the form and each crew member signs off on the form. All employees and supervisors who come to the job site once work has begun are required to locate the form, review the hazards and sign off on it before entering the work zone.

Following from the belief that all accidents are preventable, an important component of our safety program is the use of “Cause Mapping”. Cause Mapping is like Root Cause Analysis on steroids. It provides a consistent, graphical approach to investigating incidents and recognizes that often there are multiple conditions present that caused an accident to occur—any one of which might have prevented the accident had it not been present. Most importantly, Cause Mapping reduces the tendency to blame and point fingers, and instead focuses on solutions that could prevent an accident from occurring in the future. Since our rate of injury is so low, we now also use this tool for near miss accidents and what-if scenarios.

So, how might you apply these principles in your personal life to create a personal “safety culture”? Our feature article this month, courtesy of Federated Insurance, is on distracted driving. Please read it and think about how you might change your thinking and your habits to make sure you or someone you love never becomes one of the quoted statistics resulted from a preventable accident. I sincerely want you to “make it home safe today...and every day.”

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Did you know your computer is using electricity while you are sleeping? Computers use electricity any time they are turned on, even if they are in sleep or hibernate mode! Turning your computer off and unplugging any laptops while you aren't using them will help save energy in your home.

Visit www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips for more energy savings tips from OPU.





Local emergencies that may require siren activation include, but are not limited to, dangerous weather events such as tornadoes or extreme winds; deadly chemical or hazardous material releases; or certain active security situations. The message that emergency officials want to tell the public by using outdoor warning sirens is to find protective shelter, using the catch phrase “get inside then get information.” Public Officials will provide more information on local radio regarding the emergency.

What we want the public to do During a Tornado Warning:

- Stay Weather-Ready: Continue to listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay updated about tornado watches and warnings. Acting quickly is key to staying safe and minimizing impacts.
- At Your House: If you are in a tornado warning, go to your basement, safe room, or an interior room away from windows. Do not forget pets if time allows.
- At Your Workplace or School: Follow your tornado drill and proceed to your tornado shelter location quickly and calmly. Stay away from windows and do not go to large open rooms such as cafeterias, gymnasiums, or auditoriums.
- Outside: Seek shelter inside a sturdy building immediately if a tornado is approaching. Sheds and storage facilities are not safe.
- In a vehicle: Being in a vehicle during a tornado is not safe. The best course of action is to drive to the closest shelter. If you are unable to make it to a safe shelter, either get down in your car and cover your head, or abandon your car and seek shelter in a low lying area such as a ditch or ravine.

Public Emergency Warning System.

Outdoor warning sirens are just one element in an integrated public warning system that uses many methods to provide immediate, life-saving warning to the public as quickly as possible. Other elements of this integrated public warning system include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s NOAA All Hazard Weather Radio (NWR); broadcast local radio, local television, and cable providers that use the Emergency Alert System (EAS); Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) systems; telephonic emergency notification services (Everbridge); digital message boards along highways and the Integrated Public Alert System (IPAWS).

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) is a modernization and integration of the nation’s alert and warning infrastructure and will save time when time matters most, protecting life and property. Federal, State, territorial, tribal and local alerting authorities can use IPAWS and integrate local systems that use Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) standards with the IPAWS infrastructure. IPAWS provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface.

No single piece of public warning technology is capable of alerting all people all the time. People engage in various activities throughout the day and these warning tools may or may not be effective at reaching an individual at any particular moment. Having numerous emergency warning tools provides redundancy and resilience against failure of key systems such as cell phone towers, the internet, or the power grid, which happens often when disaster strikes.

Emergency Warning Siren Principles:

The Dispatch center receives warnings of impending severe weather by the National Weather Service or by trained spotters or via special phone lines and radio systems. Using the national weather service information, the dispatch center and Skywarn spotters decide whether to sound the outdoor warning sirens. The sole purpose of outdoor warning sirens is for the protection of life. Emergency warning sirens should be used to warn of immediate threats to life and limb. They should not sound when the predominant hazard is for property damage. They also should not be used for any non-life safety purpose such as time-of-day notification (“noon siren” or “curfew siren” for instance).

Take Shelter

The public should know that hearing an outdoor warning siren is a call to take immediate life-saving action. The phrase “Get inside then get information” are memorable words recommended to describe the essential actions that people should take when they hear an outdoor emergency warning siren. People should always take shelter when hearing an emergency warning siren and get more information from local radio regarding the warning.

MAYOR

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DISTRACTED DRIVING

Information for this article obtained from Federated Mutual Insurance Company.

2,440,000 people have been injured and 35,092 killed on our nation's highways.† These are not just numbers, they're family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers. Hundreds of thousands more suffered injuries or emotional pain following a car crash. **And nearly all of these crashes were preventable.**

Last year, Federated Insurance rolled out a distracted driving program, Please Make it Home Safe Today, which focused on the dangers of texting and driving. The goal was to help prevent vehicle crashes from taking an immeasurable toll on business owners, their employees, and their families. Federated spread the word to its 30,000+ clients and shared the message locally with fellow businesses, friends, and neighbors through billboards, radio ads, and presentations.

Federated Insurance is committed to safer roads. The Company recently partnered with local NBC television affiliate KARE 11 to sponsor **#eyesUP**, a cooperative awareness campaign to encourage Minnesotans to put down their cell phones and end distracted driving. The kick-off was televised on April 11 and the campaign will continue through September 24. Go to kare11.com/eyesup to watch the live program and to take the pledge to stop driving distracted.

Complementing its distracted driving focus, Federated's latest campaign, appropriately titled *Drive S.A.F.E.*, addresses the other behaviors behind a majority of all auto crashes: *Speed, Attention, Fatigue, and Emotion.*

- SPEED** Nearly one-third of traffic fatalities occurred in speed-related crashes.*
- ATTENTION** Texting while driving is one of the fastest growing driver distractions. Sending a text while driving requires roughly five seconds. If you're driving 55 mph, you just traveled the length of a football field without looking where you're going.*
- FATIGUE** A National Sleep Foundation poll reveals nearly two-thirds of adult drivers say they have driven a vehicle while feeling drowsy,

and more than one-third of those same drivers admitted to actually falling asleep at the wheel.*

EMOTION Aggressive driving (a.k.a. road rage) plays a role in more than half of fatal crashes.*

Risky driving habits typically develop over time and can take effort to break. But it can be done. Keeping the S.A.F.E. factors in mind may help drivers avoid the temptation to take risks that put them and others in danger. Federated's ultimate goal is to help keep you and your loved ones out of harm's way.

To help spread this important message, Federated developed an accompanying *Drive S.A.F.E.* video, which is available for you to show family, friends, employees, community organizations, and others interested in ending the distracted driving epidemic on our streets and highways. *If you would like a copy of the Drive S.A.F.E. video, contact Julie Rethemeier at 507-455-5684.*

- In the meantime, here are some tips you can use today to help make our roads safer for everyone.
- Allow enough time to get where you're going. Not only does it feel good to be early and not rushed, chances of being involved in a crash can be significantly reduced.
 - Commit to paying attention to the task at hand, mentally and physically. Be on the lookout for inattentive drivers and drive defensively.
 - Get enough rest. This helps with mental awareness, which can help you react to hazards that may require split-second maneuvers.
 - Remain in control of your emotions and act responsibly. Put space between you and motorists whose actions aren't sensible.

Please make it home safe today...and every day.

*Injury Facts, 2016. National Safety Council. Page 117 (124 of 218 PDF).
†<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812318> p1 first paragraph

This article is for general information and risk prevention only and should not be considered legal or other expert advice. The information herein is not intended to identify all risk exposures. The recommendations herein may help reduce but are not guaranteed to eliminate any or all risk of loss. Qualified counsel should be sought with questions specific to your circumstances. © 2017 Federated Mutual Insurance Company.

EQUIPMENT SERIES



Out with the old, in with the new! This month OPU will begin a large construction project at its West Owatonna Substation. We will be replacing equipment we installed over 30 years ago. The new equipment will make sure you continue to receive reliable electric service.

The substation, located on the west side of town, converts high-voltage electricity to lower voltages so it can be distributed to homes and businesses in our community. The West Owatonna Substation is one of six transformer substations OPU operates. These substations

are the necessary link between power plants that produce electricity and the distribution wires that bring that electricity to your home or business.

Substations like West Owatonna are a big deal — literally and figuratively. They cost over \$1 million to build. On average, they take up as much room as eight professional football fields.

The transformer equipment we're replacing at West Owatonna, at a cost of about \$200,000, has been operating since 1984. We certainly got our money's worth!

Transformers contain a lot of copper wire. Years ago, when copper prices were higher, thieves risked injury or death by electrocution when they broke into the West Owatonna Substation to steal copper.

Feel free to come and watch the construction taking place if you're interested (it's expected to last for several weeks) but please **don't ever** try to enter a substation. Accidental contact with the wrong piece of equipment could mean severe injury or death.

GIVE 'EM A BRAKE

Owatonna Public Utilities has about 14 employees who work on electric, water or natural gas equipment under or above our streets. In addition to the hazards of the work being performed, employees in a work zone may also encounter additional risks, including drivers traveling through the work zone.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, nearly 700 workers were killed in work-zone accidents in 2015. Fortunately, OPU's field workers have never been struck by a vehicle while in a work zone, although there have been some close calls. Our field workers' continued safety depends on you! When you see a utility truck on the side of the road, orange cones in the street and the sign, "Utility Work Ahead," please give them a brake and be extra careful:

- Slow down
- Don't stop to watch the work
- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the one in front of it

You can keep OPU field workers safe by practicing defensive driving when in a work zone. Please do not allow yourself to become distracted by trying to text, talk, eat, drink or perform other activities while driving. Thank you for your part in keeping OPU workers safe.



OPU HIGHLIGHT



OPU Meter Services (L to R):
Dan Grabanski,
Brian Austinson,
Chris Johnson, Jeri Blazek,
Launie Sorensen, and
Shawn Pelot

Although reading meters has changed over time, meter service workers are more important now than ever before. Gathering meter data from the electric, water, and natural gas meters in Owatonna is merely a small portion of what the meter services department does.

To better the service provided to the community, meter service workers analyze the data looking for any indications of substantial consumption changes. Contacting customers with abnormally high water consumption have helped locate and repair water leaks that may not have been caught otherwise.

Meter services also plays a vital, yet under recognized role during major outages. In order to help prioritize where crews need to go to make repairs, meter service workers go out in the field to help locate and assess the severity of damage. This makes OPU more effective in restoring power when we do have those unfortunate events.

Another important role meter services plays is replacing, maintaining, and testing the 30,000 combined meters to ensure billing accuracy, and maintaining the 7,000 air conditioner load control devices. In addition, they assist our commercial and industrial customers by providing detailed load profile data to ensure more efficient operations.

All the behind the scenes work, meter services provides to support the entire utility operation at Owatonna Public Utilities, is worth recognition and a big Thank You.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Law **REQUIRES** homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, excavators and contractors contact Gopher State One Call two business days prior to digging, driving stakes, or performing any other activities that involve disrupting the ground. ***Never assume the depth of a utility or that the depth of the utilities are consistent.***

Gopher State One Call will contact the utility companies in the area to have underground lines marked. Once all utility lines are marked, digging may begin. Proceed with caution and avoid the tolerance zone or hand dig with a shovel within 2 feet of the marked utility lines.

Watch for private facilities such as sprinklers, power lines to garages or out buildings, gas grill lines or invisible fencing as these will not be located by Minnesota utility companies.

Visit gopherstateonecall.org to learn what information will need to be given when contacting Gopher State One Call.

The service is **FREE**. Call toll free at 800-252-1166 or simply dial 811.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**



CleanH2Owatonna Catch Basin Adoption and Storm Drain Marking Program

The City of Owatonna seeks stewards, volunteers and organizations to participate one of our CleanH2Owatonna Stormwater Programs. This is a perfect way to enjoy the beautiful spring weather and get involved in the community while having a positive impact on your environment and community.

Storm Drain Marking Program

Participants will check out a Storm Drain Marking Kit with all needed supplies to stencil a "No Dumping Drains to River Clean-H2Owatonna" message near the catch basin. The City will also provide a storm system map your area of interest. It is best to participate as a group.

Catch Basin Adoption Program

Participants will select nearby catch basins to adopt. Responsibilities of the adoptee include ensuring the catch basin remains clear of debris, periodic grate cleaning, and stenciling of the catch basin. Participants will receive a complimentary CleanH2Owatonna rake.

Remember: the distance between your yard and the water's edge is as close as the nearest storm drain or ditch.

The City Engineering Department offers several other community stormwater programs.

Anyone interested in our programs is encouraged to contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality/Stormwater Specialist, (507)-774-7300 or Bradley.rademacher@ci.owatonna.mn.us





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www.OwatonnaUtilities.com

CONSERVE & \$AVE®



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
- 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.

Happy Memorial Day!



TO THOSE WHO
COURAGEOUSLY
GAVE THEIR LIVES...

AND THOSE WHO
BRAVELY FIGHT
TODAY...

THANK YOU



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 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 schmolli@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.



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