

# RPU Plugged In

## *Ring in* **2019** *with RPU's Help!*

Get helpful information, tips, and learn about programs to help you start off 2019 on the right foot!

- ✓ Neighborhood Energy Challenge Workshops
- ✓ Solar Community Education Class
- ✓ Understanding RPU's Energy Costs by Time of Day
- ✓ RPU Utility Board Meeting Information
- ✓ Tips to Prevent Frozen Water Services
- ✓ Reasons Why You Should Sign Up for Service Assured®
- ✓ And more!

# Attend the Upcoming Neighborhood Energy Challenge Workshop on January 26

## And Sign Up for your Home Energy Audit!



### The Neighborhood Energy Challenge includes:

 **Free Energy Workshop.** Attendance at our free "Saving Energy 101" workshop is mandatory to participate in the program – and a great opportunity to learn new no- or low-cost strategies to stop energy waste, all while visiting with your neighbors. Free childcare is provided.

 **Home Visit and Materials.** At the workshop you will have the opportunity to sign up for a Home Energy Audit where an energy professional will visit your home for an hour and a half to run diagnostic tests (like a blower door to test for air leaks), install energy-saving materials, and find your home's best opportunities for saving energy and reducing your utility bills.

 **Help with Next Steps.** If we find an opportunity for significant savings through installing additional insulation, attic air sealing, or replacing old heating equipment, we can make the next steps easy by connecting you with qualified contractors, financing, incentives, and rebates.

The Home Energy Audit materials and recommendations are all included in a one-time \$50 fee. Materials provided may include:

- Gasket seals
- Safety caps
- LED bulbs
- Pipe insulation
- High-efficiency faucet aerators
- High-efficiency showerhead

For questions regarding the Neighborhood Energy Challenge or to sign up, contact Stacy Boots Camp at **888.734.6365** or [sbootscamp@mncee.org](mailto:sbootscamp@mncee.org).

**Date:** Saturday, January 26, 2019 10-11 am

**Location:** Northrop Community Education Center – Room 308  
201 8th St NW

For future NEC dates,\* visit the RPU website at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).

\* Workshop dates subject to change.

## Is Solar Right for You?

Come and take an in-depth look into solar energy and get answers to those solar questions that you have!

### Class: Solar Energy for Your Home or Business

Learn about solar electric and heating systems from the experts. Many installation photos will show you how they look and how they are installed. Many questions will be addressed, such as: How well does solar energy work in Minnesota? How much energy do systems produce? What are the costs involved and economics? What incentives are available? Is there maintenance? There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion.

**Date:** Saturday, February 23, 2019 10 am-12 pm

**Cost:** FREE

**Location:** Northrop Community Education Center – Room 308  
201 8th St NW



### Sign Up Today!

Register for a Community Education class by calling **507.328.4000** or online through the Rochester Community Education website at <https://rochester.ce.eleyo.com/>.

# RPU Board and City Council Approve RPU Rate Increase for Water and Electric in 2019

The RPU Board approved the 2019 budget including an overall rate increase for electric (1.9%) and water (6%) at its November 20 board meeting. As a municipal utility, the RPU budget required final approval from the Rochester City Council at their December 3 meeting. The new budget and rates will take effect on January 1, 2019.

## What does the new rate increase mean to me?

- For an average residential customer, the approximate increase on electric will be \$1.50 per month and for water it will be \$0.76 per month.

## What are the drivers for the increases?

### Electric

- Continuation of investments in our system for growth and reliability
- Investments in IT systems
- Need to meet financial targets based on Utility Method of rate setting
  - Change in Net Assets (Net Income)
  - Debt Service Coverage Ratio
  - Equity Percent
  - Minimum cash reserves per Board policy

### Water

- Growth in customers 1.2% and projected growth in total consumption
- Larger capital expenditures for water main replacements
- City planned street reconstruction

- DMC development
- Distribution system expansion
- One new well in 2019
- Continued water conservation programs and education

## How can I offset the increase?

- Change four 60-watt incandescent bulbs in your home with four LED bulbs. If used for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day, you will save more each month than the increase. You can also visit the RPU website ([www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)) for upcoming educational opportunities such as the Neighborhood Energy Challenge or for a list of energy-efficient equipment and our Conserve & Save® rebates.

## RPU's Energy Costs Vary Based on Time of Day!?

The quick answer to the question is yes; RPU energy costs do vary by the time of day that energy is needed. However, to better answer this question, a little background information is required.

The City of Rochester is contracted to purchase the majority of our energy from SMMPA (Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency). SMMPA is a generation and transmission company, providing wholesale energy to 18 member communities, of which Rochester is a part. They have wholesale energy rates that vary throughout the day as shown in the chart. During the peak hours of 8 am-10 pm, energy costs are 1.5¢ kWh higher.

SMMPA participates in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) energy market. The MISO market includes 15 states in the central US from Louisiana to Canada, and from North Dakota to Indiana. The market sets prices to the lowest marginal cost generation needed to meet the load requirement for the entire region. Congestion on the transmission system can limit the transfer of power which adds a location-based component to the price. The real-time price is updated every five minutes. The SMMPA rates buffer the member communities from the full variation in the MISO market while recovering all energy costs. Similarly, RPU rates absorb cost variations in order to provide customers with a consistent, predictable cost.

Beyond the procurement of energy, additional expenses include the distribution, metering and IT infrastructure along with human resources in customer service, finance, IT, engineering, line crews and operations. RPU rates include all these costs. RPU works hard to control costs and keep energy affordable while operating a reliable electric system.

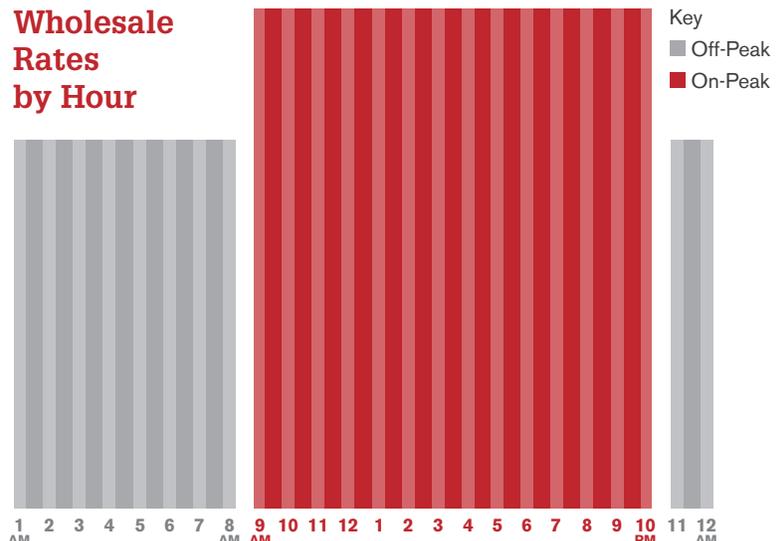
RPU rates are set by the Mayor-appointed RPU Board and approved by the City Council.

## How you can help!

Ideally, the less energy RPU needs to purchase during higher peak day times, the less money RPU needs to spend on energy purchases. Consider shifting your energy usage to off-peak times to reduce costs for everyone. Dishwashers and electric vehicle charging are examples of electric load that could be moved to off-peak times. In fact, many major appliances are now available with settings to easily select when the appliance should run.

For more energy saving tips and ideas, visit the RPU website [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).

## Wholesale Rates by Hour





# 2019 RPU Board Meeting Dates

Consider being a part of the decision-making process at RPU by attending a Board meeting in 2019. All RPU Board meetings are open to the public and allow time for visitors to address the Board, if they choose.

**Where:** Meetings are held at the RPU Service Center (unless an alternate location is otherwise noted on the RPU website).

**When:** See dates below. Meeting time is at 4 p.m. (unless an alternate time is noted on the RPU website).

**Learn More:** Board meeting information can be found on the RPU website, [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org), under the "About RPU" tab.

- January 29
- February 19
- March 26
- April 30
- May 21
- June 25
- July 30
- August 27
- September 24
- October 29
- November 12
- November 26
- December 17

## It's that time of year! Come in to the RPU Service Center and **PICK UP YOUR FREE RPU 2019 CALENDAR!**

If your child was a winner or participated in the 2018 Arbor Day poster contest, their artwork may be in our calendar!



**FEATURING:**

- 2018 Arbor Day posters drawn by Rochester area elementary school children
- Information on RPU's CONSERVE & SAVE® rebate and educational programs
- Monthly energy and water conservation tips



*\*while supplies last*

## DON'T THROW AWAY OLD HOLIDAY LIGHTS. **RECYCLE THEM!**

Once you've purchased all the new energy efficient LED holiday lights you need this season (and applied for your rebate from RPU), what should you do with the old ones?

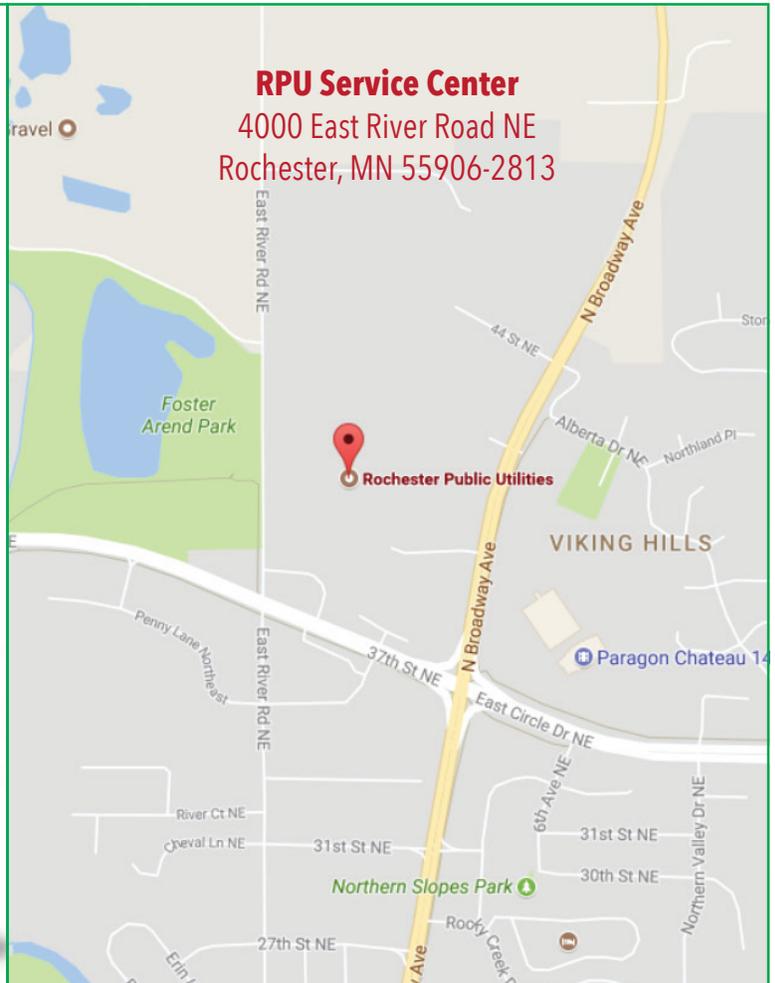
## RPU will recycle all of your old holiday light strands for **FREE!**

It's easy - just bring your old strands of lights into the **RPU Service Center** lobby and drop them in the bins designated for holiday light recycling.



Available now through Jan 31, 2019.

**RPU Service Center**  
4000 East River Road NE  
Rochester, MN 55906-2813





# PROTECT YOUR WATER SERVICE THIS WINTER

**E**ach winter, we urge customers to be mindful of their water service. The extreme cold and frost line can cause major damage to your water service underground and in your home if it goes unnoticed. Here are some tips and reminders for you as we head back into winter.

✓ Customers who have outside faucets should make sure garden hoses are disconnected so the faucet can drain properly.

■ If left connected, the faucets will not drain and can freeze and break. The line usually breaks in the wall so the first sign of a problem is water running through the wall.

✓ Customers who live in mobile homes should make sure their heat tape is turned on and working properly. If the heat tape is turned off or malfunctioning, the pipes and water meter can freeze and break.

✓ If there is exposed plumbing in closets or cabinets on an outside wall, open doors and let warm air from your home circulate into the closet to prevent frozen pipes.

✓ Customers who have experienced frozen water services in the past, or who know their service is susceptible to freezing, should begin monitoring the temperature and condition of their water. Taking your water's temperature is a simple way to avoid a costly problem. If the water temperature reaches 35 degrees Fahrenheit, or if water sporadically appears rusty, then the water service could be in danger of freezing.

■ To reduce the possibility of a water service giving in to the cold weather, let a tap or faucet flow continuously with the water stream about as wide as a pencil (1/4"). This will allow about one-quarter gallon per minute to run through the pipes in a home, thus reducing the likelihood of a freeze-up of the water service. This step may also prevent the freezing of sewer services.

Call RPU (**507.280.1500**) to have it noted on your account that you are running your water to prevent freezing.

✓ If you are leaving your home for an extended time, contact RPU with the dates you will be gone. Also leave a name and phone number of a person in the area who knows how to reach you in case of a utility emergency at your home.

✓ If you would like bills forwarded to your winter or temporary address, please give us that address. Call RPU Customer Relations at **507.280.1500**.



Make sure to sign up for RPU's Underground Utility Repair Coverage program, Service Assured®.

## RPU Commercial Customer Corner:

# RPU's Energy and Environmental Advisors — What Can They Do for Me?

**W**hether you are interested in learning about your energy usage, understanding your bill, or have an energy project in mind, you'll have a friendly face to turn to through the whole process! RPU's Energy and Environmental Advisors are important for your business.

### What is an Energy and Environmental Advisor and what can they do for me?

Energy and Environmental Advisors are your single source contacts at RPU. They can provide you with information and guidance to help you understand, manage, and lower your utility bill at no cost to you.

Additionally, our Energy and Environmental Advisors have a wide range of experience in energy-efficient equipment, buildings, and creating energy teams to behaviorally reduce your energy. If you are looking at retrofitting, expanding, or just purchasing some new equipment, they can help.

### What are some of the financial tools available from an Energy and Environmental Advisor?

Our Conserve & Save® commercial rebates, for new construction or remodels, can lower your project costs while saving you energy and money. LED lighting, air conditioning, and industrial kitchen equipment are just some of the areas where we can help get you some money back.

Our Partnering in Energy Solutions program (PIES) will help ensure your business is connected with the right people who can install or design a system that is energy efficient and eligible for our Conserve & Save® rebates. Through our PIES program, your company may be eligible for zero percent financing that can be applied to your monthly RPU bill.

**See your RPU representative for more information on energy management or our Conserve & Save® rebate program.**



**Jan Blevins**  
Commercial Account Representative  
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507.280.1578



**Dru Larson**  
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**Josh Mason**  
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abasimamovic@rpu.org  
507.280.1565

**CONSERVE & \$AVE®**



*Pictured from L-R: Dana Larson, Sue Simmons, Emma Sotillo, Colleen Keuten, and Lani Towne.*



RPU employees from the Finance Department got into the holiday spirit by volunteering to be bell ringers for The Salvation Army.



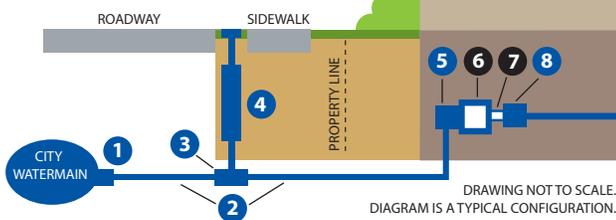
# Is Your Home Protected?

If you don't have RPU's underground utility repair coverage, Service Assured®, you could get stuck paying thousands of dollars out-of-pocket to repair your damaged underground water or electric services. For only \$2.99 per month,\* you can rest assured that you won't be hit with costly repair bills if your underground electric or water service breaks!

FIGURE 1 Water Service

SERVICE ASSURED® covers from 1 to 7

- 1 Corporation Stop (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 2 Service Line (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 3 Curb Valve (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 4 Curb Box (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 5 Angle Stop (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 6 Meter (RPU OWNED)
- 7 Meter Tail (RPU OWNED)
- 8 Full Flow Gate Valve (CUSTOMER OWNED)



## Are there really parts of my electric and water service that I own as the homeowner?

Yes, as a homeowner you own a number of components necessary for getting electric or water service into your home. Without having a professional contractor or RPU Service Assured® coverage, you may be left without service. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

## My home is fairly new. It can't happen to me, right?

The age of your home may not matter when it comes to what is underneath the ground. Weather, soil, and frost can play a big part in the disruption of underground utilities.

## Can I get coverage on just one utility?

Yes, for \$1.99 per month you can cover only one of your utilities, but cover both for just \$1 more!

## I get mailers selling a similar coverage for utilities. Does that coverage have anything to do with RPU?

No, RPU's only underground utility repair coverage is Service Assured®. Other companies send out mailers and postcards advertising services to cover underground utilities for \$5.49 per month or more. Protecting underground utilities should be left to the professionals who work with these utilities every day such as RPU's electric line workers and water operators. If you choose to go with a third-party company, RPU strongly recommends investigating their work record and their contract fine print. Buyer beware.

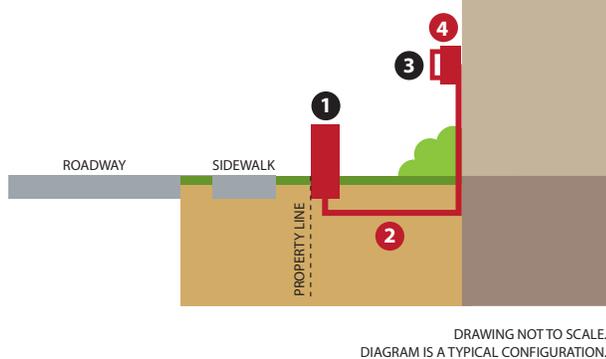
## Where can I get more details on Service Assured®?

All of the information on Service Assured® can be found on the RPU website [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org). This includes terms and conditions, pricing, and diagrams of what is owned and maintained by the homeowner, and what is owned and maintained by RPU.\*

FIGURE 2 Underground Electric Service

SERVICE ASSURED® covers from 1 to 3

- 1 Transformer or Secondary Pedestal (RPU OWNED)
- 2 Service Line (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 3 Meter (RPU OWNED)
- 4 Meter Socket (CUSTOMER OWNED)



Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to review complete Terms and Conditions. To determine if your home qualifies, or if you want to enroll in Service Assured®, call us at 507.280.1500. A pre-inspection of your water and/or electric service is required before enrollment can be completed. When one of our employees comes out to do the inspection, they will bring the enrollment form with them for you to complete.

\* Contact us to determine your eligibility; some exclusions apply. Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to review complete Terms and Conditions.



4000 East River Road NE  
Rochester, MN 55906  
507.280.1500  
www.rpu.org

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# Where to Find RPU

Find us on social media for the latest RPU news and updates!

- @rpuoutages for outage information
- @rpualerts for RPU news and general information
- Rochester Public Utilities



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## RPU SERVICE CENTER Holiday Hours

The RPU Service Center will be closed on:

**Monday, December 31**

**Tuesday, January 1**

**Monday, January 21**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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# Learn About Solar Energy For Your Home or Business

- QUESTIONS ADDRESSED:**
- How well does solar energy work in Minnesota?
  - How much energy do systems produce?
  - What are the costs involved and economics?
  - Is there maintenance?
  - What incentives are available?

*There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion. Installation photos will show you how they look and how they are installed.*

- CLASS:** Solar Energy for Your Home or Business  
**DATE:** Saturday, February 23, 2019  
**TIME:** 10 am – 12 pm  
**COST:** FREE!  
**LOCATION:** Northrop Community Education Center, Room 308  
 201 8th St NW  
**REGISTER:** Rochester Community Education  
<https://rochester.ce.eleyo.com> or 507.328.4000



Pictured are homes with solar systems in Rochester, MN.

