

ROCHESTER PUBLIC UTILITIES

Plugged In

July 2020

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rpu
we pledge, we deliver





Power Outage Safety

Power outages can happen for any number of reasons including overgrown vegetation, equipment failure, animals, auto accidents, and storms. We understand that it is an inconvenience for customers anytime the power goes out. Many RPU employees are also RPU customers, experiencing the same outages as you. In those times, all available resources are used to address the outage immediately.

RPU's first and foremost concern during any outage regardless of size, is safety for customers, the community, and RPU employees. We will never compromise the safety of anyone to expedite power restoration.

Never go near a downed power line. Stay away from the area and contact RPU immediately at **507.280.9191**. Even if a power line looks like it is disconnected, it still can be energized and will cause severe injuries if contact is made with it.

If your house is fed from overhead lines and there is possible storm damage to the line or connection into your home, you will need to take additional steps to safely have your power restored. Keep in mind, the electric service can get pulled down or dislocated from your house and still be working.

- ✔ If a line is down, regardless if it is working or not, it may require additional attention to ensure safety and proper service.
- ✔ Call RPU's outage line at **507.280.9191** to have a crew inspect your overhead service.
- ✔ If repair work is required, RPU will disconnect your service, and will then instruct you to have a licensed electrician make necessary repairs.
- ✔ Once the electrician has completed their work, they will notify a city electrical inspector to ensure the work was done properly.
- ✔ The inspector will then notify RPU for a reconnection.

Your safety, along with the safety of our employees and community, is our priority.

RPU System Operations is staffed around the clock, overseeing all RPU operations and systems. In addition, RPU electric and water crews are always on-call and available when a service outage occurs.



RPU lineworkers will not go out to assess or work on outage restoration if there is inclement weather in the immediate area, which could compromise the safety of RPU line crews.



For large outages,
we use Twitter
[@rpuoutages](https://twitter.com/rpuoutages) for sharing
outage information and
restoration progress.
RPU outage map —
www.rpu.org

POWER OUTAGE EMERGENCY PLAN

As much as we try to keep the power on, there are circumstances that can cause the power to go out for minutes or even days. What is your plan for you and your family if you were to lose power? Here are some things to consider:

 **Report the outage.** Have RPU's outage line in your cellphone or easily accessible to report your outage — **507.280.9191**.

 **Have a back-up location.** Do you have a list of friends or family in the area who you could go stay with if necessary? Even if your home is heated by natural gas and the electricity is out, you will not be able to heat your home because the fan on your furnace is powered electrically.

 **Keep your cellphone charged.** If bad weather and strong winds are in the forecast, keep your cellphone charged in case the electricity goes out.

 **Practice food safety.** FoodSafety.gov offers important food safety tips for before, during and after a power outage at:

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage>.



Store extra flashlights and batteries. Keep flashlights and new batteries in an accessible location to provide some light and safety.



Be aware of medical conditions. If you or someone you know has a medical condition and they rely heavily on electricity for medical equipment, seek medical attention early rather than waiting for the electricity to come back on at your home.



Know your garage door. If you have an electric garage door opener and the power goes out, it may be difficult to find the release cord in the dark. Consult your garage door opener manual and find out how to release the opener in case the power goes out. This will allow you safe and easy access to opening your garage door even without power.



Practice safety first. Never go near downed power lines or wires. Power lines can still stay energized even if they are lying on the ground. Call RPU immediately — **507.280.9191** — if you ever see a downed line and keep others away from the area.



For up-to-date lake levels, visit <https://www.rpu.org/education-environment/lake-zumbro-water-level.php>.



A Historical Look at the Lake Zumbro Dam



It was just over 100 years ago that Lake Zumbro Dam became operational by generating electricity for the city of Rochester. Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) has taken much pride in this facility over the last century, providing renewable energy for our customers.

HISTORY OF THE DAM

- Construction began in 1917 by renowned engineer Hugh L. Cooper.
- The powerhouse was placed into service on November 7, 1919.
- RPU has owned and operated the Lake Zumbro Dam since it was built.
- The Lake Zumbro Dam was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991 for its feats in engineering.

GENERATION AND OPERATION

- The MN Department of Natural Resources regulates RPU to operate as a run of the river hydroelectric generation dam. What flows in, must flow out, which means Mother Nature has the biggest influence on lake level.
- Electrical generation averages around 12,500 megawatt hours per year; that's enough electricity for approximately 1,500 homes.
- Due to increased precipitation, RPU has had record generation in 2018 and 2019.

DAM SAFETY AND LAKE LEVEL REGULATIONS

- The Lake Zumbro Dam is inspected annually, with more in-depth inspections happening every 5 years.
- RPU staff inspects the dam weekly.
- No-Wake is initiated when lake levels exceed 915.6 Mean Sea Level (MSL) and is lifted when lake levels drop below 915.3 MSL.
- Olmsted County Sheriff enforces the No-Wake ordinance (Olmsted County Resolution #94-109).

Field Crew Safety Message

Based on recent customer satisfaction surveys, over 92% of RPU customers are satisfied with the service they receive from RPU. Like any relationship however, we may on occasion fall short of customer expectations. If you feel you have received less than excellent customer service or have other issues with RPU, please realize that our field staff (the folks in the white trucks of various sizes) are in the field to perform assigned construction and maintenance tasks and are not in a position to be able to effectively address specific customer concerns. Note that our field staff are instructed to remove themselves or in extreme cases, call 911 if they ever feel that they are in a threatening situation. Unfortunately, negative confrontations involving our field staff seem to be on the rise.

If you are ever frustrated and feel that you are unable to bring a situation to resolution with RPU, please call RPU Customer Relations at **507.280.1500** rather than attempt to solve the issue with our field personnel.



Difficulty Paying Your Bill?

Please contact our Customer Relations Team. They can assist you with payment arrangements and answer other billing questions.

Phone: 507.280.1500
Monday–Friday | 8am–5pm

Limited Lobby Hours:*
Monday–Friday | 8am–4pm

*Please remember to wear a face covering and practice social distancing. No more than three customers may be in the lobby at one time.

Save Water! Save Money!

Look for the Energy Star®, Energy Star® Most Efficient, and WaterSense® labels. These products are certified to use at least 20 percent less water, save energy, and perform as well as or better than regular models.

Plus, you can apply for a rebate from RPU on:

- Clothes Washers
- High Efficiency Toilets
- Rain Barrels
- Weather-Based Irrigation Controllers

Download a Water Efficiency Rebate Application with complete terms and conditions at www.rpu.org.



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RPU Commercial Customer Corner:

Do's and Don'ts of Workplace Comfort Settings

Small thermostat adjustments may seem trivial, but changing the temperature even one degree can save you money. Your thermostat's operations manual can tell you specifics about your equipment, but read on to learn basic tips for what you should and shouldn't do to properly heat and cool your place of business.

Do:

- ✓ **Set different day and night temperatures.** Though it's a good idea to leave a thermostat set to the same temperature, there's no reason to have it running at full force after hours. Setting the thermostat 5 to 8 degrees higher during off-hours in the summer and 10 to 15 degrees lower in the winter, can save you up to 15% on monthly heating and cooling bills.
- ✓ **Consider smart thermostats.** A smart thermostat can adjust the temperature based on humidity, show you real-time energy consumption, and can be accessed through a smartphone app, making it easier to see how much you're spending on heating and cooling, and adjust the settings to save money.
- ✓ **Think about working conditions.** Recent studies indicate that the most favorable workplace temperature is 72 F. Cooler temperatures encourage productivity, but on the opposite end, too-hot conditions force the body to cool down and use up glucose it would otherwise use for cognitive processes. One study found that worker productivity decreased once the office temperature reached 75 F.

Don't:

- ✗ **Adjust the temperature too often.** Adjusting the thermostat frequently overworks the air conditioner or furnace, and leads to unnecessary wear and tear. Cycling each system on and off in a short period of time wastes energy and money. Pick a comfortable temperature for your employees and leave it at that.
- ✗ **Use extreme set-points.** Turning the thermostat up to 80 F won't heat your office any faster; instead, it overheats the space gradually. If it's set too high initially, you'll have to readjust the thermostat to bring the temperature back down or waste energy, and cause employee discomfort.
- ✗ **Forget to change batteries.** If you realize the furnace or air conditioner isn't working, there's a good chance the problem is with the thermostat and, specifically, dead batteries. Some digital thermostats have battery



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backups that maintain settings in the case of a power outage. It's a good idea to change them once a year.

Yearly Maintenance Is Key

A properly programmed thermostat may not operate properly if the system as a whole isn't running efficiently. Yearly maintenance of the thermostat and heating and cooling system is important to save money, time, and energy.

Contact your RPU Commercial Account Representative for more information on available rebates.

CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS!



Environmental Achievement Awards are given annually for outstanding environmental achievement in Olmsted County.

Nominations are sought for individuals, families, youth, organizations, or businesses in any or all categories:

- Climate Change
- Conservation
 - Education
 - Energy
- Renewables
- Sustainable Food Production
 - Water
 - Other

Download a nomination form at www.rpu.org

DEADLINE IS OCT 2.

2020

Photo by Keith Anderson
2018 Environmental Achievement Award Recipient

WATER CONSERVATION

Monthly Tip on Saving From the Tap!



When the kids want to cool off, use the sprinkler in an area where your lawn needs it most.



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ENERGY CONSERVATION

Monthly Tip for Plugging into Savings!



BE A COOL COOK!

On hot days, instead of using the oven, cook on the stove, use a microwave oven, or grill outside.



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



RPU Service Center Holiday Hours

The RPU Service Center will be closed on:
Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day

Social Media:

- rochesterpublicutilities
- @rpuoutages
@rpualerts
- Rochester Public Utilities
- blog.rpu.org
- RPU TV

Mobile App:



Customer Service: 507.280.1500
Toll-Free: 800.778.3421
Pay By Phone: 855.631.3643
 (toll-free • no fee • 24 hrs)
Electric Emergency:
 507.280.9191 (24 hrs)
Water Emergency:
 507.280.1500 (8am-5pm)
 507.280.9191 (5pm-8am)

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Download Now!
 Search "RPU Connect"
 on the Google Play or Apple App Store.

Our customer online portal and mobile app

allow you to manage your account, pay your bill, view your usage, control communication preferences, connect with us, and much more!



Questions? Need help? Our Customer Relations Team is happy to assist you! Call us Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm at 507.280.1500. We also have helpful videos at www.rpu.org.