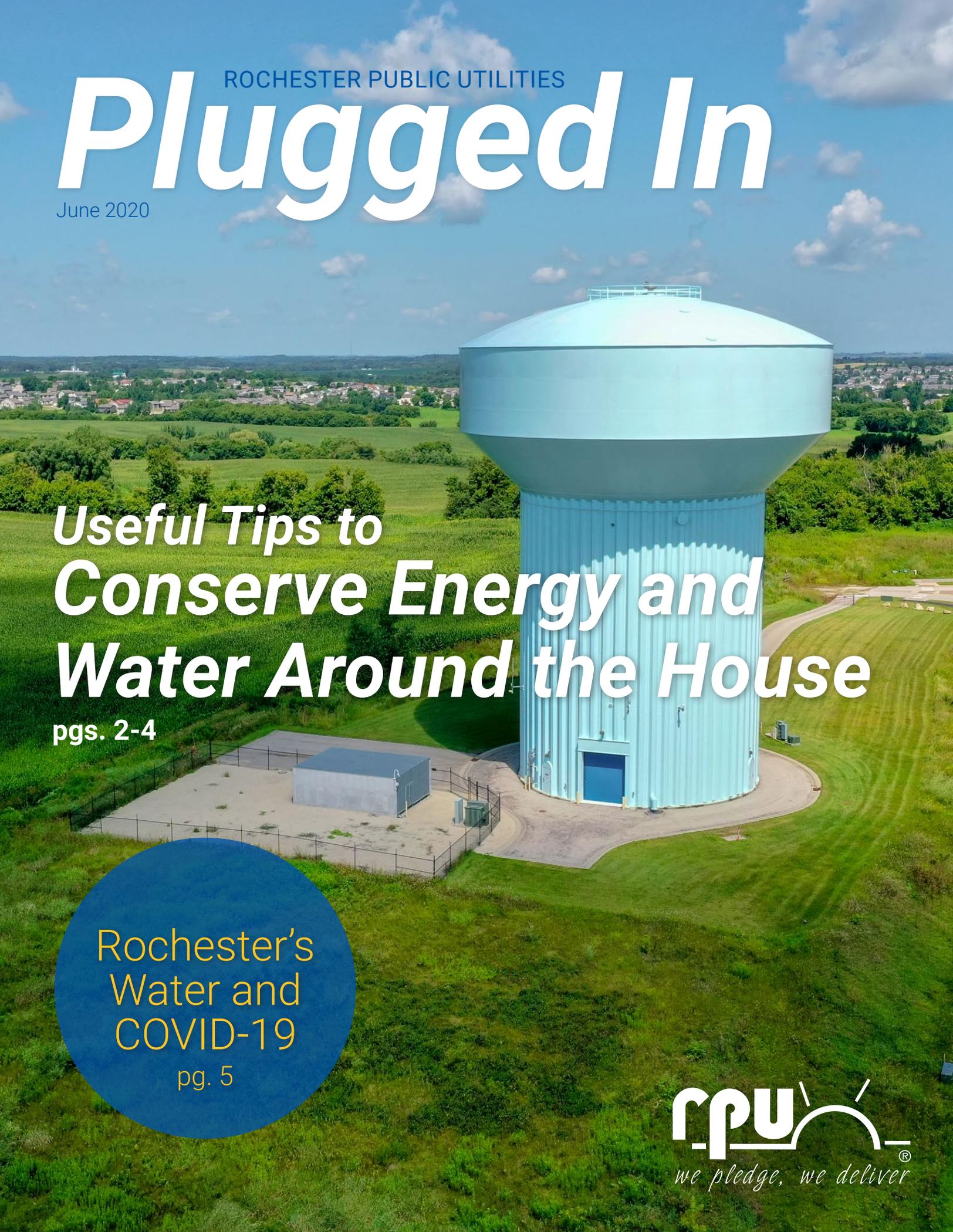


ROCHESTER PUBLIC UTILITIES

Plugged In

June 2020



Useful Tips to Conserve Energy and Water Around the House

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Useful Tips to Conserve Energy and Water Around the House

You've possibly had more time than you've wanted to analyze your home projects lately, but some of those home improvements related to your energy and water use might actually be pretty easy and inexpensive to complete. Let RPU's energy and water experts help you save energy and water starting today! Use this list of tips for saving energy and water around your house, and then saving money too!



Saving Energy in the Kitchen

- ✓ Cover liquids and wrap your foods before storing them in the refrigerator. Moisture released from uncovered foods and liquids make the compressor work harder.
- ✓ Check your refrigerator and freezer door gaskets by placing a dollar bill between them and closing the door. If the bill pulls out easily, it suggests either a gasket or door adjustment problem.
- ✓ Make sure the temperature in your refrigerator is set correctly at 38°F.
- ✓ Don't open your refrigerator door too often! Every time the door is opened, up to 30% of the cooled air can escape.
- ✓ Vacuum your refrigerator condenser coils every six months.
- ✓ Use microwaves, toaster ovens, and slow cookers. These use 75% less energy than an electric oven.
- ✓ No peeking in your oven to check on your food; it can lose 25–50 degrees or up to 30% of its heat.

Saving Energy in the Living Areas

- ✓ Summer sunlight can heat up your home quickly. Close the shades on the south and west side of your home during daylight hours.
- ✓ Use room fans in conjunction with air conditioning to avoid having to set the air conditioner too low. Turn off the fan when you leave the room as fans cool people through wind-chill, but do not cool the room.
- ✓ Weatherstrip or caulk around loose-fitting exterior door jambs and windows.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat; limit heating to 68 degrees and cooling to 78 degrees.
- ✓ Change the filter on your HVAC system every month.
- ✓ Have a professional clean and tune up your central air conditioner (A/C) unit. You can receive a \$25 rebate through RPU's CONSERVE & SAVE® program.
- ✓ Replace incandescent lightbulbs with Energy Star® LED bulbs.
- ✓ Reduce the number of lights you are using. Turn off unneeded lights.
- ✓ Use a table lamp for reading instead of turning on room lights.
- ✓ Unplug rarely used appliances such as a TV located in a spare bedroom.



Saving Energy in the Laundry Room

- ✓ Wash only full loads of laundry, or set the machine for the correct-sized load.
- ✓ When possible, wash clothes in cold water.
- ✓ When purchasing a new clothes washer, buy an Energy Star® high-efficiency model. They use 45% less water which reduces water heating costs. They also spin the clothes better for shortened drying times.
- ✓ Lower the temperature of your water heater to 120°F.
- ✓ Dry your clothes on a clothesline instead of using a clothes dryer.





Saving Energy Outdoors

- ✓ Use LED holiday lights and decorations. They are 75% more efficient and last up to 25 times longer.
- ✓ For outdoor decorations, use a timer or look for timers that include a light sensor for easier operation!
- ✓ Keep the outdoor part of your central A/C unit clean to help it operate more efficiently. Seeds, grass clippings, dust, and brush growing too close to your condenser can clog it and make it work harder.
- ✓ Plant a tree! If you plant a tree today on the west side of your home, in five years your energy bills should be 3% less. In 15 years the savings will be nearly 12%.

Saving Water in the Kitchen

- ✓ When cooking, peel and clean vegetables in a large bowl of water instead of under running water.
- ✓ Don't continuously run the water when washing and rinsing dishes.
- ✓ Only run the dishwasher when it's full.
- ✓ When buying a dishwasher, select an Energy Star® model with a "light-wash" option.
- ✓ Only use the garbage disposal when necessary (composting is a great alternative).
- ✓ Repair leaking faucets.
- ✓ Install WaterSense® water-saving faucet aerators.
- ✓ Keep a bottle/jug of drinking water in the refrigerator – running tap water to cool it off for drinking water is wasteful.



Saving Water in the Bathroom

- ✓ Take short showers instead of baths. Soap up in the shower.
- ✓ Turn off the water to brush teeth. Fill the sink to shave.
- ✓ Repair leaking faucets.
- ✓ Install WaterSense® water-saving faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads.
- ✓ Repair leaky toilets. Add 12 drops of food coloring into the tank, and if color appears in the bowl one hour later, your toilet is leaking.
- ✓ When needed, replace your toilet with a WaterSense® high-efficiency model.
- ✓ 30% of home water use is flushed down the toilet – avoid unnecessary flushing and you'll save big.
- ✓ Don't use your toilet as a wastebasket.

Saving Water in the Laundry Room

- ✓ Wash only full loads of laundry, or set the machine for the correct-sized load.
- ✓ When purchasing a new clothes washer, buy an Energy Star® high-efficiency model, which uses 45% less water than regular washers.
- ✓ Repair leaking faucets.
- ✓ Hang towels to dry and use them multiple times instead of washing after each use.

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Saving Water Outdoors

- ✓ Apply mulch around shrubs and flower beds to reduce evaporation, promote plant growth, and control weeds.
- ✓ Maximize the use of natural vegetation and establish smaller lawns. Consider planting more trees, shrubs, ground covers, and less grass.
- ✓ Add compost or an organic matter to soil as necessary, to improve soil conditions and water retention.
- ✓ When mowing your lawn, set the mower blades to 2-3 inches high. Longer grass shades the soil improving moisture retention, allowing it to grow thicker and develop a deeper root system.
- ✓ Only water the lawn when necessary. Step on the grass. If it springs back up, it doesn't need watering. If it stays flat, the lawn is ready for watering. Water your lawn during early morning or later evening hours to minimize evaporation and to ensure the water gets soaked up by the lawn.
- ✓ Replace a standard clock timer with a WaterSense® labeled, weather-based irrigation controller, which can save an average home nearly 8,800 gallons of water annually.
- ✓ Collect rainfall in a rain barrel for irrigation.
- ✓ When washing a car, wet it quickly, then use a bucket of soapy water to wash the car. Turn on the hose to final rinse. Or take your car to a self-serve car wash, which will use half the water of a home wash.

- ✓ Use a broom to clean walkways, driveways, decks, and porches, rather than hosing off these areas.
- ✓ Repair leaking outdoor faucets, pipes, and hoses.

CONSERVE & \$AVE

Make sure to check out RPU's website (www.rpu.org) for a complete list of CONSERVE & SAVE® rebates available for qualifying Energy Star® and WaterSense® labeled equipment. If you are buying trees for your property, RPU has you covered there, too. Find coupons on the RPU website through RPU's Partners in Planting Program that are good toward the purchase and maintenance of new trees!

Need Help Paying Your Utility Bill?

You may be eligible for assistance. Visit our blog for a list of resources available to residential and commercial customers.



blog.rpu.org



COOL & COMFORTABLE

A new, high efficiency air conditioning system provides optimal comfort, while saving you energy and money. Plus, RPU offers great rebates on your purchase!

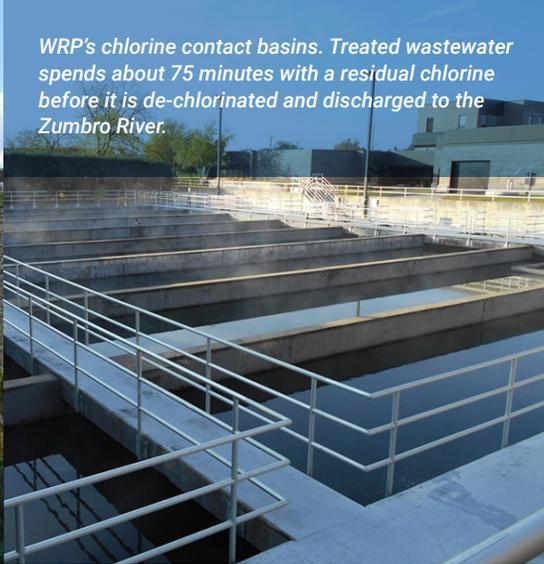
Visit www.rpu.org for a complete list of eligible equipment and to download an Electric Rebate Application with complete terms and conditions.



CONSERVE & \$AVE®



WRP's final effluent outfall. This is where treated wastewater is discharged into the Zumbro River.



WRP's chlorine contact basins. Treated wastewater spends about 75 minutes with a residual chlorine before it is de-chlorinated and discharged to the Zumbro River.



RPU Water Distribution Workers regularly collect water samples for testing to ensure no viruses and bacteria are in the RPU water distribution system.

Rochester's Water and COVID-19

A recent story from Minnesota Public Radio highlighted University of Minnesota researchers studying whether the coronavirus could impact Minnesota's water resources. The idea is that the virus would travel from an infected person's waste into wastewater, then the environment, and eventually a drinking water resource. Could this happen in Rochester?

Rochester's Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) cleans our wastewater through physical, biological, and chemical processes to remove organics, nutrients, and solids. The final step of treatment process is chlorine disinfection where any remaining pathogens and viruses are destroyed. The effluent is then de-chlorinated before it is discharged to the Zumbro River.

A few key takeaways:

- Rochester's chlorine disinfection process is an effective treatment for COVID-19 in wastewater.
- The WRP is required by permit to chlorinate every year from April through October.
- In an abundance of caution, Rochester's Water Reclamation Plant started chlorinating its wastewater in mid-March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WRP operates 24 hours a day to ensure that Rochester's wastewater is treated to meet permitted discharge limits set by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. These permit limits are put in place to protect public health and keep the river's aquatic ecosystem healthy. The WRP is doing their part by continuing to treat our wastewater to the highest possible standards to keep you safe and keep our waterways clean. You can help them by doing your part and only flushing toilet paper and human waste down the toilet to prevent clogs in the sewer infrastructure.

While it's good to know that WRP is preventing the virus from entering the Zumbro River, Rochester's drinking water is sourced from underground aquifers, not the Zumbro River. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been detected in drinking water. Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19."

Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) water department works every day to protect public water supplies from bacteriological and viral contamination. RPU complies with all State & Federal drinking water regulations and uses a multi-barrier approach to ensure safe and reliable drinking water.

- **Source water protection:** RPU's drinking water source is groundwater, primarily the Jordan aquifer. Protecting the areas around all of RPU's 31 wells removes the risk of contamination from entering the water system.
- **Treatment:** RPU disinfects the drinking water with a small amount of chlorine. Chlorine is very effective in eliminating all viruses and bacteria from our water. Chlorine levels are checked daily on the distribution system to ensure adequate levels.
- **Monitoring:** RPU collects water samples weekly at numerous locations throughout Rochester to ensure no viruses and bacteria are in the distribution system.

Rochester's tap water continues to be readily available for hygienic and drinking purposes, and it is recommended to continue to use and drink tap water as usual. RPU is confident that our disinfection process keeps Rochester's water free of the coronavirus, clean, and safe to use.

Do Not Fall Victim to a Utility Scam Call

Please be vigilant and mindful of utility scams. Scams come in many forms, but the one we are made aware of the most is the phone scam. Never offer financial or bank information over the phone, unless you prompted the call to RPU at **507.280.1500**.

Imposters are calling RPU customers stating that their utilities will be shut off unless immediate payment is made over the phone by credit card or pre-paid debit cards. These calls can happen

at any time of the day or night. Beware – with phone technology today, the scammers can even make the caller ID show RPU's customer service line (**507.280.1500**). This is not how RPU operates, and remember, RPU would never call with this threat.

RPU will never request banking or secure information from you over the phone unless you ask to discuss your account. The RPU representative will then ask for information to identify who you are and that you are authorized to speak on behalf of the account.

What to do if you receive a scam call:

- If someone calls threatening to cut off your power if you don't pay, hang up!



- Call RPU at **507.280.1500** to report the scam.
- Never give personal or financial information to an unknown caller.
- Remember that RPU will never use threatening language or make forceful demands for payment.

This type of scam is not just seen in Rochester. Utilities throughout the nation deal with scam calls as well. Please share this information with friends and family to help ensure that they don't fall victim to a phone scam.

Complete a Central Air Conditioner Clean & Tune

and apply for a

\$25 REBATE!

Regular preventative maintenance is the best way to ensure trouble-free, energy-efficient operation.

Visit www.rpu.org to download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions; some exclusions apply.

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Need a new cooling system? We have rebates for that too!



RPU Commercial Customer Corner: Energy-saving Tips for Your Refrigeration Units

Refrigerators and freezers are critical to the operations of restaurants, grocery stores, and other types of businesses. Cold storage units, however, operate around the clock and use a lot of energy. The typical commercial refrigeration unit consumes about 17,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity a year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, and larger systems can use much more.

Energy-saving Tips

Your business can take a variety of measures to reduce the energy use of commercial refrigerators and freezers. Save some cold cash with these low-cost tips:

- 1 Turn on anti-sweat heaters only when ambient conditions cause condensation on the display doors. Install adaptive controls for these devices so they turn on and off automatically when necessary.
- 2 Check door gaskets and auto closers to make sure they are in good condition. Warm, humid air can enter refrigeration compartments if these are not working properly, resulting in energy waste and spoiled food.
- 3 Keep the refrigeration system clean and dust-free, especially the coils. This can help improve heat transfer within the system.
- 4 Ensure that the refrigeration unit has enough space around it to maintain proper airflow over the heat exchange coils, which helps improve system efficiency.
- 5 Use high-efficiency LED fixtures for case lighting. LEDs offer excellent cold temperature performance. Also, install motion sensors to ensure that lights are turned on only when needed.
- 6 Install night curtains on open cases to help keep refrigerated air from escaping after business hours.

If it's time to replace your cold storage unit, upgrade to an ENERGY STAR® certified model. ENERGY STAR commercial refrigerators and freezers are, on average, 20% more energy efficient than standard models while still providing a high level of performance.



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Choose walk-in units with the highest annual walk-in energy factor (AWEF), a federal efficiency metric. When comparing refrigeration units, look for the lowest maximum daily energy consumption (kWh/day) based on total display area (TDA).

For more information on commercial refrigeration energy efficiency and possible rebates, please contact your RPU Energy and Environmental Advisor.



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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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CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS!



2020

Photo by Keith Anderson
2018 Environmental Achievement Award Recipient

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 OCTOBER 2.**