

ROCHESTER PUBLIC UTILITIES

# Plugged In

May 2020



## We're Proud to Serve Rochester!

RPU's over 190 employees are proud to serve the Rochester community with reliable, affordable electricity and safe, clean drinking water!



This group photo of RPU employees was taken prior to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions in the newly renovated RPU garage.



# A 299-Foot Change to the Rochester Skyline Coming this Summer!

The Rochester skyline is changing! No, Mayo isn't building a new addition, nor is a new high-rise apartment complex going up. The Silver Lake Plant's 299-foot chimney on Unit 4 will be demolished early this summer.

This structure was built in 1968 and actually consists of two concentric chimneys; an inner cylindrical lining made of acid-proof brick which carried the flue gas, and an outer concrete column that provided support and protection from temperature changes and the elements.

The chimney was in use for the majority of its 52-year life until it was shut down on September 24, 2013, for the last time. The condition of the brick, mortar, and concrete was sound for decades as hot flue gas kept the chimney warm and prevented the penetration of moisture into its cracks and crevices. As the unit was cycled on and off more often at the end of its life, Mother Nature, in the form of rain, snow, and ice ate away at its integrity, accelerating the

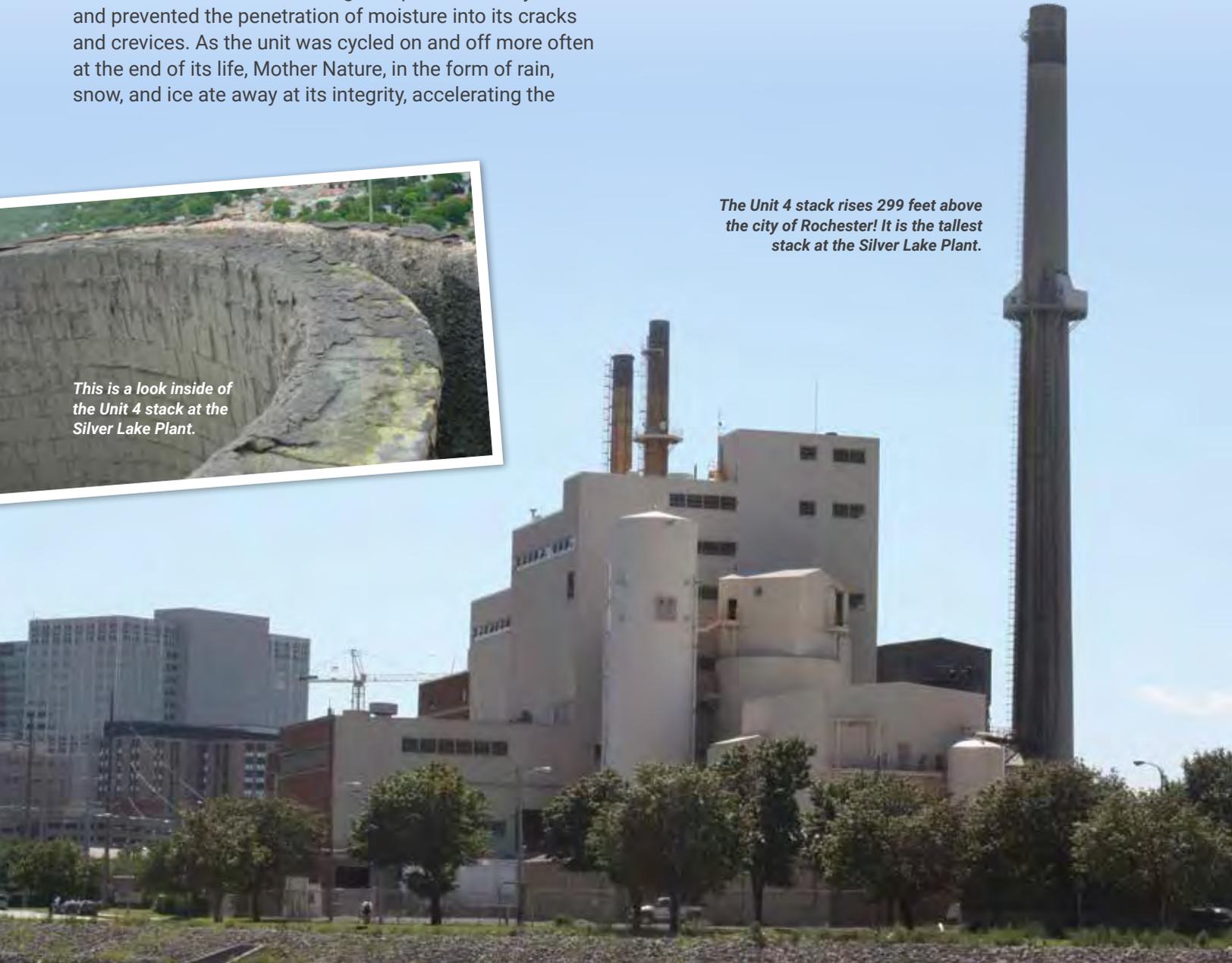
rate of deterioration. Although it is in no immediate danger of collapsing, the attached structures (ladder, shelter, lighting platforms) are corroding and could eventually produce a safety hazard.

Many have ridden up and down its elevator, the blinking lights have been changed numerous times, and our environmental technicians performed countless tests 200 feet up in the white shelter that surrounds it. The soaring tower of stone has been painted, inspected, repaired, and tested many times over the years, and before the end of the summer the silhouette of this 1968 monument will be no more.



*This is a look inside of the Unit 4 stack at the Silver Lake Plant.*

*The Unit 4 stack rises 299 feet above the city of Rochester! It is the tallest stack at the Silver Lake Plant.*



# 'WE ARE WATER MN' TRAVELING EXHIBIT COMING TO ROCHESTER

In Minnesota, water is a vital part of our history, identity, and culture. In a state with more shoreline than Florida, Hawaii, and California combined, this connection to water, both culturally and literally, is vital. Your three water utilities, stormwater, wastewater, and drinking water, invite you to join us in celebrating this connection with water as Rochester hosts "We Are Water MN," the state's popular traveling exhibition that explores the connections between the humanities and water through an interactive exhibit and public events. We Are Water MN will be on view in Rochester in the spring of 2021.

We Are Water MN reveals the central nature of water in our lives by exploring how we relate to water — how we use water, how water unites communities, how water affects every element of life, and how we care for our water and protect water for the future. Visitors reflect on local stories and the meaning and experiences of water in Minnesota with space to add their own stories. Combining learning and sharing in this way strengthens Minnesotans' relationships with water and increases participation in water stewardship activities.

The City of Rochester Public Works Department, Rochester Public Library, and Olmsted Soil and Water Conservation District, in cooperation with the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC), will be leading this celebration and have welcomed many partners including Rochester Public Utilities and the Water Reclamation Plant. Our partners met in February and established the following goals for our events:

- 1 In a collaborative spirit, broaden and strengthen opportunities of partnerships
- 2 Deepen understanding and connection of the watershed, past, present, and future to empower people of all ages to affect change
- 3 Explore how we value water and build our community's shared relationships with water
- 4 "Let's get personal for the Zumbro Watershed." Activate stewardship behaviors that have a direct impact on your lifestyle to provide input for policy change

We are still seeking more partners to be a part of this effort as we explore how the greater Rochester area relates to water. If interested, connect with our host site coordinator, Stephanie Hatzenbihler, at **507.328.2440** or [stormwater@rochestermn.gov](mailto:stormwater@rochestermn.gov).



MHC's project partners for We Are Water MN are the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Minnesota Departments of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources. These partners connect host communities to resources and information, learn from host communities, and provide opportunities for host communities to learn from and with each other.

*We Are Water MN is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and with money from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund that was created with the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.*

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*Monthly Tip for Plugging into Savings!*



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*Monthly Tip on Saving From the Tap!*



Spreading a layer of organic mulch around plants helps them retain moisture, saving water, time, and money.

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## RPU Commercial Customer Corner: Clean Your Facility and Save

Commercial air conditioner and chiller tune-ups can benefit from a deep cleaning at least once per year, and spring is the perfect time. Deep cleaning not only enhances the appearance of your building, it also improves indoor air quality and lowers your operating costs. Spruce up the following areas.

✔ **Cooling system.** Keeping your cooling system clean is an effective, cost-saving measure that's often overlooked. Most air-conditioning units remain dormant throughout the winter, allowing for dust and dirt buildup in system components, ductwork, and vents. This can lead to lingering odors and indoor air quality issues, as well as maintenance problems and higher operating costs. Keep employees healthy and productive by having your system cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional.

✔ **Lighting systems.** Dust buildup on lamps and fixtures reduces their effectiveness and lowers light levels. Cleaning lamps, fixtures, and lenses brightens your facility and increases lighting efficiency. When employees can see better, the quality of their work improves and the potential for costly accidents is reduced.

✔ **Machinery.** Motors use a substantial amount of energy in production facilities and many commercial buildings. Accumulation of dirt and other foreign matter on motor components causes overheating and excessive wear, and reduces overall efficiency. After cleaning the outside of the motor to remove dirt and grease, carefully disassemble the unit and thoroughly clean all parts.

✔ **Floors, walls, and ceilings.** Soiled carpets and dirt buildup in corners and under furniture and equipment often results in indoor air pollution and other contaminants, which may cause allergies and respiratory problems. Dirt collects on walls and ceilings, reducing the amount of light they reflect. Cleaning or painting walls in small rooms will help to brighten the work area and enhance the effectiveness of natural lighting while improving productivity.

✔ **Outside.** Washing the building's exterior and sprucing up your landscape makes your facility more attractive to employees, visitors, and customers. Sealing and weatherstripping doors and windows improves comfort and efficiency. For long-term savings, plant leafy trees



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around the south and west sides of your facility. They provide cooling shade in summer and, when the leaves fall, allow the warm sun to shine through on cold winter days.

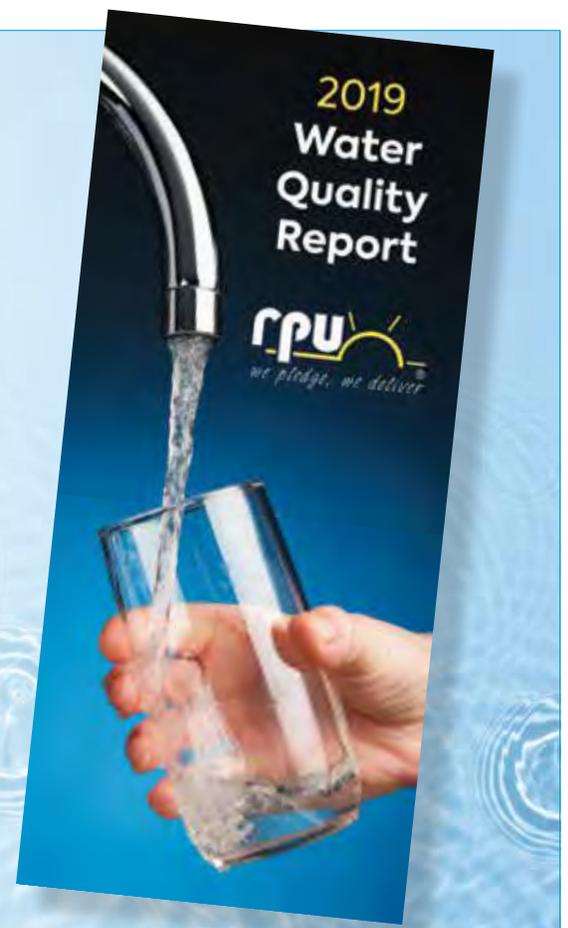
Commercial air conditioner and chiller tune-ups are now eligible for a rebate through our Conserve & Save® program. Visit our online Commercial Rebate Center at [www.rpu.org/rebates-programs/commercial/conserv-save-rebates](http://www.rpu.org/rebates-programs/commercial/conserv-save-rebates) or call your Account Representative for more details.

# Water Quality Report 2019

Municipal water utilities, including RPU, are highly tested and scrutinized for safety and quality. In accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the testing results over the past year are compiled and made available for the public. Each May, RPU releases the consumer confidence report (CCR) publicly.

This year, we are pleased to announce that water provided by RPU, again met all state and federal drinking water standards.

A complete version of the CCR can be found on RPU's webpage located at: [www.rpu.org/environment/water-quality](http://www.rpu.org/environment/water-quality). Questions and requests for a hard copy version of the 2019 water quality report can be directed to Todd Osweiler at **507.280.1589**.



## Online Energy Efficiency Workshop

Participate in our FREE Neighborhood Energy Challenge workshop and qualify for a \$50 home energy audit, valued at \$300! Register and you will receive an email link to the online event.

**Tuesday, May 19, 2020 • 6:30–7:30pm**

**TO REGISTER:**

**Call: 888.734.6365 -or- Email: [sbootscamp@mncee.org](mailto:sbootscamp@mncee.org)**



# Ask to Have Your Irrigation System Tested Today!

An irrigation system can certainly be convenient for watering the yard, but it can also be a cause of water contamination if the backflow preventer isn't tested and working properly.

Residential irrigation systems have pressure vacuum breakers (PVBs), which serve as a backflow assembly to prevent water from back flowing into your home. A recent change in the Minnesota Plumbing code made annual testing mandatory for all backflow assemblies, including PVBs most commonly found on residential irrigation systems.

Backflow is the flow of water or other liquids, mixtures, or substances, under positive or reduced pressure into the distribution pipes of a potable water supply from any source other than its intended source. Backflow is caused by either backsiphonage or backpressure. Backsiphonage occurs when a flow of used, contaminated, or polluted water from a plumbing fixture or vessel enters into the

public water system, often due to negative pressure in a pipe. Backpressure occurs due to a drop in pressure from the water system. It is important to note that a drop in pressure is out of your control and can occur at any time.

Testing must be done by a certified backflow tester and typically takes less than an hour to perform. Contact your irrigation system contractor and ask if they have a certified backflow tester; many local plumbing contractors also have certified testers.

After the test has been completed, the certified tester sends the results to RPU. Homeowners are required to perform backflow testing on an annual basis.

If the certified tester finds that the backflow assembly has failed, normally the company will have a licensed plumber on staff to repair the backflow assembly. If not, you will need to have it repaired immediately and then confirmed with RPU.



Visit the RPU website ([www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)) for more information on RPU's Backflow Prevention Program.

## 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](http://www.rpu.org).

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- rochesterpublicutilities
- @rpuoutages  
@rpualerts
- Rochester Public Utilities
- [blog.rpu.org](http://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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## Hydrant Flushing this Spring and Summer

Hydrant flushing is a vital maintenance activity to clean and flush the city's water mains. Fire hydrants are opened to move a large volume of water at a higher-than-normal velocity through the system. This important maintenance procedure mobilizes particles and minerals that settle over time and flushes them out of the pipes resulting in better water quality. Although it may appear to waste water, the process is part of a routine maintenance program necessary to maintain the integrity of the water system and allows us to ensure the hydrants are in proper working order.

Hydrant flushing may cause periods of discolored water. The water will remain safe to use and will generally clear within a few hours after flushing is completed. If you notice discolored water in your home or business, run the water at the hose bibs outside for a few minutes, then run the cold water inside until the water is clear.

If possible, do not do laundry while flushing is taking place. If you notice your laundry has been stained, do not dry. Rewash the load using a stain/rust remover, which can be provided free of charge by calling RPU at **507.280.1500**. Do not use bleach on stained laundry as bleach will set the stain.

