Things are getting brighter in Rochester!

10 Megawatts of solar energy is coming soon to RPU. (Read more on page 2)
Things Are Getting Brighter in Rochester!

The solar panels continue to go up across the 138-acre parcel along Valleyhigh Road NW and 50th Avenue NW. When the Westside Solar Project (WSP) is completed later this spring, it will provide 10 megawatts (MW) of solar energy generation.

The WSP is a component of RPU’s Infrastructure Plan, and is another step toward RPU becoming 100 percent renewable by 2030. Planning and coordination for the WSP has been done in partnership with EDF Renewables Distribution -Scale Power team, a well-respected solar distribution company with projects across the Midwest and nation. The construction and financing are being managed by EDF Renewables, with RPU purchasing the power produced from the site through a 20-year power purchase agreement.

Here are some interesting facts that come with the WSP that RPU customers should be aware of and proud of!

- The solar system will contain nearly 32,000 solar panels
- The panels are installed on a base that tracks the sun from east to west throughout the day, enabling them to capture more of the sun’s energy
- The power produced from WSP is equivalent to avoiding CO2 emission from:
  - 2.6 millions of gallons of gasoline consumed
  - 3,489 homes’ electricity use for a year
  - 2.33 million smart phones charged

Watch for more updates on the project in future editions of RPU Plugged In.
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.

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 card. 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 Care line (507-280-1500). This is not how RPU operates, and remember, RPU would never call with this threat.

RPU will never request bank 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. Never offer financial or bank information over the phone, unless you prompted the call to RPU at 507-280-1500.

What to you 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.
2022 MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award

A Rochester high school senior could get up to $2,000 to attend a post-secondary educational institution from the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA). Here’s how to apply.

Students are asked to write an essay on one or more aspects of the theme, “Municipal Utilities: Good for All of Us.” This applies to municipal electric and natural gas utilities. Judges will look for originality and relevance of the theme to the writer and their city.

- High school seniors are eligible. Those eligible must be, or have as a legal guardian, a customer of an MMUA-member municipal electric or gas utility.
- Essays should be original and between 500 to 750 words. Entries must be typed and double spaced.
- Students must schedule a time to meet with an RPU representative in person or virtually to learn more about RPU before writing and submitting an essay.
- All essays should include a cover page with the writer’s name and address.
- An independent person or body may be designated to select the winner of the local essay. If there is an independent body selecting the winner and they do not know who wrote which essay, relatives of utility personnel are eligible to enter the contest.
- Deadline for submitting essays to Tony Benson at RPU is March 25, 2022.

Resource Materials: Rochester Public Utilities is the best resource for information and printed materials. We recommend reaching out to other local resources for more detailed information relevant to where you live. One local essay selection will be forwarded to MMUA for statewide judging. If a local winner is selected for an award prize, the local utility will contact the student directly.
RPU will spend nearly $1.7 million this year on proactive tree trimming and vegetation management. This investment will provide a safer and more reliable electric system for Rochester. As RPU crews and their tree trimming contractors are out working on clearing lines safely, here’s what you should know:

- Safety and system reliability are the reasons for RPU tree trimming.
- RPU will send a mailing, connect with you in person at your door, or leave a door hanger to affected neighborhoods in order to communicate what work is being done and when.
- It is important to stay a safe distance away from the coned-off work zones while trimming is being done. All tree trimming should be done by a licensed and certified tree trimming professional.

Customers can help RPU by doing an inventory of trees on their property and noting ones that may be getting close to overhead lines. RPU would be happy to come by and inspect those trees and take corrective action to ensure that you aren’t affected by an outage due to trees damaging overhead lines and infrastructure.

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**Cold Weather Rule Ends April 30th**

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule window is coming to an end on April 30, 2022. If you are behind on paying your RPU bill, please contact RPU Customer Care to make arrangements to bring your account current by April 30th. If no arrangement has been made and your account is not current as of April 30th, your electric service may be shut off for non-payment. **RPU Customer Care (507-280-1500) is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday to assist you.**

KEEP AN EYE OUT!

Details on RPU’s 2022 Arbor Day Celebration will be coming soon.

FREE ONLINE ENERGY WORKSHOP

With rising fuel costs, it’s more important than ever to learn new strategies to stop energy waste and save money! By attending this workshop, you’ll qualify for a $50 home energy visit (valued at over $400) with diagnostic tests and installation of basic energy saving materials. For larger improvements, you’ll get connected with qualified contractors, financing, incentives, and utility rebates. Learn more at www.rpu.org.

SATURDAY
MARCH 5
10-11am

To register for this free online workshop, call or email Stacy:
888-734-6365 • sbootscamp@mncee.org
Commercial billing changes are coming for some business customers.

Understanding your RPU bill can help save you money and provide you with important information for managing and conserving your energy, becoming more efficient, and identifying savings opportunities.

Effective January 1, 2023, the demand thresholds for the General Service and the Medium General Service rates will change. Those customers with demand under 25 kW will continue to be billed just Energy (kWh) under the General Service rate. Customers with loads greater than 25 kW will be moved into the Medium General Service rate and will start seeing two electric billing components: Energy (kWh) and Demand (kW).

It is important to RPU that our customers understand their energy consumption and how they are being billed. For additional information on RPU’s rate schedule, demand billing, or how this change may affect your bill, we encourage you to call us at 507-280-1500 or email us at RPUMarketing@rpu.org to talk to one of our Energy and Environmental Advisors.

Meet RPU's New ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISOR

Mohamed Faal
Energy and Environmental Advisor
mfaal@rpu.org
507-280-1607

Originally from Southern California, Mohamed Faal has recently relocated to Rochester to continue working on his passion - delivering energy and environmental solutions. Mohamed’s background includes serving as an energy advisor and analyst, as well as an environmental planner, which has equipped him with the tools necessary to bring the most value to RPU.

Mohamed holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies from Whittier College, California, and a Master of Science degree in Global Energy and Climate Policy from the University of London, United Kingdom. Having traveled and lived in many countries around the world, Mohamed offers a unique and diverse perspective; allowing him to create and deliver customer-specific solutions.

Fun Fact: Recycling old, incandescent holiday lights keeps these materials out of landfills. This past holiday season, RPU recycled 2,425 pounds of holiday lighting.
PLANT A TREE!
RPU encourages you and your family to go out and plant a tree in April in honor of Arbor Day! Together, we can make a difference.

Your gift of a few extra cents can go a long way towards helping others in need within Rochester.

RPU’s Neighbors Chipping In program collects donations and disburses the funds to help people in our community pay their utility bill.

It’s easy to give with a recurring* monthly donation. You can either round up your utility bill or add a specific amount.

Download an enrollment form at www.rpu.org.

Thank You!