



ROCHESTER  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**  
WE PLEDGE, WE DELIVER™

# Plugged In

**FREE**  
**Open House**  
**during Drinking**  
**Water Week 2024**

Details on page 2

MAY / JUN  
**2024**

# Water Tower & Wellhouse Open House in May

Have you ever wondered what is inside a wellhouse or how the water gets from the aquifer to your home? For National Drinking Water Week May 5-11, 2024, RPU will be holding an open house for customers. Join RPU water staff to view inside the Apache Mall water tower and wellhouse on Friday, May 10 from 12-3pm. The Apache Mall water tower is a spheroid water storage facility and has the storage capacity of 500,000 gallons of water. In comparison, the Bandel reservoir located on Bandel Dr NW can hold up to 2,250,000 gallons of water.

Come and learn what it takes to deliver safe, clean drinking water to over 42,000 customers in Rochester. This is the first time in over 15 years that the Apache Mall water tower and wellhouse has been open to the public! We're excited to talk water with you on May 10.



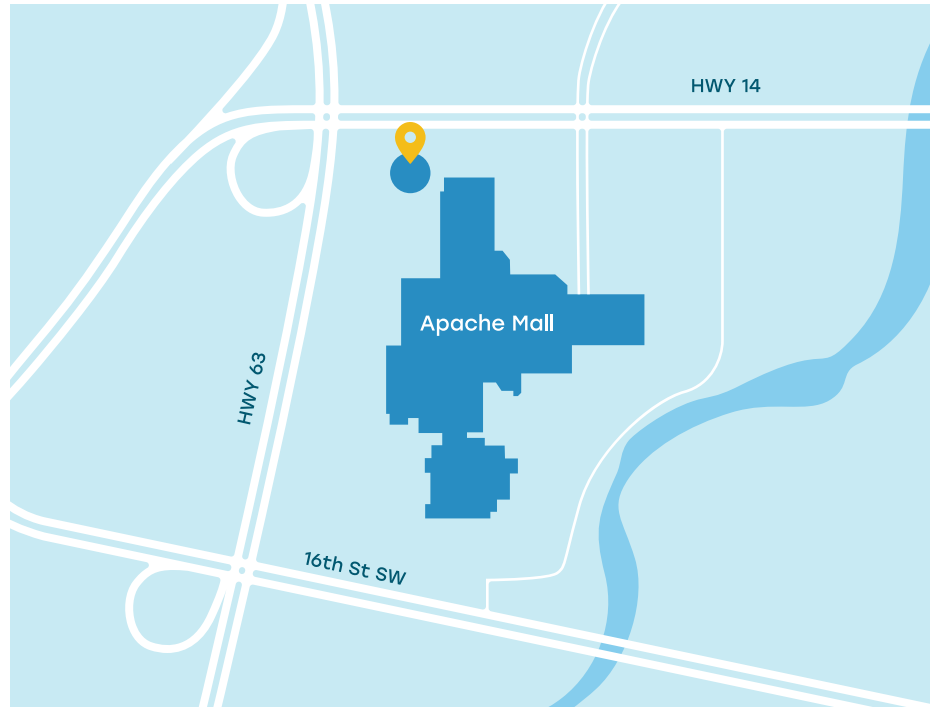
**WHERE:**  
Apache Water Tower  
and Wellhouse



**WHEN:**  
Friday, May 10  
12-3pm



**WHY:**  
National Drinking  
Water Week

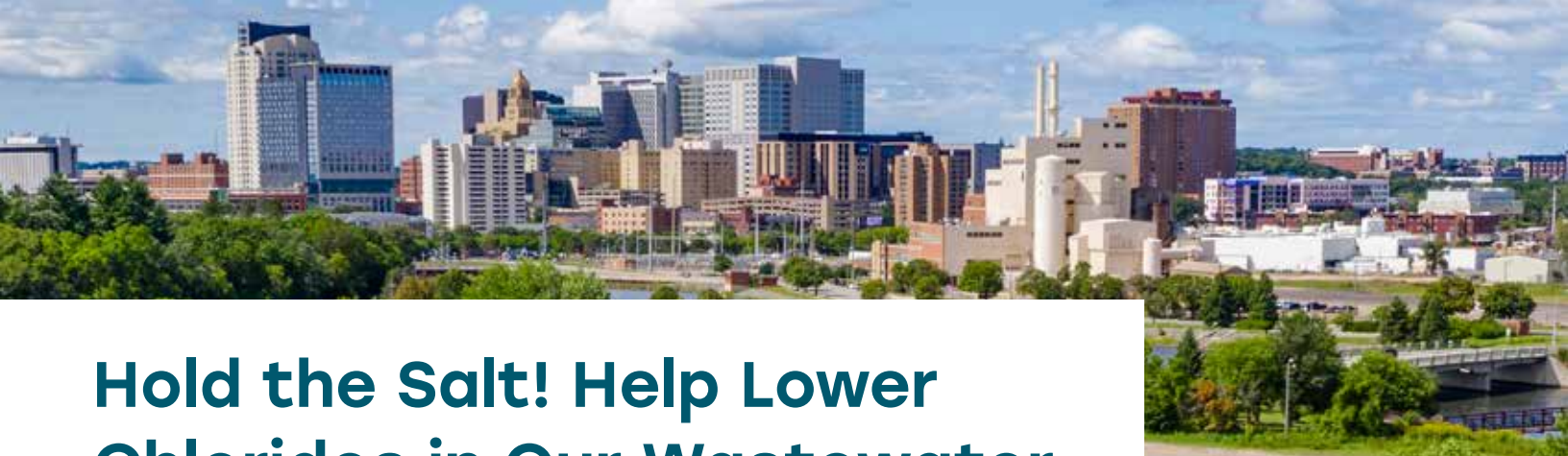


## RPU Voted Best Tasting Drinking Water in 2024

RPU's water beat 31 other utilities to win the coveted title of 'Best Tasting Drinking Water' for 2024 at the Minnesota Rural Water Association! Our team works hard to provide safe, clean drinking water to Rochester every single day.







# Hold the Salt! Help Lower Chlorides in Our Wastewater

Minnesota is known for its natural resources including lakes, rivers, and streams. However in recent years, water quality experts have been growing more concerned with the amount of chlorides in our rivers and lakes, including those in southeast Minnesota.

Most of us are familiar with chlorides in the form of salt used for seasoning our food; however, the majority of chlorides are entering our waterways from road salt and from home water softener use. While small amounts of chloride occur naturally in our freshwater resources and many organisms need it to carry out basic functions of life, elevated levels can cause cells to lose water and become deprived of nutrients—ultimately killing fish, amphibians, plants, and other aquatic organisms.

Most of Rochester's homes have water softeners that remove hardness (dissolved minerals; primarily calcium and magnesium). Hard water is responsible for scale build up on appliances/dishware, difficulty in getting soap to lather and water flavor. The water softener process releases chlorides into the wastewater system for treatment, but, wastewater plants are not designed to remove chlorides. As a result, these chlorides are ultimately discharged into the waterways. While

there are technologies that can remove chlorides from wastewater, they are incredibly expensive and would increase wastewater rates for everyone.

The other major source of chlorides comes from de-icing products used on roadways, parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks to make travel safe. When the snow and ice melt, chlorides used in de-icing wash into storm drains and make their way into area lakes and rivers.

Thus the City of Rochester is asking for your help to reduce chloride use. Here are a few simple things you can do:

## Water Softeners

- Adjust your water softener (the manufacturer can provide instructions). This will reduce chlorides and save you money by reducing the amount of salt you need to buy.
- Calibrate your softener to 17 grains per gallon, which is the hardness of Rochester's water supply.
- Reduce the frequency of regeneration cycles to once a week on a timed softener.
- Consider replacing your old water softener with a newer, more efficient model that regenerates based on a sensor or flow meter.

## De-icing Products

1. **Shovel** – Clear walkways before snow turns to ice. Apply salt only if needed.
2. **Scatter** – Use salt only where critical. Aim for 3 inches of space between salt granules.
3. **Switch** – Salt doesn't melt ice below 15 degrees, use sand instead for traction.
4. **Sweep** – Clean up leftover salt, sand, and de-icer to save and reuse as needed.

With your help we can reduce chlorides that end up in our lakes and streams, and preserve the Minnesota natural resources we all enjoy.

## What About My Drinking Water?

Currently, chlorides in Rochester's drinking water are very low. However, we must remember that our groundwater is replenished by surface water, and the actions we take on the surface could have drastic effects on groundwater quality in the future. Make an effort today to introduce less salt into the environment to help keep Rochester's drinking water salt free for future generations!

Read more about RPU's dedication to water quality at [rpu.org](http://rpu.org)

# Summer Hydrant Flushing May Mean Discolored Water

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, flushing them out of the pipes, resulting in higher water quality. Although it may appear to waste water, the process is part of a routine maintenance program. Flushing hydrants is necessary to maintain the integrity of the water system, and ensures 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/faucets 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 or 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.



## 2023 Water Quality Report

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, 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. Review the complete version of the CCR at [rpu.org/environment/water-quality](http://rpu.org/environment/water-quality). Questions and requests for a hard copy version of the 2023 Water Quality Report can be directed to Todd Osweiler at **507-280-1589**.

Rochester Public Utilities

### • 2023 • Water Quality Report



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## RPU's Distributed Generation Rules Annual Disclosure

In compliance with Rochester Public Utilities Distributed Generation Rules, Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. RPU is obligated to provide information regarding rates and interconnection requirements—free of charge—to all interested customers upon request. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility.

Any disputes over interconnection, sales, or purchases relative to qualifying facilities should be brought to the RPU Board for resolution. Rochester Public Utilities Distributed Generation Rules and associated documents can be found on the RPU website ([rpu.org](http://rpu.org)). For further information, customers can call 507-280-1500.

## How much could your house save you?

This is our last class until fall!

Attend our FREE workshop and learn low-cost/no-cost ways to save! Qualify for a \$75 home energy audit (\$365 value) which includes installation of energy saving materials. Learn more at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).

**Wed, May 22 | 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

\*\*\*FREE CHILDCARE PROVIDED!\*\*\*

To register, email or call Stacy:  
[sbootscamp@mncee.org](mailto:sbootscamp@mncee.org)  
 888-734-6365



MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES | ROCHESTER PUBLIC UTILITIES WE PLEDGE, WE DELIVER™



One of our **CONSERVE & \$AVE™** programs.

# REBATES FOR ON AND OFF THE ROAD!

### ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EV)

- **New TOU Enrollment:** \$200 bill credit for first EV; \$50 per additional EV\*
- **Existing TOU Customer:** \$50 bill credit per qualifying EV\*



### BATTERY-POWERED LAWN MOWERS

- **Push Lawn Mower:** \$50 bill credit\*
- **Riding Lawn Mower:** \$100 bill credit\*

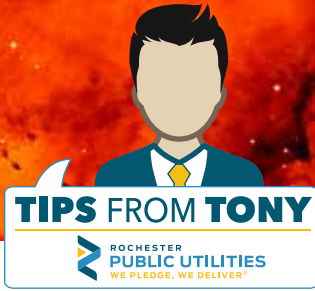


Scan the QR code to download a rebate application with minimum efficiency requirements and complete terms and conditions from [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).



## CONSERVE & \$AVE™

\*To qualify for these bill credits, you must enroll in RPU's Residential Time-of-Use (TOU) Rate. First come, first served. Limited supply of Time-of-Use meters are available.



# Geomagnetic Disturbances Explained

RPU's Tony Benson sat down with Director of Core Services, Scott Nickels, to get a high-level explanation of geomagnetic disturbances (GMD). Recently, there have been news and social media popping up that reference GMD and solar flares and the possible effect they could have on electric reliability.

**To be honest, this was the first time I had heard of them, so it was interesting to get a few minutes with Scott to learn more!**

## What is a GMD?

**SN:** RPU experts have long been aware of GMD events and their potential effect on RPU and other electricity utilities and the bulk electric grids around the world.

A GMD (aka: solar flare) is caused by charged material emitted from the sun and the introduction of these charged particles with the bulk electric system. This could cause power outages due to the magnetic field of the storm introducing an electrical current onto the high-voltage transmission system. Extremely strong GMD events are rare, but can affect system voltages, relay, and protection system performance, as well as the operation and health of some large power transformers.

## Who monitors this?

**SN:** At a very high-level overview, it starts with the North American

Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) – the national regulatory authority whose mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid. There are specific NERC standards that lay out mitigating steps for reliability coordinators and transmission operators to follow to protect the bulk electrical grid. RPU is a member of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) which acts as a reliability coordinator and is also responsible for ensuring compliance with all NERC standards and requirements, just as RPU is.

## What RPU facilities could be affected by a GMD event?

**SN:** RPU doesn't own any high-voltage transmission assets that would be negatively impacted by a GMD event. However, the high-voltage transmission system that RPU is interconnected with, could possibly be affected with damage to transformers, infrastructure, or even generators by the extreme heat produced by the GMD event.

## What was the most extreme GMD event?

**SN:** Probably the most extreme and well-known event was back in 1859, known as the Carrington Event named after British astronomer Richard Carrington of the 19th century. More recently, there was a sizable GMD event in Canada in the late 1980s.

## Does RPU monitor GMD daily?

**SN:** RPU complies with all MISO and NERC standards and requirements to ensure the protection and security of the bulk electric grid from all natural and domestic threats. RPU has system operators monitoring the RPU system 24/7 as well.

## What if a customer wants more information on GMD and the standards and procedures in place for mitigation?

**SN:** I would recommend customers reference both the MISO website ([misoenergy.org](http://misoenergy.org)) and the NERC website ([nerc.com](http://nerc.com)) to learn more. The NERC website even has a page that lists out GMD events and the strength measured on the K-index.

## Plugged In is adding digital!

If you would like to join the digital mailing list, scan this QR code.



# Give us 2-4 degrees and we'll give you \$75!\*

Help RPU use new technologies to reduce electric demand during Peak Savings Events. Participate in our new Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program!

**\*When you join BYOD, you'll receive a one-time \$50 enrollment incentive bill credit plus a \$25 annual, year-end bill credit for participating.**

Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to enroll today:



*RPU electric customers who have installed a qualifying connected smart thermostat controlling their central air conditioning or heat pump system are eligible.*



## Energy Assistance Resources

If you or someone you know has concerns about paying their utility bills, there may still be energy assistance available. The RPU Customer Care Team (507-280-1500) can help provide resources available by phone or in-person at the RPU Service Center. In addition, a complete listing of local assistance is also available on the RPU website ([rpu.org](http://rpu.org)) under the Community Resources page.

## Backflow Assembly Testing is Required Annually

Providing safe drinking water is the highest priority for RPU. Regulated by the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Plumbing Code, and RPU's Water Service Rules & Regulations, RPU follows strict standards to ensure that the public drinking water supply remains safe.

As a customer, you also have a responsibility to help keep the public water supply safe. Proper backflow prevention on cross connections can eliminate contaminants from entering our public water supply. Remember you are drinking the same water as your neighbor—we are all connected.



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. The MN Plumbing Code requires that all backflow preventer assemblies, at the meter and elsewhere within your business or home, must be tested annually by a certified tester.

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

*Rainy days mean more than just puddles...*

## THEY CAN SAVE YOU MONEY!

Use rainy days to conserve water, save money, and play a little too! You can also apply for these rebates from RPU:

- **Rain Barrels: \$10**  
*(built or purchased; limit 5 per household)*
- **Weather-Based Irrigation Controllers: 50% of cost** *(up to \$75)*

We offer indoor water-saving rebates for High Efficiency Toilets (\$25) and Clothes Washers (\$25).

Scan to download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).







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ROCHESTER, MN  
PERMIT NO. 4

4000 East River Road NE  
Rochester, MN 55906  
507-280-1500  
www.rpu.org



RPU Plugged In is now designed  
and printed locally in Rochester.



We are closed on May 27 for Memorial Day and on June 19 for Juneteeth.

Social Media:

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

Mobile App:



**RPU Service Center:** Hours  
(8am - 5pm) Monday - Friday

**Customer Care:** 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)

# Partners in Planting

## \$10 NURSERY COUPON

Submit to Jim Whiting Nursery & Garden Center or Sargent's Gardens

### \$10 OFF ANY SHADE TREE PRICED \$99 OR MORE

**Jim Whiting**  
Nursery & Garden Center  
www.jimwhitingnursery.com  
3430 19th St NW • 507-289-3741

**SARGENT'S**  
www.sargentsgardens.com  
7955 18th Ave NW 1811 2nd St SW  
507-289-0022 507-289-6068

In support of RPU's Partners in Planting Program. Must be an RPU customer to participate. One coupon per household. Offer valid on any tree priced at \$99 or more. Regularly priced trees only. Not good with other discounts or promotions. Must be presented at time of sale.



# Partners in Planting

## \$20 ARBORIST COUPON

Submit to Maier Tree & Lawn or Sargent's Gardens

### \$20 OFF THE PURCHASE OF ANY TREE CARE SERVICE\*

**Maier TREE & LAWN**  
a DAVEY company  
MaierTreeandLawn.com  
3930 Hwy 14 E, Rochester, MN 55904  
507-286-8733

**SARGENT'S**  
www.sargentsgardens.com  
7955 18th Ave NW 1811 2nd St SW  
507-289-0022 507-289-6068

In support of RPU's Partners in Planting Program. Must be an RPU customer to participate. One coupon per household. \*Offer valid on arborist services over \$200. Not good with other discounts or promotions. Must be presented at time of sale. Refunds not available.



One of our **CONSERVE & SAVE™** programs.  
Learn more about Partners in Planting at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).