



ROCHESTER
PUBLIC UTILITIES
WE PLEDGE, WE DELIVER™

Plugged In

**Understanding
the Minnesota Cold
Weather Rule &
Winter Bills**

Details on page 2

SEP / OCT
2024

Understanding the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule & Winter Bills

RPU's objective is to ensure that residential customer accounts are protected during the cold weather period and to follow the requirements of Minnesota Statute 216B.097.

Minnesota Statute 216B.097 states that a municipal utility must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 1 and April 30. If the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

1. The household income is at or below 50% of the state median income. RPU may verify income on forms it provides or obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50% of the state median household income;
2. The customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers

the financial resources of the household. "Reasonably timely payment" means payment within five working days of agreed-upon due dates;

3. The customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

If these conditions are not met, RPU can disconnect utility service(s) for non-payment during the cold weather period.

To be protected from service disconnection during the cold weather period, customers are required to complete a Cold Weather Application, available from RPU Customer Care or on rpu.org. Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between October 1 and April 30, RPU will provide the following information to the customer:

1. A notice of proposed disconnection;
2. A statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy assistance providers;

4. A form on which to declare inability to pay; and

5. A statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

RPU is required to give notice of proposed disconnections to the local energy assistance provider and the Department of Commerce.

Local Energy Assistance Provider: Contact Three Rivers Community Action at **800-277-8418** or threeriverscap.org to learn about options to assist with energy bills.

Third Party Notification: If you are elderly, ill, going south for the winter, or do not speak English, you may want to designate a third party (friend, relative, church group, or community agency) to be notified in the event that a disconnection notice is issued to you.

Applications and Forms: For a Cold Weather Application and/or Third Party Notification Request Form, please download the form at rpu.org/my-account/billing-fees-deposits-and-payment-options or contact RPU Customer Care.



RPU Customer Care
507-280-1500



RPU Community Outreach

Each year, RPU staff enjoy many opportunities to connect with customers. Follow us on Facebook and continue reading RPU Plugged In to find upcoming events, activities, and learning opportunities at RPU and other community events.

 @rochesterpublicutilities

FEBRUARY 2024
Rochester
Area Builder's
Home Show

JULY 2024
Safe City
Nights



MAY 2024

Neighborhood Energy Challenge Workshop



JUNE 2024

Safe City Nights



NOVEMBER 2024
Rochester
Area Chamber
of Commerce
STEAM Summit

Leaving for the Winter?

Make sure your contact information is up-to-date in case of an issue with your water or electric service.

If you are a customer that leaves Rochester for an extended amount of time over the winter, there are a few things you can do to ensure your electric and water services are safe and working properly while you are away.

- **Call RPU before you leave to make sure your contact information is up-to-date.** If there is a question regarding your bill or usage changes, RPU may need to contact you.
- **Tell RPU how long you will be away.** When you contact RPU, our Customer Care team will note your account with the period of time that you will be away.
- **Add a backup contact on your account.** Adding a backup contact of someone in the Rochester area can help you in the case of a utility emergency. Their name and phone number must be on your account, and they must be noted as an authorized person on your account.
- **Ensure your RPU bill is forwarded to your winter location.** Having your bill forwarded to your winter location is as easy as calling RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500** to provide them with your winter address. We can ensure any correspondence will reach you while you are away. If you would prefer to receive your bill via email, simply create a user account on the RPU Connect app or online portal.

From the Desk of the General Manager



Tim McCollough
General Manager

In last month's issue, I shared RPU's five foundational principles: Reliability, Rates, Responsibility, Relationships, and Reputation. These five Rs form the cornerstone of our strategic plan and guide our pledge to our customers in setting rates that deliver exceptional value and long-term financial stability.



RELIABILITY



RATES



RESPONSIBILITY



RELATIONSHIPS



REPUTATION

Rates. I recognize that rates are not always viewed in a positive light as confirmed in responses to our quarterly customer survey. While an unfortunate reality, rates are required to capture all cost aspects of providing you with safe, reliable, and responsive utility services. Unlike investor-owned utilities that charge extra to provide profit to shareholders, we are a not-for-profit public power utility.

It is our job to ensure that fiscal responsibility and management take place as part of our budget and finances. RPU is governed locally through the RPU Board and our pledge to you is that we design and deliver rates that are predictable, competitive, fair, equitable, defensible, and cost-based.

This approach benefits all customers by ensuring you receive clear and honest pricing without hidden fees, which hopefully builds trust and confidence in RPU. At the same time, it demonstrates our commitment to fostering innovation and sustainability, meaning you can feel good about supporting practices that contribute to long-term environmental and economic health.

Our dedication to upholding our five foundational principles ensures that our rate setting practices are not only transparent, but also serve the best interests of you and our local community.

On behalf of our whole team, we appreciate your trust and support as we work to serve you.

Does Your Bill Have You Seeing Double?

You may do a double take when you receive your October billing and see two energy charges. This actually happens twice a year: once in June and again in October. The reason behind the dual energy charge is the change in the rate. As of October 1, the cost per kilowatt drops. This means part of your usage is prorated at the higher (summer) rate and

part of your usage is prorated at the lower (non-summer) rate, hence two separate energy charges appearing on your bill. On your billing statement, please note that the energy customer charge is a flat fee that stays the same regardless of energy use or rate.

If you have questions about summer and non-summer rates, contact RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500**.

As of October 1st, the rate will return to the non-summer rate.



Keep Your RPU Contact Information Current

Have you recently updated your phone number, email address, or mailing address? Keeping your contact information current is crucial for us to serve you better.

If you have made any changes to your contact information recently, please call RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500** to ensure we have the most up-to-date information. This will allow us to reach you promptly for appointments or any questions related to your account.

Thank you for helping us maintain effective communication with you.



This payment kiosk is located at the entrance of the RPU Service Center.

Kiosk now features new language options

Exciting news! We've expanded our kiosk's language options to include three additional languages. In addition to English and Spanish, we have added Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabic. We're committed to making your experience more convenient and accessible. Use our convenient RPU kiosk today in your preferred language.

FREE ENERGY EDUCATION



Neighborhood Energy Challenge Workshop

Thursday, September 19
6:30-7:30 p.m.

— OR —

Saturday, November 16
10:00-11:00 a.m.



Solar Energy for Your Home or Business

Saturday, October 12
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Also check out the many classes that Rochester Community Education has to offer on electric vehicles, heat pumps, and more!

Go to:
rochester.ce.eleyo.com
and search "energy"

All classes are held at the Northrop Community Education Center. Learn how to register at www.rpu.org.



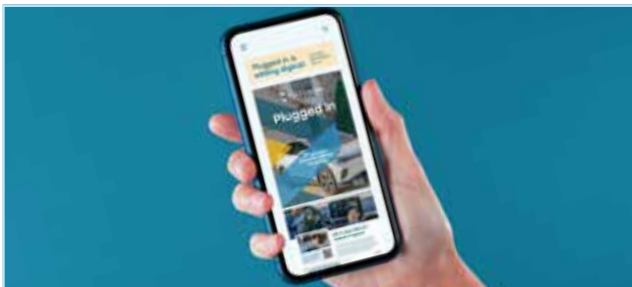
Downed Power Line Safety Tips

Here are a few important reminders about downed power line safety.

- If you see downed power lines or cables, do not approach or touch them.
- Stay at least 50 feet away and call RPU immediately.
- A downed line can still be energized with high-voltage electricity even if it isn't arcing or sparking.
- Electricity can be conducted through trees and branches touching a downed line.
- If a wire falls on your car, stay in your car, make sure no one approaches your car or the area, and call 911 immediately.



Call RPU immediately at 507-280-1500 if you ever see a line down.



Plugged In added digital!

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



Free Goodie Bags for Kids to Celebrate Public Power Week

With National Public Power Week being October 6-12, 2024 this year, RPU is celebrating by highlighting the benefits of having a public power provider in Rochester and giving away **free** goodie bags to kids who visit the RPU Service Center throughout the month of October.





Meet Matt Davidson

Matt Davidson, with more than 15 years of experience with commercial facilities and project management, joins RPU as an Energy & Environmental Advisor. He will be working with trade allies and commercial customers to assist with their energy service needs through consulting, planning, and delivering high quality customer service. Matt is originally from the Rochester area and has recently moved back from Florida with his family. Feel free to reach out to Matt or any member of our commercial team for assistance.

Matt Davidson
Energy and
Environmental
Advisor

mdavidson@rpu.org
507-280-1627

Contact Matt if your business has questions about how you can operate more energy or water efficiently and how RPU's Conserve & Save™ rebates can help your business save money.

For questions regarding our Commercial programs and services, contact one of our Energy and Environmental Advisors.



Josh Mason
Energy and Environmental Advisor
jmason@rpu.org
507-280-1588



James Dessner
Energy and Environmental Advisor
jdessner@rpu.org
507-280-1607

Military Payment Arrangements For Military Service Personnel

When a household member has been ordered to active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota Law protects military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their bill in full. To qualify for this protection, you must enter into and keep reasonably current with one of the payment plans described here.

- If your household income is below the state median household income, pay 10% of your household's gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.
- If your household income is above the state median household income, make and keep a payment plan.
- If you receive energy assistance, pay 10% of your household's gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.

The full statute description for Minnesota Statute 325E.028 can be found on the state of Minnesota website revisor.mn.gov/pubs/.

If you would like to sign up for payment arrangements or have questions regarding the "Military Service Personnel Disconnection Law," please contact RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500**.



FOR ROCHESTER!

RPU's Neighbors Chipping In program collects donations to help people in our community pay their utility bill. It's easy to give with a recurring monthly donation.* You can round up your utility bill or add a specific amount. Call RPU Customer Care at 507-280-1500 to enroll or scan the QR code to learn more at www.rpu.org.



*Donations can be cancelled at any time.

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








RPU Plugged In is designed and printed locally in Rochester.



Our office is closed on September 2 for Labor Day.

Social Media:

-  @rochesterpublicutilities
-  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)



We appreciate your feedback

We are always looking for ways we can do better. You can help by participating in our Q3 customer satisfaction survey.

Three easy steps:

1

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera.

2

Answer our short survey.

3

Provide contact information if you would like RPU to contact you regarding the survey or if you have a question.

