

# RPU Plugged In



RPU Lineworkers Attend 15<sup>th</sup> Annual  
APPA Lineworkers Rodeo



# RPU Lineworkers AT THE APPA LINEWORKERS RODEO

**E**stablished in 2001 by the American Public Power Association (APPA), the Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo is where public power lineworkers come together from all over the United States and some U.S. territories to demonstrate their skill and knowledge in the craft of linework. At the rodeo, journeyman and apprentice lineworkers compete for professional recognition, attend training courses, and practice essential skills in a safe environment. Furthermore, attendees have a unique opportunity to connect with and learn from the nationwide community of lineworker professionals.

This year's Lineworkers Rodeo was held in Sacramento, California, May 15-16. Lineworkers from RPU included:

- Todd Keach – Lead Lineworker
- Nick Hall – Lineworker
- Sean McDowell – Lineworker
- Mitch DenBoer – Apprentice Lineworker

View more pictures from the APPA Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo on RPU's Facebook page.



# RPU Safety Equipment Does Its Job

**O**n the afternoon of Wednesday, May 27, at 3:21 p.m. over 1,400 residents in northwest Rochester were without power for 34 minutes, and this is the reason why. Power outages of any duration are certainly an inconvenience, but in this case, it quite possibly may have saved a customer's life.

Some quick background information on power outages first. The outage happened because the RPU distribution system experienced a fault, which caused safety mechanisms in the substation to operate and cut power to the area that was experiencing the fault. The safety mechanisms in place are for exactly that, keeping people and equipment safe. Similar to the breakers in your home, if they experience a surge, the breaker will operate and cut power to everything on that breaker.

As the calls came into RPU, the RPU crews were dispatched to the area affected to patrol the lines (visually inspecting the overhead lines and equipment) for the cause of the outage. As the crews were in the area of 50<sup>th</sup> St. NW, they saw a large tree leaning into an overhead distribution wire and a homeowner still cutting the tree. Trees are very capable of carrying electricity and that is why we always stress to stay away from trees and branches if they are near or making contact with overhead lines.

The RPU crews worked diligently to make the area safe by removing the affected tree from the lines and inspecting all of the other equipment to ensure safety and proper operation. Once everything was verified to be safe, the crew communicated with RPU's system operator to close in the circuit again to return power to the over 1,400 customers affected.

The situation back on May 27 could have been a fatal incident if the RPU safety mechanisms in place hadn't operated as they should. The 34-minute outage was a small issue to deal with when it probably saved a life that day.

The other takeaway from the outage is to **never do tree trimming on your own near overhead power lines**. Always hire a licensed tree trimmer with experience trimming around overhead power lines. Let the experts take care of this dangerous work. If you have questions about a tree near overhead power lines, call RPU for a visual inspection and advice on what can and should be done to ensure safety and electric reliability.



**If you see trees or large limbs near overhead power lines, contact RPU at 507.280.1500. NEVER try to cut or remove trees near power lines.**



## Safety Tips to Keep in Mind

- Ladders, TV antennas, and kites can also be dangerous around overhead lines. Be aware and cautious about your surroundings.
- 61% of RPU's distribution system is underground, which can be dangerous also. Remember to always *Call Before You Dig* to have all underground utilities located and marked.

[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) | **1.800.251.1166**

## WATER REBATES *Outside & Inside!*

**\$3 REBATE**

**Rotating  
Sprinkler  
Nozzle**



**\$10 REBATE**

**Rain  
Barrel**



**\$25 REBATE**

**Clothes  
Washer**



**\$50 REBATE**

**High  
Efficiency  
Toilet**



**Install water-efficient products\* and apply for a rebate on your purchase.**  
For a complete list of eligible items as well as terms and conditions,  
**download a Water Efficiency Rebate Application from [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).**

**CONSERVE & \$SAVE®**

\*must meet minimum efficiency requirements as specified in the Water Efficiency Rebate Application

# What Does Environmental Stewardship Mean?

One of RPU's core values is stewardship, but what does that mean? More importantly, what does that mean for RPU customers? The stewardship core value primarily points to environmental stewardship and what RPU does to be a

good steward of resources while providing safe, reliable electricity and water service to the Rochester community.

## Wind Energy

When explaining where RPU sits with regard to renewable energy, we need to look first at RPU's wholesale provider, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA). Since 1977, RPU has been in a contract calling for a contracted rate of delivery for

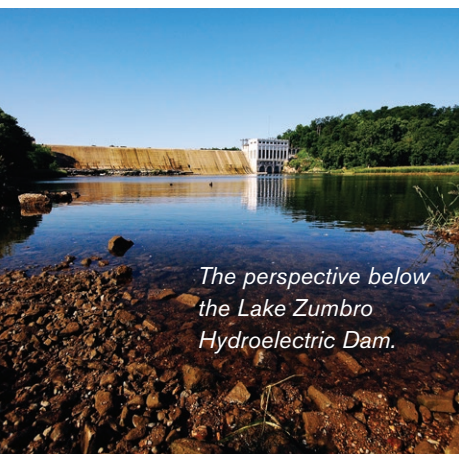
power at 216 megawatts (MW). RPU is the largest of the 18-member utilities and accounts for 42% of SMMPA's load.

SMMPA owns and operates two 950 kilowatt (kW) wind turbines (installed in March 2003), two 1,650 kW wind turbines located in member community Fairmont (installed in late 2004/early 2005), and two 1,650 kW wind turbines located in member community Redwood Falls (installed in late 2004/early 2005). Additionally, SMMPA purchases all energy generated from 67 wind turbines totaling 100.5 MW at Dexter, Minnesota, 26 miles south of Rochester. With these combined wind turbines, SMMPA supplies the energy needs of over 38,000 homes.

Currently 12% of the energy SMMPA supplies to its 18 municipally owned member utilities comes from renewable and carbon-free sources.



*SMMPA purchases the energy from 67 wind turbines located in Dexter, MN.*



*The perspective below the Lake Zumbro Hydroelectric Dam.*

## Lake Zumbro Hydroelectric Dam

Since 1920, RPU has produced renewable, hydroelectric power at the Lake Zumbro Hydroelectric Dam. The two turbines at the dam are rated at 2.3 MW. In 2014, the hydroelectric dam produced 9,766,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh).

*Silver Lake Foods, pictured l. to r. – John Winkels (Winkels Electric), Jason (Store Manager), Jan Blevins (RPU), and Dirk Bierbaum (RPU).*



## Energy and Water Conservation

By working with residential and commercial customers, we were able to save over 21 million kWh and over 9 million gallons of water in 2014. RPU's Conserve & Save® rebate program offers customers rebates for qualifying energy and water efficiency purchases.

One of the customers that RPU worked with recently is Silver Lake Foods. With the help of our Energy Solutions Partner, Winkels Electric, much of the lighting in the entire store was switched out to LED lighting. The annual estimated energy savings is over 60,000 kWh!

View the full list of rebates available on RPU's website, [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org). (Limited funds available.)

## Solar Power at the RPU Service Center

RPU staff continues to work on the solar installation at the RPU Service Center that was announced in a past edition of *RPU Plugged In*. The space set aside will accommodate approximately 440 kW of solar.

Installation of the solar panels could start as early as late summer.

*Designated space for 440 kW of solar power at the RPU Service Center.*



## Customer Satisfaction Survey – WE'RE LISTENING

**E**ach quarter we have 1,000 surveys mailed out to customers to get feedback on how we're doing and how we can serve you better. We have received a number of comments about receiving RPU's newsletter *RPU Plugged In* and our *Home Energy Reports* energy usage comparisons.

Many of the comments we receive from customers are positive and they appreciate these opportunities to learn about RPU and ways to reduce electric consumption. But we also understand that some of our customers would prefer not to receive these mailings, so we are making it as simple as filling out this form, and mailing it, or dropping it off at the RPU Service Center.

Please fill out this form to opt out of our *RPU Plugged In* newsletter or *Home Energy Reports*. Please allow up to two months for removal from these lists.

Note: Once you are removed from the *Home Energy Reports* mailing, you cannot be added at a future date.

## OPT-OUT REQUEST FORM

**Please remove me from the following RPU mailings:**

- ☐ *RPU Plugged In* Newsletter
- ☐ *Home Energy Reports*  
Energy Usage Comparison\*

*\*I understand that once I am removed from the Home Energy Reports mailing, I **cannot** be added again at a future date.*



Name \_\_\_\_\_

RPU Contract Acct Number: **300000** \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## RPU PITCHES IN FOR LITTER BIT BETTER

RPU employees had another successful year picking up garbage around the RPU Service Center and Foster Arends Park. A total of 72 pounds of garbage was collected between the two sites.



# Got a problem with humidity? Solve it with an Energy Star® dehumidifier...

and receive up to a \$40 rebate from RPU!

Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to download an Electric Rebate Application with complete terms and conditions.



## CONSERVE & \$AVE®

### It's not just for frozen pipes!

Invasive tree roots, seasonal changes, and aging pipes can cause a water or underground electric service to break. You can't prevent it or predict it. Worst of all, most homeowner insurance policies do not cover repairing it, so you'll have to pay for it. **Is your home protected?** Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to learn more about Service Assured® and enroll online.



## Solar Powered Savings!

### 1) APPLY FOR AN RPU CONSERVE & SAVE® SOLAR REBATE

Install a qualifying photovoltaic (PV) system with a utility interconnection agreement and apply for a **rebate of \$0.50 per watt**. Download a rebate application at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) with complete terms and conditions. If you are planning a project, be sure to contact Stephanie Humphrey at 507.280.1639 for pre-approval and to confirm availability of rebate funds.

### 2) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FEDERAL TAX CREDIT

The Solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC) is a **30 percent federal tax credit** for residential solar systems (under Section 25D). But hurry! Under current law, the ITC expires December 31, 2016.

## CONSERVE & \$AVE®



## CONSERVE & \$AVE

Ahoy, Mateys! Learn how to save your "treasure" by conserving water!  
Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) for water saving tips and tricks. Color this page  
and bring it into the RPU Offices for a FREE water bottle!  
For kids 12 and under. While supplies last.

RPU • 4000 E River Rd NE • Rochester, MN 55906 • 507.280.1500 • [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)



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US POSTAGE  
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BlueSpire



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## Landscaping Around RPU Transformers

**T**he summer is a great time to plant new bushes and shrubs in your yard. However, did you know that there are issues and potential problems with planting them near and around transformers?

Improving the aesthetics of the community and neighborhoods is one of the reasons why RPU installs new electric service underground and is also the reason why some customers choose to plant around the pad-mounted transformers. There are, however, guidelines and access requirements so RPU crews can safely work on the transformers.

Each pad-mounted transformer has a warning sticker affixed to it outlining the

dangerous voltage inside, the dangers of digging and planting around it, and a diagram for safe-planting distances. This information is for the safety of both the customer and RPU lineworkers.

In most cases, RPU has a utility easement of 10 feet from the front of the property line to work in. If there is planting or landscaping within that 10 feet, RPU may need to remove or cut the landscaping near it to ensure a safe working environment. The recommended clearance for all planting near a transformer is to keep plants 12 feet away from the front and 3 feet from both sides. If you have questions regarding landscaping near a pad-mounted transformer, call RPU at **507.280.1500**.

