

RPU

Plugged In



Customer Satisfaction
Telephone Survey
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2015
Arbor Day
Celebration!



RPU'S ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION RECAP

The 13th Annual Arbor Day Celebration was, by many accounts, the largest Arbor Day event ever! Over 3,000 people of all ages came out to celebrate the beauty and wonder of trees in the Rochester community, despite it being moved indoors to the RCTC Field House.

The setup for the day's events started bright and early around 7 a.m. at RCTC. The many picnic tables set up acted as a hub for numerous activities set around the track area. Activities included balloonists, a scavenger hunt, temporary tattoos, and a bean bag toss to name just a few. The ever popular Smokey Bear also made his rounds welcoming all adults and children alike.

The free lunch including hot dogs and corn on the cob was enjoyed by many again this year. In addition, each of the over 2,600 school-aged children in attendance received a box lunch to enjoy.

The stars of the event, of course, are the trees that are given away. Thousands of free trees were given out to everyone in attendance. Each tree handed out will hopefully be planted and will provide health and aesthetic benefits in the Rochester community for years to come.

Awards Ceremony Recognized 2015 Arbor Day Poster Finalists

The awards ceremony at noon provided an opportunity to recognize Rochester elementary school students who were selected as finalists of the 2015 Arbor Day poster contest. One student for each grade level was selected and then one overall winner was picked. This year's overall winner was Nicole Yang, a second grader at Churchill Elementary School. Nicole received a \$100 Barnes & Noble gift card, and her poster will be featured in future RPU advertising, and a tree was planted in her honor at Churchill Elementary School.

City Tree Planting

Also due to the weather, the city tree planting was postponed until the following week. As a part of the Arbor Day Celebration, RPU line crews and Rochester Parks &



View a time-lapse video of this year's RPU Arbor Day Celebration on the RPU website, www.rpu.org.



Recreation planted over 60 trees along 16th St. S.E. between 3rd Ave. and 11th Ave. All of the tree species were selected as appropriate trees for planting underneath overhead electric lines. The tree species planted include:

- Eastern Redbud
- Royal Raindrops Crabapple
- Rainbow Pillar Serviceberry
- Paul's Scarlet Hawthorn
- Korean Sun Pear
- Cleveland Select Pear



Thank you to everyone for coming out to RPU's 13th Annual Arbor Day Celebration to celebrate the beauty of trees in the Rochester community!

Photos by Josh Banks.



Thanks to Maier Tree & Lawn and Rochester Parks & Recreation for sponsoring RPU's 13th Annual Arbor Day Celebration. Our co-sponsors include: Hy-Vee, Minnesota Energy Resources, Sargent's Gardens, and Seneca Foods. We also want to thank all of the participants including: Boys & Girls Club of Rochester, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Olmsted County Environmental Resources, Olmsted Soil & Water Conservation District, Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester Public Library, Rochester Public Works, and Zumbro Valley Audubon.



POSTER CONTEST WINNERS



Overall Winner

Nicole Yang • 2nd Grade
Mrs. Thompson • Churchill



First Grade

Ellis Cox • Mr. Anderson (not available for photo) • Churchill



Second Grade

Jacob Philo • Mrs. Thompson • Churchill



Third Grade

Sally Kim • Mrs. Rud • Elton Hills



Fourth Grade

Ava Fevold • Ms. Bottema • Gibbs



Fifth Grade

Greta Gilbert • Ms. Jensen • Elton Hills

There's More to Outages Than Meets the Eye ...

Do You Know What to Do in Times of a Power Outage?

Power outages can happen for any number of reasons including overgrown vegetation, equipment failure, animals, auto accidents, and storms. We understand that it is an inconvenience for customers anytime the power goes out. Many RPU employees are also RPU customers, experiencing the same outages as you. In those times, all available resources are made available to address the outage as soon as possible.

RPU's first and foremost concern during any outage – regardless of size – is safety for customers, the community, and RPU employees. We will never compromise the safety of anyone to expedite power restoration.

For the safety of RPU line workers, severe weather conditions such as lightening or high winds, can cause delays in power restoration efforts.

Never go near a downed power line. Stay away from the area and contact RPU immediately at **507.280.9191**. Even if a power line looks like it is disconnected, it still can be energized and will cause severe injuries if contact is made with it.

If your house is fed from overhead lines and there is possible storm damage to the line or connection into your home, you will need to take additional steps to safely have your power restored. Keep in mind, the electric service can get pulled down or dislocated from your house and still be working.

- If a line is down, regardless if it is working or not, it may require additional attention to ensure safety and proper service.
- Call RPU's outage line at **507.280.9191** to have a crew inspect your overhead service.
- If repair work is required, RPU will disconnect your service, and will then instruct you to have a licensed electrician make the necessary repairs.

- Once the electrician has completed their work, they will notify a city electrical inspector to ensure the work was done properly.
- The inspector will then notify RPU and you will be contacted for a reconnection.

Your safety, along with the safety of our employees and the community are our priority.



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

The local media is an ally for us when the power goes out. As information is available, we try to keep in contact with the local media. We do our best to share causes, locations, and the number of customers affected by the outage but sometimes confirming this information takes time, and we do not want to provide misinformation.

Just as many media outlets follow RPU on *Twitter@rpuoutages*, customers are also welcome to stay informed as information during outages is available. Currently, over 1,600 people are following RPU on Twitter.



POWER OUTAGE EMERGENCY PLAN

As much as we try to keep the power on, there are circumstances that can cause the power to go out for minutes or even days. What is your plan for you and your family if you were to lose power? Here are some things to consider:

✓ **Report the outage.** Have RPU's outage line in your cell phone or easily accessible to report your outage – **507.280.9191**.

✓ **Have a back-up location.** Do you have a list of friends or family in the area who you could go stay with, if necessary? Even if your home is heated by natural gas and the electricity is out, you will not be able to heat your home because the fan on your furnace is powered electrically.

✓ **Keep your cell phone charged.** If bad weather and strong winds are in the forecast, keep your cell phone charged in case the electricity goes out.

✓ **Keep refrigerators and freezers closed.** According to the U.S. Department of Health, food left in a closed refrigerator or freezer should be safe for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard perishable foods that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours. For more information, visit: http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/refridg_food.html.

✓ **Store extra flashlights and batteries.** Keep flashlights and new batteries in an accessible location to provide some light and safety.

✓ **Be aware of medical conditions.** If you or someone you know has a medical condition and they rely heavily on electricity for medical equipment, seek medical attention early rather than waiting for the electricity to come back on at your home.

✓ **Know your garage door.** If you have an electric garage door opener and the power goes out, it may be difficult to find the release cord in the dark. Consult your garage door opener manual and find out how to release the opener in case the power goes out. This will allow you safe and easy access to opening your garage door even without power.

✓ **Practice safety first.** Never go near downed power lines or wires. Power lines can still stay energized even if they are lying on the ground. Call RPU immediately – **507.280.9191** – if you ever see a downed line and keep others away from the area.





CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TELEPHONE SURVEY

Important Information for ALL RPU Customers

During the weeks of June 1 – June 19, 2015, Rochester Public Utilities will be conducting a customer satisfaction telephone survey among both its residential and business customers.

The purpose of this survey is to measure customers' opinions and satisfaction with a variety of services and resources provided by RPU. These topics include, but are not limited to, perceptions of the utility, interactions with customer service and field service personnel, billing, and alternative energy resources.

The survey itself will be conducted by GreatBlue Research, Inc., a professional research firm located in Cromwell, Connecticut. This survey will be vital in helping RPU understand the concerns and priorities of its customers and guide us in making decisions that best reflect the goals and expectations of the community we serve.

A random sample of RPU customers will be called and the name of the survey firm ("GreatBlue Research, Inc.") will show up on caller ID should you have that technology at your home. As required by the Code of Ethics of the National Council on Public Polls and the United States Privacy Act of 1974, GreatBlue Research, Inc. maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the firm conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondent to RPU.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact GreatBlue Research, Inc. at **860.740.4000** for more information about their experience and past work. We thank you for your cooperation and hope that you participate in this important survey.

River Bluff Cooperative at Elton Hills

Parking Garage Lighting Project

APPROXIMATE
ENERGY SAVINGS
ANNUALLY:

42,924 KWH



*Pictured l. to r.: John McGuire,
Neletta Harper, Merrill Wondrow,
and Jan Blevins (RPU)*

CONSERVE & \$AVE

RPU worked with River Bluff Cooperative at Elton Hills to reduce annual energy use by approximately 42,924 kWh (kilowatt-hours) by changing out parking garage lighting with energy efficient lighting. For information on how you can receive Conserve & Save® rebates for energy efficient projects at home or your business, visit the RPU website www.rpu.org. Rebate funds are limited!

*** BEWARE OF UTILITY SCAMS ****

The Scam

A caller – usually from a blocked or 800 number – says that they are a representative from your utility company (sometimes they do not even name RPU) and that you are past due. They say that if payment isn't paid over the phone, you will be disconnected. Be aware though, that sophisticated technology and newer phone systems can mimic the look of an RPU phone number.

The caller will then request a payment method. They usually will require you to purchase a pre-paid debit card and to provide the number of the card over the phone. **Payments from a pre-paid debit card cannot be reversed.**

Sometimes a credit card over the phone will be requested.

Identifying a Scam

RPU will never request bank or secure personal 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.

- 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.
- RPU will never use threatening language or make forceful demands for payment.

If you ever feel pressured or feel that something is not right, hang up and call RPU directly at **507.280.1500**.



There's an easier way to save on cooling costs...



with rebates on high efficiency air conditioning equipment!

Stop sweating over summer cooling costs!

Visit www.rpu.org to download a rebate application with a list of eligible equipment as well as complete terms and conditions.

CONSERVE & \$AVE®

Thinking about solar? Capture some 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 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.



Pictured are homes with PV systems in Rochester, MN.

CONSERVE & \$AVE®



4000 East River Road NE
Rochester, MN 55906
507.280.1500
www.rpu.org

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BlueSpire



RPU SERVICE CENTER Holiday Hours

The RPU Service Center
will be closed on:
Friday, July 3, in observance
of Independence Day

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Public Utilities

OVERALL POSTER WINNING ENTRY

By Nicole Yang, 2nd Grade, Churchill



A look at our RPU Poster Contest Winners with General Manager Mark Kotschevar.
See page 3 for more information.

Photos by Josh Banks.