

RPU Plugged In



Safety Is Important for Everyone during Power Outages



Photo by Josh Banks

Electrical Safety 'Tips for Around the House

Being safe around electricity should go without saying, but each year many people are severely injured or die due to an accident involving electricity. Here are some simple reminders to keep in mind when working with electricity around your home.



Extension Cords

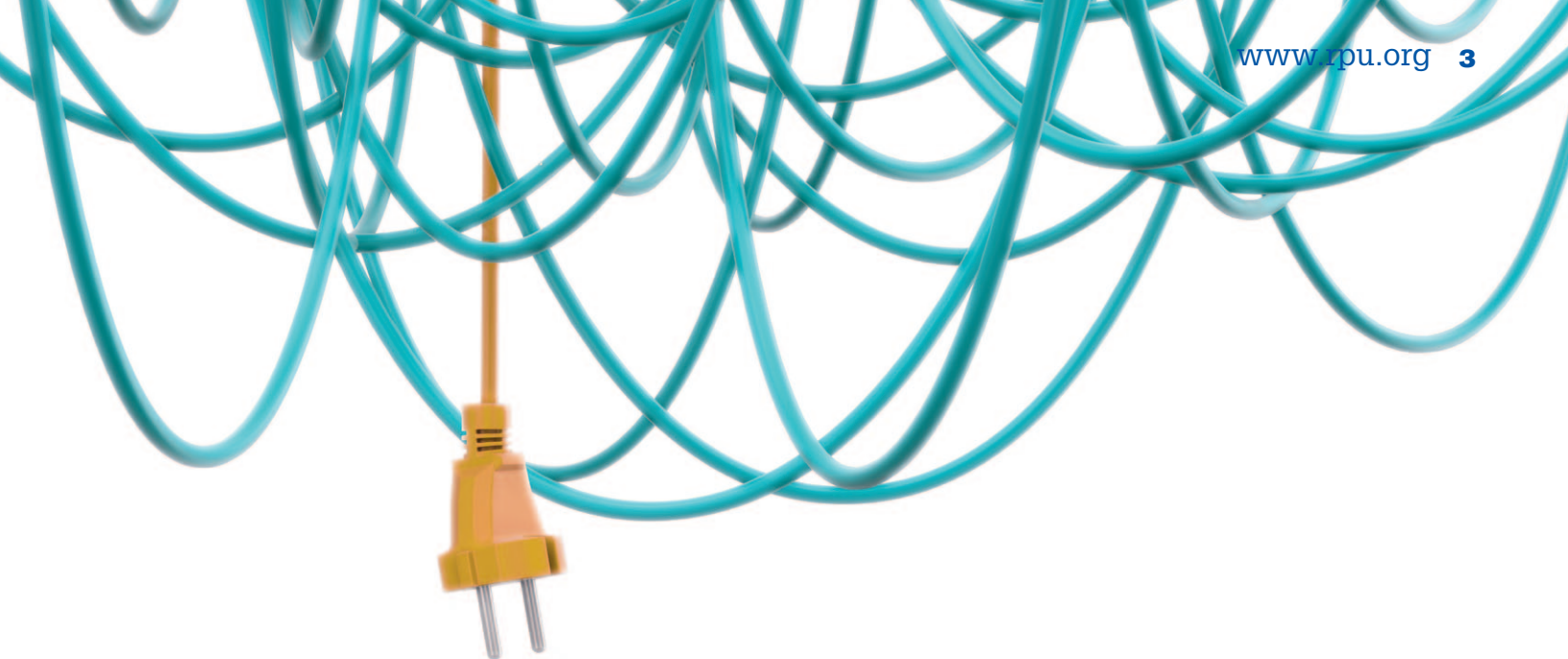
- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked “for outdoor use.” These weather resistant cords have the added safeguard of a protective coating designed to withstand the rougher outdoor environment and to prevent water from seeping in.
- Be sure amperage ratings for outdoor extension cords are higher than those of the electrical product with which they are used.
- Keep cords out of your path or work area. Throw the cord over your shoulder.
- Be sure to examine cords before each use. Damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Remember that extension cords are for short-term needs and not for long-term power solutions. Never alter or tamper with an extension cord in any way.

Power Tools and Equipment

- Protect yourself from injury. Turn the tool off, unplug it and put it in the “lock” position when carrying or connecting attachments such as mower baskets or saw blades.
- When ready for use, don’t leave electric tools unattended. Be sure to put the appliance where no curious child or unqualified adult can misuse it.
- Store the equipment indoors to protect from damage caused by water and excessive heat.
- If an electrical product falls into a pool or pond, unplug it before you reach into the water.
- Safely store warm-weather tools like lawn mowers and trimmers. Check cold-weather tools, such as leaf and snow blowers, along with their power cords, for unusual wear and tear. Repair or replace worn tools or parts right away.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Safeguards on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in the safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves, and other safety gear as recommended for each tool. A few dollars spent now are well worth the lifetime of good sight and hearing.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job. Wearing sandals while mowing the lawn is just asking for trouble.



Outdoor Electrical Outlets and Receptacles

- A GFCI is a type of outlet which automatically disconnects power when a plugged-in electrical tool comes in contact with water or begins to “leak” electricity. It is a life-saver; not a luxury.
- The National Electric Code now requires GFCIs in bathrooms, garages, kitchens, and outdoor outlets.
- Protect outlets from the elements by making sure that they are covered when not in use.
- Keep outdoor outlets and electrical products covered and dry between uses.
- Keep dry leaves away from outdoor lighting, outlets, and power cords.



Power Lines

- Before you place a ladder or trim a branch, check the area to ensure that it might not accidentally come in contact with overhead power lines.
- Remember that power lines are underground as well. Before you dig to plant a tree or put in a fence, call Gopher State One Call to have them come out and mark all of the utility lines at **1.800.252.1166**.



Portable Generators

- A qualified, licensed electrician should install your generator to ensure that it meets local electrical codes.
- Do not operate the generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Generators can produce deadly levels of carbon dioxide very quickly.
- Use outdoor-rated extension cords, and make sure that the number of appliances plugged into the generator does not exceed its capacity.

Safety tips provided by the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

Photos by Josh Banks

Important Information about

POWER OUTAGES

Power outages can happen because of 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 used to address the outage immediately. Such was the case last month when a large storm with strong winds, hail, and heavy rain came through the area.

As calls started to come in to RPU system operations, calls went out to available employees to answer customer calls.

One great benefit to being a municipal utility is that a great emphasis is put on customer service. A number of available RPU employees came in to help answer calls and to provide a live voice on the other end of the calls coming in from concerned customers.

All available line workers were also called in, with one line worker in St. Paul at the time of the call. As many line workers as possible made it in to RPU safely to help with the restoration efforts.

Whether the power is out for five minutes or five hours, we understand that it's an inconvenience for our customers. Even with all of the preparedness measures and state-of-the-art equipment in place, power outages still occur. 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.

During and after a storm or power outage, never go near a downed power line. Stay away from the area and contact RPU immediately. Even if a power line has come free from the pole or transformer, it still can be energized and will cause severe injuries if contact is made with it.

Thank you for keeping safety in mind during power outages. This includes the safety inside your home and yard, and also the safety of RPU line workers.



→ Follow RPU 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 becomes available. Currently, more than 400 people are following RPU on Twitter.

Summer Energy Saving Tips *for Air Conditioning*

Summer's heat means more than likely you have or will be turning on your central air conditioner (AC) or room AC. Air conditioning can be one of the biggest energy hogs in your home. Take some of these steps to help increase your efficiency and save money!

When buying a window room air conditioner, bigger is not always better. Take into account the size of the room and consider other factors that might affect temperature such as how many windows it has and which direction they face. A room air conditioner that is sized too big for a room will only end up costing you more energy and money.

Proper sizing for central AC units is also very important. Improper sizing can account for up to 30 percent in reduced system efficiency. When shopping for a new AC make sure your contractor has sized the system properly. There is a proper method for sizing AC units that takes into account your home's construction, insulation levels, number of windows, room sizes, etc.


Schedule an annual maintenance checkup with your contractor to ensure that your unit is cleaned, properly charged, and has not been damaged. Regular maintenance can help ensure that your AC is running to manufacturer's specifications, which will help reduce monthly cooling bills and increase the life span of your unit.

Proper use of pre-programmed settings can save you approximately

\$180

EVERY YEAR

in energy costs.



Checking for leaky ducts not only saves on your cooling costs but will also help save on your heating costs. Efficiency can improve by as much as 20 percent.

If you have an old AC unit with a SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating) of less than 8 or 10, it may be worthwhile to consider replacing it with a more energy-efficient system.

Installing a programmable thermostat is ideal for customers who are away during the day or for set periods of time throughout the week. Proper use of pre-programmed settings can save you approximately \$180 every year in energy costs.

If, or when, you do purchase a new central or room AC, don't forget that we offer rebates on qualifying products. Rebate information can be found on our website at www.rpu.org. Stay cool and energy efficient at the same time!

Clearing Up Questions about Rusty Water

Each year, RPU flushes hundreds of fire hydrants to verify proper operation and clean out sediment in the system.

When we're flushing hydrants in your neighborhood, it isn't uncommon to experience some discoloration or "rusty" looking water. The discoloration in the water does not pose a health concern; the water is safe to drink and use. Flushing your household plumbing by running your cold water taps can help to run all of the discolored water through.

Customers can check to see where RPU water crews are flushing by visiting the RPU blog for specific locations, timeframes, and maps.

In addition to the information posted on the RPU blog, RPU has also started using IVR (interactive voice response) to contact customers if a flushing route is scheduled in their neighborhood. The automated call will give you a quick background about the need for the flushing and the expected timeframe for the work.

We would like to hear if you find value in the IVR calls regarding the flushing routes. Please email us and let us know if the IVR call was beneficial for you and your family at customerservice@rpu.org.



Rochesterfest Kids' Day

Thank you for coming out and visiting us at Rochesterfest Kids' Day. RPU line worker, Chad Peterson showcased an RPU bucket truck at the event.

Bucket Truck Facts

- RPU's heaviest truck weighs 30 tons or 60,000 pounds.
- The boom, or arm, on the truck extends to a height of 87 feet.



Lobby Update

A couple months ago, we shared plans to remodel the lobby of the RPU service center. Work has been going along at a fever pitch and we are excited to unveil the new lobby within the next month.

The large lobby space proved to be confusing and a large waste of usable space. With the new design, you will find inviting seating, clearer distinction of where to go, and a dedicated Conserve & Save® rebate center for filling out all of your rebate forms.

Energy use was also considered when choosing the lighting for the space. Overhead windows still provide plentiful natural light for the lobby, along with the new energy-efficient LED (light emitting diode) lighting installed over the work stations. In fact, after the lobby is complete, it will use less energy and will provide more usable light than before!

Watch for an announcement coming soon for an official unveiling event of the new lobby for our customers and the community!

Choose Your Way

TO PAY YOUR RPU BILL

STEP 1: Delivery

Choose a Paper Copy – OR – Receive an e-Bill

STEP 2: Billing Plan

Pay Monthly Amount Due – OR – Budget Billing

STEP 3: Payment Method

- Automatic Bank or Credit Card Payment
- Pay By Phone: 1.855.210.2285
- Pay Online: www.rpu.org
- Mail Payment to the RPU Office
- Walk-In Payment to the RPU Office

To learn more or enroll in e-Bill, Budget Billing, and/or Automatic Payments, visit www.rpu.org.



Electrical Safety Is Important at Any Age

Each year, RPU provides an electrical safety demonstration for all third grade classes in Rochester. Held out at the Cascade Meadow Wetlands & Environmental Science Center, the electrical safety classes teach students about the danger of electricity and how to be safe around it.

For more information about RPU's electrical safety demonstrations, contact Bob Freund at bfreund@rpu.org or call **507.398.4292**.

Come See Us **at the Fair!**



Enjoy games, prizes, hourly giveaways ... and learn how to save energy, too! Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) and Minnesota Energy Resources will be at the Olmsted County Free Fair on Friday, July 27, 2012. Visit our tent from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. for some energy fun and to enroll in the Neighborhood Energy Challenge – our full-service residential energy audit program. The Neighborhood Energy Challenge includes:

- **A Free Energy Workshop.** Attendance in our free “Saving Energy 101” workshop is mandatory to participate in the program – and a great opportunity to learn new no- or low-cost strategies to stop energy waste, all while visiting with your neighbors. Free child care is provided. Workshops are held several times a year, and the next workshop is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, August 13, 2012, at Bamber Valley Elementary School.
- **Home Visit and Materials.** At the workshop you will have the opportunity to sign up for a Home Visit, where our energy professionals will visit your home for an hour and a half to run diagnostic tests (like a blower door to test for air leaks), install energy-saving materials, and find your home’s best opportunities for saving energy and reducing your utility bills.



- **Help with Next Steps.** If our crews find an opportunity for significant savings through installing additional insulation, attic air sealing, or replacing old heating equipment, we can make the next steps easy by connecting you with qualified contractors, financing, incentives, and rebates.

The Home Visit and Materials and Help with Next Steps are all included for a one-time fee of only \$40!

To learn more about the Neighborhood Energy Challenge, visit RPU's website at www.rpu.org. For energy-saving games, prizes, and giveaways, we'll see you at the Fair!

RPU's Water Celebration at Cascade Meadow

We have recently unveiled two new water exhibits at the Cascade Meadow Wetlands & Environmental Science Center and are excited to invite you out to see them. Throughout the months of July and August, we will be giving away RPU water bottles to everyone who visits Cascade Meadow to explore the new exhibits – All About Aquifers and Drinking Water Protection.

All About Aquifers and Drinking Water Protection were both designed to educate customers about where RPU pumps the city water supply from and what we all can do to ensure that it is protected for years to come.

The exhibits are designed to be engaging and educational for all ages. Another added bonus to exploring the new water exhibits, find the answers to a few simple questions along the way and you can enter to win a free rain barrel each month. RPU and Cascade Meadow staff will be on hand to help with the answers as well.

Cascade Meadow Hours of Operation

Thursday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., www.cascademeadow.org





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

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How Are We Doing?

Each quarter, we have an outside research company measure our effectiveness in areas such as environmental stewardship, customer service, and system reliability through a randomly mailed survey to 1,000 customers. We receive ratings on many individual parts of our business along with an overall rating.

For the second quarter of 2012, 81.5 percent of respondents rated their overall experience and service with RPU in the top two categories as "completely satisfied" or "mostly satisfied." As we gather data and feedback on the surveys from customers, we are continuing to look at ways to improve and better serve you in the future.

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated!

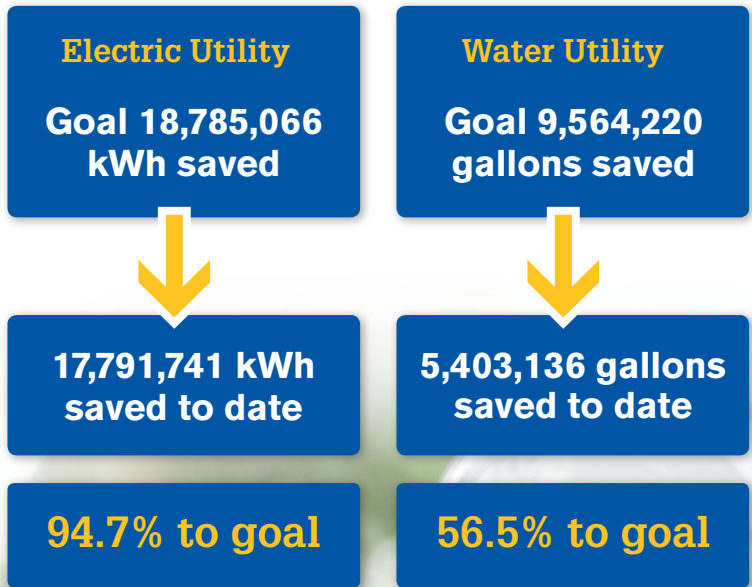
RPU Service Center Holiday Hours

Payments can always be made online at www.rpu.org or over the phone by calling **1.855.210.2285**.

CONSERVE & \$AVE®

Working with residential and commercial customers to reduce electric and water usage and promote environmental stewardship.

Our 2012 Conservation Goals are:



➔ We can help your home or business save energy and money too! Visit www.rpu.org to learn more about Conserve & Save®.