



the municipal **Advantage**

PEOPLE...POWER.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025

NUPU commissioners complete terms as new commissioners welcomed

At the end of 2024, two New Ulm Public Utilities commissioners finished their terms. Public Utilities commissioners are allowed to serve three consecutive three-year terms.

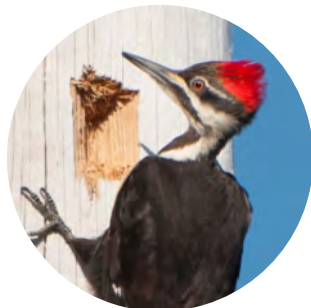
Commissioners are appointed by the mayor and approved by the City Council.

Sean Fingland, Commission Vice-President, was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Norman Melville, beginning on June 17, 2014. Beginning January 1, 2016, Sean began his first full term on the Public Utilities Commission. Shannon Hillesheim also ended her final term on the Public Utilities Commission in December of 2024. Shannon began her first full term on January 1, 2016.

Both Shannon Hillesheim and Sean Fingland played a vital role in pushing forward crucial projects within the utility. Projects, such as the 69 kV transmission and wishbone pole replacement



**NEW COMMISSIONERS COLLEEN SKILLINGS
AND DARRIN BUEGLER**



project of 2020. This project, which lasted 21 weeks and spanned the Minnesota River, consisted of the removal of 33 wood electrical poles damaged by woodpeckers and converting them to steel poles. **Projects such as this put the utility in a position to ensure transmission lines will be good for the next 40 to 50 years.**

This project also allowed for other improvements with the electric poles to be updated as well, resulting in yearly electrical savings of 22,037,281 kWh and a peak savings of 2,433 kW.

As these commissioners end their term, two new commissioners will take their seats. Darrin Buegler, Kraft-Heinz Plant Manager and Colleen Skillings, CEO of Minnesota Valley Testing Labs (MVTL) took their oath of office at the New Ulm Public Utilities Commission meeting on January 28th. NUPU staff would like to thank both Shannon Hillesheim and Sean Fingland for their dedicated service to the Utility and the citizens of New Ulm and welcome Darrin Buegler and Colleen Skillings to the Commission.



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NEW ULM PUBLIC UTILITIES NEWSLETTER
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Water and Sewer Line Protection



Over the last few months New Ulm residences have been receiving mailings from Service Line Warranties of America (SLWA). NUPU wants to remind customers that this is a voluntary program and is not mandatory to enroll, nor is it a New Ulm Public Utilities program.

However, if you are interested and need additional information on SLWA's policy, or to stop mailings, you may find material on their website

www.slwofa.com, or by calling them toll-free at 1-866-922-9006. Additionally, homeowners should also think about contacting their insurance agent to see if they carry the same or similar coverage for water and sewer lines.

Key points to remember for sewer line maintenance:

Only flush toilet paper and human waste: Avoid flushing anything else down the toilet, including baby wipes, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, and dental floss, even if labeled as "flushable."

Grease management: Never pour cooking oil or grease down the drain; instead, collect it in a container and throw it in the trash.

Use drain strainers: Install strainers in sinks and showers to catch hair, food particles, and other debris before they reach the sewer line.

Regular water flow: Run water through infrequently used drains at least once a week to prevent buildup.

Garbage disposal care: Always run cold water for a few seconds after using your garbage disposal to flush debris down the pipe.

Check for leaks: Monitor for signs of water damage or leaks around your plumbing fixtures, which could indicate a sewer line problem.

Professional inspections: Schedule periodic sewer line inspections with a plumber to identify potential issues such as tree root intrusion or pipe damage before they become major problems.



Take Steps to Reduce the Risk of Frozen Water Pipes

Cold weather brings a chance of water pipes freezing and breaking. This risk increases with long stretches of extremely cold weather. Here are some tips to help avoid frozen water pipes in your home.

- Most water service lines enter the home in the basement, make sure that the basement temperature is at least 55 degrees.
- Expose water pipes to warmer air by leaving cupboard doors open under the kitchen and bathroom sinks to allow heat to enter that space.
- Check for air leaks in your home that could freeze the water pipes.
- Monitor the temperature of your home's water by running the water in a sink closest to your water meter until the water is at its coldest temperature. For example, use a laundry sink in the basement. The water temperature should be around 45 degrees in the winter. If the temperature drops below 40 degrees, your service line may be starting to freeze up.
- You can help prevent a service line from freezing by letting the water run from a faucet at 1 quart per minute. This would be a pencil size flow of water from your faucet. This results in a flow of about 10,800 gallons in one month and would cost about \$47 for the month above your usual water/sewer usage. The cost to have a contractor thaw a frozen water service is estimated at a minimum of \$400.

The risk of frozen water service lines will continue until any extreme cold passes and the temperature returns to normal levels.

If problems arise during the day, call the Water Department at 507-359-8279. After 4 p.m. call 507-359-8204.



Natural Gas Department **Dos!**

The New Ulm Public Utilities Gas Department provides a service you may not be aware of. When you experience a problem with the operation of a gas appliance, **call the Gas Department first at 507-359-8289 during work hours or 507-359-8204 anytime.**

We will send a service technician to make sure the problem is not with the gas supply at no charge to you. After the technician has checked the gas meter and regulator for proper operation it may be necessary to contact a qualified repair person to service your appliance. We do not make any adjustments or repairs. If you call an appliance repair person or plumber before calling us and the problem turns out to be the gas meter or regulator you will not be reimbursed for the appliance service call.



Annually, the New Ulm Public Utilities (NUPU) staff change out gas meters to ensure the accuracy of our meters. **If your meter is scheduled to be replaced, you will receive a letter in the mail. Upon receiving this letter, contact NUPU as soon as possible to schedule an appointment.**

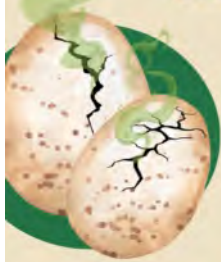
Upon receiving this door tag, please contact NUPU as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. It is necessary for NUPU staff to enter your home to complete the installation of the new meter due to the brief interruption of service which occurs during the meter change. NUPU staff will re-light pilot lights and make sure your gas appliances are working before leaving.



Every home should have a Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector in it. CO detectors are just as important as smoke detectors and should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Carbon Monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that when accumulating over time can be fatal. **If your CO detector alarms, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door and call the New Ulm Public Utilities Gas Department.** We will send a technician to check the level of CO present and try to locate the source.



Do you know what natural gas smells like?



Rotten Egg Smell

Natural gas, by itself is odorless. Mercaptan is added to give it that rotten egg smell, making it easier to detect.

If you smell it...

If you notice the smell of rotten eggs inside or outside the home, leave the area immediately.



DO NOT...

Do not do anything that would cause a spark or flame. No smoking, candles or doorbells. Wait to call until you are safely away.

CALL...

Once you are safely away, CALL 911.



CLEAR YOUR GAS METER

AFTER EVERY SNOW FALL, REMEMBER TO:

- Keep your meter free from snow and ice.
- Clear a 3-foot area around the meter.
- Look above the meter for ice that may fall.

For more information :

(507) 359-8289

NOTE: If blocked, pressure may build up, creating a dangerous situation and causing appliances to fail.



★ MEETING MINUTES

NUPU Commission

December

- ✓ Approved the terms of the collective bargaining agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 949.
- ✓ Approved the revisions to the City/PUC Personnel Policy Manual, effective January 1, 2025.
- ✓ Approved new Schedule of Water Rates to be effective February 1, 2025.
- ✓ Approved new Schedule of Steam Rates to be effective February 1, 2025.
- ✓ Approved new Schedule of Wastewater Rates to be effective February 1, 2025.

January

- ✓ Oath of office for Darrin Buegler and Colleen Skillings.
- ✓ Elected Seth Visser President and Mary Ellen Schanus Vice President.
- ✓ Approved 2025 Commissioner appointment to Cable Communication Advisory Board (Seth Visser) and Personnel Committee (Kim Williams and Darrin Buegler).
- ✓ Approved 2025 Pay Equity Implementation Report.
- ✓ Approved 2024 Annual Distributed Energy Resource Report.
- ✓ Approved Cogeneration and Small Power Production Rate Schedule for 2025.
- ✓ Approved proposed EAA (Energy Acquisition Adjustment) for 2025.

- ✓ Received and order filed the quote from Paragon Restoration II, Inc. for the 20th Street Lift Station beam repair.
- ✓ Received and order filed the quote from Tech Sales Co. for gas monitoring equipment for 20th Lift and Courtland Lift Stations.
- ✓ Authorized the City Manager to accept the proposal from Power System Engineering, Inc. (PSE) for the main Wastewater Plant Motor Control Center (MCC) Replacement Project.
- ✓ Received and order filed the purchase of chemical metering pumps and a skid unit from Hawkins.
- ✓ Authorized City Manager to award the bid for the replacement of the Combustion Controls and Burner Management Panels on the #4 Boiler from Simoneau Sterling Midwest Group.
- ✓ Authorized the City Manager to accept the quote from Clark Equipment Company to purchase a 25HP R2-Series Bobcat Compact Excavator.
- ✓ Authorized the City Manager to accept the quote from Chuck Spaeth Ford to purchase a 2025 Ford F150 and the quote from Crysteel Truck Equipment for the installation of service boxes.
- ✓ Authorized the City Manager to accept the state bid from Ford of Hibbing to purchase a F450 Truck Chassis and the quote from Crysteel Truck Equipment for the dump box.



Energy Assistance Program

Deadline: May 31, 2025

A grant for income eligible households to assist in paying heating and electric bills.

Available to homeowners, renters who pay heating/electric costs and renters with heat included in their rent*
 MVAC serves the following counties:
Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan
 Hablamos español

* Crisis assistance is also available for disconnection notices, shut-offs, and no fuel emergencies.

Assistance with heating unit repairs is available to approved homeowners who have a no-heat situation.

Household income cannot be more than these income guidelines:

Household Size	Annual Income	1 Month Max Guidelines
1	\$35,799	\$2,983
2	\$46,814	\$3,901
3	\$57,829	\$4,819
4	\$68,845	\$5,737
5	\$79,860	\$6,655
6	\$90,875	\$7,572
7	\$92,940	\$7,745
8	\$95,006	\$7,917
9	\$97,071	\$8,089



SCAN HERE FOR APPLICATION

MINNESOTA VALLEY ACTION COUNCIL
 "Community Action: Helping People. Changing Lives"

To request an application:
 (507) 345-6822 | (800) 767-7139

Applications available for download at:

www.mnvac.org



Commercial and Industrial Rate Reclassification Changes

New Ulm Public Utilities (NUPU) recently finished the rate reclassification of commercial and industrial customers and has sent letters to customers changing rate classes.

A rate reclassification is conducted yearly during the last few weeks of January. A rate reclassification looks at a customer's usage from January through December of the prior year. All utilities NUPU offer are looked at to verify if reclassification is necessary based on customer usage/ consumption and the rate schedule approved by the New Ulm Public Utilities Commission.

Rate schedules for utilities can be found at newulmmn.gov/438/Utility-Rates-Fees-and-Charges.

A reminder to commercial and industrial customers: reclassifications are done annually and can change yearly based on usage. If you have questions on rates, call NUPU at 507-233-2110.



★ **AT YOUR SERVICE** Employee of the Month Honored

Alex has demonstrated great organizational skills with placement of inventory stock items. He is willing to accommodate all employees and contractors with a positive outlook. He has a very pleasant, quirky personality that makes the atmosphere at the MDC positive. He is self-motivated and is always looking to better the workflow and help me out when asked. I feel Alex is a valuable employee and truly an asset to the MDC and well deserving of the "Employee of the Month" recognition.

**ALEX
SCHAPEKAHM**
Storeroom
Clerk
Admin. Dept.



ONLINE FILLABLE FORMS So FAST! So EASY!

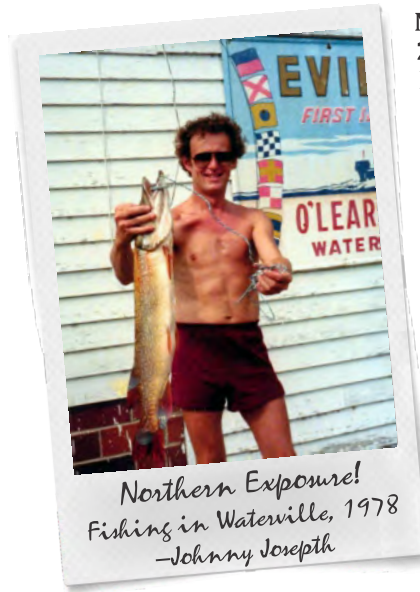
★
There's a new and faster way for customers to submit rebate applications. **Online fillable forms** are available for most rebates offered at **newulmmn.gov**. If a particular rebate is not available as a fillable form, a PDF of the

application is still available on the website.

It is strongly encouraged to submit rebate applications through the online fillable form process. If a person is unable to use the fillable form process, due to lack of internet connection, or means of uploading an invoice, a paper submittal will still be accepted.

Vendors submitting rebate applications for customers must be submitting applications using the fillable-form process. Paper copies of rebate applications are meant for individuals who may not have computer access and/or a way to digitize an invoice.

2026 REBATE & CONSERVATION CALENDAR **Minnesota Vacation Memories**



*Northern Exposure!
Fishing in Waterville, 1978
—Johnny Joseph*

New Ulm Public Utilities 2026 Conservation & Rebate Calendar will feature your Minnesota vacation adventures. Any year is accepted, from childhood memories to recent trips to anywhere within the state. All seasons highly encouraged.

Submit high resolution digital photos or prints. If submitting prints, make sure they are identified as to whom they belong.

All entries must include your name, where the photo was taken in Minnesota, along with any other details you wish to share. If people are in the photo, naming them is optional.



A Superior Day

*Canal Park in Duluth is our favorite MN destination.
—Mitch & Eileen Madsen*

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2025
**ALL NEW ULM PUBLIC UTILITIES CUSTOMERS
ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.**

- Email high resolution digital photos to:
DerekN@newulmmn.gov
- Mail or bring prints to NUPU office:
310 1st N. St., New Ulm, MN 56073



CUSTOMER tips & tricks!



"Turn off lights!"

—David, Maree, Diane

**New Ulm Residents
were asked:
What can kids do to
save energy and money
around home and
elsewhere?**

**"Shut the door
we're not heating
the porch!"**

—Kathleen

"Turn off electronics when not in use."

—Angela

**"Turn off things when
not in use. Shut off water
vs letting it run."**

—Irene

**"Close the
refrigerator
door
as quickly as
possible."**

—Karin

**"Don't use all of the hot water. Turn things off
when not using them. Grab another blanket or
put on a sweatshirt. Many of the things we use at
home use energy and we have to pay for that energy
so let's use it wisely."**

—Alison

KEEP'EM CLEAR

If there's a fire hydrant near your house,
help keep it accessible this winter:

DO YOUR PART SO THEY CAN DO THEIRS



One area where young people can make a difference is through vampire energy saving. An energy vampire (also known as phantom power) is a power-sucker. A device that continues to consume energy even when it's left on standby, in sleep mode, or plugged in.

Examples are:

- ✓ Gaming consoles
- ✓ Phones that have fully charged (most smart phones take just an hour to charge and don't need to be plugged in overnight)
- ✓ Sound speakers
- ✓ Printers
- ✓ Desktop computers and displays
- ✓ Satellite and cable boxes
- ✓ Microwaves
- ✓ Coffee makers
- ✓ Electric toothbrush chargers
- ✓ Digital clocks

**Talk to kids
about
energy
vampires**



Although you may think one or two things left plugged in won't make a lot of difference, a whole household of appliances sucking vampire energy definitely will. Vampire energy can account for 20% of your monthly electricity bill.

Research shows we could save an average of \$197.49 per household on electricity bills each year by switching off these vampire devices. **That's over \$26 billion wasted on vampire energy.**

Switch off when not in use. Every cord plugged into an outlet still uses an electric current. Many devices in sleep or standby modes continuously use energy for updates, or to connect to remote servers, and record data.

Unplug devices when charged. Once a device is powered up, it'll maintain its charge when in standby mode, even if unplugged. So get your kids to charge and unplug phones, laptops, and tablets regularly and turn the power off at the switch.

Unplug items not in constant use. Identify the devices you and your teens use less frequently to help stop phantom energy draws. For example, computers and game consoles can be switched off during school hours.

Turn the thermostat down by one or two degrees. The Department of Energy estimates savings of 1 per cent for each degree of thermostat adjustment per 8 hours. This could cut your heating bill by 10%.

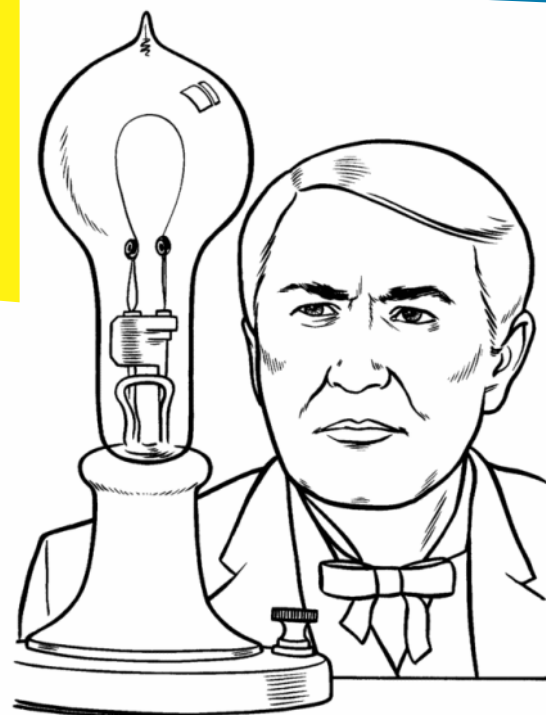


★ FUN ★ TRIVIA ★ FACTS

“Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.”

—Thomas Alva Edison

On February 11, 1847, Thomas Alva Edison, American inventor, was born in Milan, Ohio. He was an American inventor and businessman who developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph and the long-lasting, practical electric light bulb. Dubbed “The Wizard of Menlo Park” by a newspaper reporter, he was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large teamwork to the process of invention, and therefore is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory.



Edison once said, “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.” His birthday is often celebrated as “Inventors Day” to encourage children to try their hands at inventing. Thomas Edison registered 1,093 U.S. patents in his name, as well as many patents in the UK, France and Germany. He is credited with numerous inventions that contributed to mass communication and, in particular, telecommunications. His advanced work in these fields was an outgrowth of his early career as a telegraph operator. Edison originated the concept and implementation of electric-power generation and distribution to homes, businesses, and factories - a crucial development in the modern industrialized world. His first power plant was on Manhattan Island, New York.



ATTENTION PARENTS! Have your kids color the pictures of Thomas Edison above and we will randomly choose some to be published in future newsletters as space allows.

**Send a digital photo of art via email to: derekN@newulmmn.gov or mail or deliver to:
New Ulm Public Utilities, Attn: Derek Nelson
310 1st N. St., New Ulm, MN 56073**



New Ulm Public Utilities
310 1st North Street
New Ulm, Minnesota 56073

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PERMIT 609



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NEW ULM PUBLIC UTILITIES
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

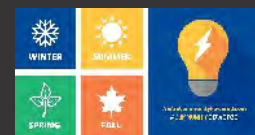


**"Rebate!
Rebate!"**

NUPU has on-going rebates year 'round!
See inside, visit newulmmn.gov, call 507-233-2110
EASY ONLINE APPLICATION!

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NEW ULM PUBLIC UTILITIES
310 1st North Street

MAIN NUMBER	233-2110
Billings & Connections	359-8259
Administration	359-8264
Electric Distribution Dept	359-8295
Gas Dept	359-8289
Material Distribution Center	233-2134
Power Plant Chief Engineer	233-2128
Power Plant Operator	233-2129
Utilities Director	359-8264
Wastewater Treatment Plant	359-8360
Water/Steam Dept	359-8279
AFTER HOURS ALL CALLS	359-8204