



# Watt's News

September 2010

Volume 23, No 09

Official Newsletter of Brainerd Public Utilities, PO Box 373, Brainerd, MN 56401

## Annual Notice to All Residential Customers

### Cold Weather Rule

The Cold Weather Rule is designed to protect people who may have trouble paying their electric bills in the winter.

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule applies from October 15 to April 15. The rule, established by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, means that your utility cannot disconnect your residential electrical service during the winter **IF** the customer meets **ALL OF** the following requirements:

- The customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- Utility disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source.
- The customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility) Note: Customers receiving "any form of public assistance", including energy assistance, are deemed to have qualified for inability to pay status.)
- The household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income level, as documented by the customer to the utility.

If you have trouble paying your utility bill, local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. The Minnesota Department of Human Services recommends you call the county in which you live.

### **Did You Know?**

You may qualify for help with heat and electric bills through your local Energy Assistance Program. Call Lutheran Social Service at 829-5000 for more information. Eligibility is based on monthly income – assets are not counted

**\*\*The EAP grant can only be applied to electric charges. Water/Sewer charges will be the customer's responsibility to pay each month.**

## IMPORTANT NOTICE For Military Personnel

Effective August 1, 2007

Section 325E.028 of the Minnesota statutes pertaining to utility payment arrangements for military service personnel outlines their rights and responsibilities effective August 1, 2007. Minnesota's Municipal Electric Utilities must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, deployment, or change in duty station if a residential customer meets criteria set forth in this statute.

Application forms are available at Brainerd Public Utilities or on our Web site at [www.bpu.org](http://www.bpu.org). If you would like a copy of this statute or an application sent in the mail, please contact BPU at 218-825-3200. An application received with out copies of income statements and proof of military orders overseas is considered incomplete, resulting in the possibility of no shut-off protection.

### Watt's Weather

#### Total Precipitation

August 2010 4.81"

August 2009 3.00"

#### Average Temperatures

August 2010 Hi 80 Lo 58

August 2009 Hi 75 Lo 52

**Smoke Alarms – A Sound You Can Live With!** Fire Prevention Week is October 4-8 and the focus this year is on smoke alarms. Did you know the two leading causes of home fires and injuries are cooking and heating systems? Remember to test your fire alarms monthly, change the batteries every year and replace the entire smoke detector after 10 years.

Stop by the Brainerd Fire Department on Thursday, October 7 from 5 to 7 pm for the annual open house and to learn more about fire prevention

# BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES POLICY 2005-10

Adopted 01/01/86

Revised 12/06/05

## DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE

### DISCONNECTION FOR NON-PAYMENT OF BILL

A customer's account is considered delinquent if the current charges are not paid to Brainerd Public Utilities (BPU) by the due date of the bill. **IT IS ALWAYS THE CUSTOMER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY BILLS IN A TIMELY MANNER AND IN FULL UNLESS OTHERWISE AGREED.** The following procedures will be followed if the bill is not paid in full each month.

The customer will be notified by regular mail that he/she is delinquent. The customer will be given five (5) business days after the date of mailing to pay the amount owing.

If the customer does not respond to the delinquent notice he/she will receive a disconnection notice delivered by regular mail. The disconnection date will be scheduled for five (5) business days after the date of mailing the disconnection notice. If the disconnection notice is for a rental property, a copy of the notice will be sent to the landlord.

If the customer does not pay the amount due on the disconnection notice in full, or make payment arrangements by the disconnect date, their service will be disconnected.

The customer may request a payment arrangement which will allow him/her to pay their delinquent amount over a three (3) month period. Current charges will also have to be paid by the due date each month. **Customers failing to make scheduled payments or current charges can be disconnected immediately.**

Once a customer has been disconnected for non-payment or not complying with the payment arrangement, the service will not be reconnected until the customer pays all the account charges in full. This includes current charges and a deposit if one has not been paid previously or if the paid deposit is not sufficient. A reconnection fee will also have to be paid. During the hours of 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. the fee is \$50 and after 3:00 p.m. and on weekends and holidays, the fee is \$150.

Payment for accounts that are on the disconnection list each week must be made with cash, money order, or credit card. No checks will be accepted.

### MEDICAL CONDITIONS

BPU shall not discontinue electric service if such action will aggravate an existing serious illness of any person who is a permanent resident of the premise where service is rendered **IF** the customer complies with the following requirements regarding such illness.

The illness must be certified to BPU by a registered physician on BPU's Physician's Certification of Illness form. The form must be filled out completely.

Initial certification by the physician may be made by telephone if the completed form is forwarded to the utility within five days.

Initial certification shall prohibit disconnection of service for thirty (30) days. Certification may be renewed by the customer for an additional thirty (30) days by providing another certificate to BPU. **IT IS THE CUSTOMER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A NEW CERTIFICATE EVERY 30 DAYS. FAILURE TO RENEW THE CERTIFICATE ENTITLES BPU TO START DISCONNECTION PROCEDURES.**

The customer cannot use their illness as a way not to pay their utility bill. The customer will be required to make a payment arrangement to pay their past due bill and keep the current charges paid.

### DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE WITHOUT NOTICE

BPU may disconnect service to any customer without further notice for the following reasons:

In the event of unauthorized use, theft of power, and/or tampering (see Policy 2003-4) with BPU's equipment.

In the event that a condition has been determined to be hazardous to the customer or other customers of BPU, BPU's equipment, or to the general public.

When a customer is in violation of municipal, state, or national electric codes.

When a customer has not complied with the requirements for application for service.

**N**OTICE: All electrical work performed in the City of Brainerd requires a "Request for Electrical Inspection" form to be filed, and work inspected by our inspector. Please call 825-3210 or 829-2193 for more information.

#### Business & Repair Office Hours

7:00 a.m.—3:30 p.m.

Business: 829-8726

Repair: 829-2193

Emergency 24 hour service 365 days a

year: 218-829-2193

EMAIL@BPU.ORG WWW.BPU.ORG

**B**EFORE DIGGING: Call Gopher State One at 1-800-252-1166 for water and electric locations. All requests for locations must be made by calling the above toll free number at least 48 hours before digging begins.