

## *'Be Bright' this fall with reduced pricing on energy efficient bulbs*

Be Bright this fall! Through December 31, while supplies last, our residential electric customers are eligible for reduced pricing on ENERGY STAR® qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs).

We've partnered with participating retailers to offer CFLs for as little as 99 cents each!



ENERGY STAR-rated CFLs use 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer than incandescent light bulbs, but less watts doesn't mean less light! Today's CFLs produce bright light at less cost to consumers and businesses because they use less electricity and last longer than incandescent bulbs.

By replacing the five most-used bulbs in your home with energy-efficient CFLs, you can save about \$35 in energy costs a year. CFLs also offer environmental benefits to help make our community a little greener.

Remember, supplies are limited so get your discounted CFLs before they sell out! (Discounted CFLs purchased during this promotion are not eligible for our CFL rebate program.)

## *'Public Power' brings benefit*

North Branch Municipal Water & Light is one of more than 2,000 publically-owned electric utilities across America. You, as citizens, are its owners. This creates several benefits, including:

- **Local Control** – Because you are the owners, you have local control. Utility policies reflect the values of the community. Decisions are made locally with customer interests in mind.
- **Non-Profit Operation** – This removes the conflict of serving both the shareholder and the customer.
- **Primary Focus on Customers** – Our business model is built around serving our owners – you, the customer. Our employees are very proud of their commitment to serving this community to the best of their ability.

We are one of 125 municipally-owned electric utilities in Minnesota. We have provided high quality, competitively-priced electric and water service since 1941.

We purchase power at wholesale from the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, of which we are a member, and distribute it locally. Our local power plant is used in emergencies and as a hedge against high wholesale market prices.

# The Connector

North Branch Municipal Water & Light

## *Thoughts as the days shorten*

The days are getting shorter and there is often a chill in the air. Please keep these thoughts in mind as we head into fall, and winter.

If you notice a street light that is burnt out or flickering, please call the utility at 674-7100 so that we may get it fixed and keep our streets bright! Be prepared to give us a specific location, so we can go directly to the light. We will do what is necessary to get the light back in service as soon as possible.

Also, please take a good look at your house some night. Are your house numbers visible? Clearly visible house numbers will not only make it easier for a pizza delivery, but it could be a matter of life and death if there is an emergency and public safety personnel are searching for your home.

Along those lines, please keep your sidewalks and other approaches to your property clear, so that utility and emergency personnel can reach you at any time and in any conditions.

## *We offer our customers variety of convenient payment options*

North Branch Municipal Water & Light offers three payment options, besides writing out a check and mailing it back to us. They are: drop boxes, credit cards and automatic withdrawal.

The most efficient payment option is automatic withdrawal. We notify the bank of what you owe us monthly. The bank will withdraw that amount out of your account automatically on the 15th of the month. (Bills are due on the 15th.) The money is then automatically deposited into our account.



You receive your regular bill stamped 'paid,' so you have a record of your usage and payment. This service simplifies things come bill-paying time and saves a lot of time and manual effort at the utility office. Many people pay this way. Please call us at 674-7100 for more information.

The credit card option is available only to residential or small business customers. We accept either Visa or Mastercard. The utility does pay a nominal fee to the credit card company for each transaction. We consider that the cost of doing business.

## *Planting? Consider distances to utility equipment, easements*

Improving the aesthetics of the community and neighborhoods is one of the reasons why North Branch Municipal Water & Light installs new electric service underground. That is also the reason why some customers choose to plant around the pad-mounted transformers.



There are, however, guidelines and access requirements so electric 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 utility lineworkers.

In most cases, the utility holds an easement of 10 feet from the front of the property line to work in. If there is planting or landscaping within that 10 feet, we 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 us at 674-7100.

## *Bill trouble? Don't wait! Call us*

Bills can pile up just like snow. But the **Minnesota Cold Weather Rule** is designed to protect people who may have trouble paying their utility bills in winter. The Cold Weather Rule applies from October 15 to April 15. Under the rule, your utility cannot disconnect your residential electric service during the winter if the customer meets all of the following requirements:

- utility disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source;
- the customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility or is receiving any form of public assistance;
- the household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median income level, as documented; and
- the customer enters into a payment schedule and is reasonably current with payments under the schedule.

Local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. Call Lakes and Pines at 1-800-832-6082.

If you are going to have trouble paying utility bills, contact us at 674-7100 to arrange a payment schedule. We'll try to help.