

The Connector



FALL 2016

The Results Are In



Elk River Municipal Utilities recently sent out our annual customer service survey; and the results are in! After analyzing the responses, we're pleased to report an impressive 92% customer satisfaction rating.

Some of the key areas you evaluated us on were: respectfulness, communication, knowledge, innovation, and timeliness. When we asked for your comments, we were delighted to receive many compliments and kind words. This meant a great deal to us and we thank you! Just as useful were some helpful comments and concerns some of you expressed. We've reviewed all of the comments and will be addressing them through personal phone calls, future newsletters, flyers, and website blogs.

ERMU Exits the Security Systems Business

On August 22, 2016, the Elk River Municipal Utilities Commission approved through resolution the sale of the ERMU security systems sales and installation department. This sale will transfer all existing security accounts and inventory to WH Security. With 25 years of providing security alarm systems in Minnesota and currently serving approximately 14,000 customers, WH Security is locally headquartered and operates out of Rockford, MN. ERMU has partnered with WH Security for many years for security system monitoring services making for a seamless transition.

This decision was made after significant consideration following months of evaluation of the security alarm system business line. The ERMU security alarm sales and installation department operated as a subsidiary of the ERMU electric utility. The driving force for ERMU to provide security alarm system sales and installation originated from a need for having security systems at ERMU facilities. This service was then extended to our electric customers and beyond.

Many factors contributed to the final decision. Ultimately, with the rapid change in security technology and growing need for electric utility grid physical and cyber security, ERMU's facility security needs have evolved beyond the services provided through the subsidiary. This change in internal needs creates a misalignment in providing exceptional security alarm system sales and installation services with the ERMU mission "to provide our customers with safe, reliable, cost effective and quality long term electric and water utility services." This misalignment in mission along with the fiduciary responsibility to the electric customers was the primary criteria in the decision to sell.

The transfer will happen October 1, 2016. There will be no interruption in security alarm system monitoring, installation, or repair services. Effective immediately, all service calls or questions about security alarm system service should be directed to WH Security at 763.477.3664. Existing ERMU security alarm system customers will receive a welcome packet from WH Security in early October with information about their company. Additional information can be found by visiting WH Security's website at <http://www.wh-security.com>.

Dam Inspection Involves Lowering Lake Level

Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) will be conducting their annual inspection of the Elk River Dam on Wednesday, October 5, 2016. The required inspection, which helps to ensure the integrity of the structure, will involve lowering the Orono lake level 30" below normal. This would be an opportune time for homeowners with lakeshore property to perform any necessary maintenance or lakeshore improvements. To see if any special permits are required, please contact the City of Elk River Environmental Department at 763.635.1000.

If you have any questions, please contact Elk River Municipal Utilities at 763.441.2020.



The Salvation Army offers a program to low and moderate income families to help them with paying their energy bills. HeatShare provides cash grants and emergency assistance with utility and heating bills on a year-round basis.

When you donate to HeatShare, you are helping warm the lives of families and individuals who have no other resources available to them, or places to turn to that can help them through the cold Minnesota winter.

To learn more about HeatShare, or to make a donation, please visit our website at www.elkriverutilities.com and click on Customer Service, then HeatShare.

Energy Assistance

There are several local organizations that may be able to support you if you need energy assistance this winter season. Please call to see if you qualify for financial or conservation and weatherization assistance.

- Tri-Cap.....888-765-5597
- Sherburne Co...763-765-4000
- Wright Co.....320-963-6500
- Henn Co.....952-933-9639
- Sal Army.....320-252-4552
- CAER.....763-441-1020

What's Haunting Your Energy Bill?

Does wasting \$100 sound scary to you? That's about what the average U.S. household spends each year on phantom load. Phantom load is the electricity used by appliances and electronic devices while they are turned off or not performing their primary job. There may be up to 40 of those devices lurking in your home. Big power suckers include TV's, cable boxes, video consoles and battery chargers.



Giving up the Energy Ghosts - While it is impossible to completely rid your home of phantom load, here are some actions you can take to conjure up some real savings.

- Unplug devices that are rarely used. Examples include a television and DVD player in your guest room.
- Use a power strip with a switch to control groups of devices, such as computer clusters (computer, printer, speakers) and entertainment centers (television, stereo, game console). Keep devices such as a cable box and wireless transmitter on a separate circuit to avoid loss of connection.
- Use advanced power strips for computers and other devices. These "smart" power strips can sense when a device is turned off or not being used and will shut off the power automatically.
- Purchase ENERGY STAR certified appliances and electronic devices. ENERGY STAR products typically draw less standby power than standard models.

Elk River Municipal Utilities has secured the right to republish this article.

Cold Weather Rule Notification

Some customers find it hard to pay their heating bills in the winter. The State of Minnesota set up the Cold Weather Rule to protect residential, heat-affected customers who are unable to pay their utility bills from disconnection of service between October 15 and April 15. Contrary to popular belief, the Cold Weather Rule does not forbid utility disconnection during the winter months. Therefore, communication with your gas and electric provider is important.

If you know you're going to have trouble paying your utility bill, we encourage you to call us, or visit our website at www.elkriverutilities.com where you'll have the ability to download, or electronically submit, an "Inability to Pay" form to be protected from utility shutoff once the Rule has taken effect. The form must be completely filled out and signed to be considered valid. If the payment arrangements are not followed, the Cold Weather Rule will not protect you from utility shut off.

As you can see, communication and keeping your payment arrangements are the key to avoiding an inconvenient and potentially detrimental disconnection. If you find yourself needing help, you can contact the energy assistance organizations, listed on the left, to see if you qualify for assistance.

If you have additional questions about the Cold Weather Rule, or would like to make a payment arrangement, please contact us at 763.441.2020. We'll do our best to help.