

11 Bridge Avenue West
P O Box 65
Delano MN 55328
763-972-0557



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During any major construction project there is the possibility of outages, electric, phone, cable TV, even water and sewer. I have talked about outages in several newsletters. It seems to be a subject that our customers want to know more about. We have had several brief outages over the past few weeks. Most of the outages were caused by the transmission system outside of Delano. We have worked for many years on our electric system inside Delano to create a “looped” system. What happens in a looped system is electricity has two paths to get to one, or all, locations within that loop. If there is a fault somewhere in that loop then electricity feeds from both sides until it hits that dead end. Sounds simple enough, electricity should be on all the time. Well, yes and no. If there is a fault, it trips a breaker here at our substation, and the lights go out until we isolate the fault then return power back to both sides of the loop while we do our repairs. This is exactly what happened on June 2nd. A construction crew hit an underground line along Hwy 12 and created a fault on the loop. Our crews were dispatched immediately, they isolated the fault and returned power to both sides of the loop.

While I am talking about looped systems, I’ll talk about our transmission system too. Two different transmission lines meet in Delano. One from the south and the other from the west. Several years ago we added the transmission lines down River St. this gave us a more reliable redundant system. In the event of an extended outage on the transmission lines, all we have to do is flip a couple of switches and the lights are on.

Now back to construction. Transmission lines and big cranes don’t get along very well. To ensure the safety of construction crews and the reliability of our system, the decision was made to temporarily remove the lines that cross Hwy 12 at River St. What does this mean? It means our transmission system is no longer looped, we won’t have the ability to switch from one line to the other if there is a major outage. That’s the bad news. The good news is that we have back up generators. If the lights go out for an extended time, our crews are trained to run engines until the transmission lines are repaired. We are doing every thing we can to ensure that your power stays on, but know that we can’t anticipate and prevent every event, we can only respond as quickly as possible to these events. Your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Thank You



Automatic Bill Payment

This morning while I was starting up my computer, I looked out the window of the utility office, and I noticed a customer standing across the street waiting to cross. I knew she was a customer because she kept glancing at our office as she held our oyster colored bill in her hand. I glanced at the clock and noted the time, 7:01. As many of you know, the detour of highway 12 runs right in front of the utility building, and just as many of you also know, the busy morning time is between 6:30 AM and 9:00 AM. Car after car travel past, a couple of big rig trucks, and a school bus, 7:05, as our customer continues to wait for a small break in traffic. The State Patrol has been doing a wonderful job of keeping traffic moving both morning and afternoon rush hours. It's a thankless, tedious job, as angry commuters impatiently wait for the officer to give their traffic lane the "wave." 7:07, finally our customer has made it across the street. She walks up the ramp, slides the bill into the payment slot, turns around, and heads back to the curb to start the waiting process all over again. Her timing was much better on the way back, as I saw her in her car waiting once again to enter the traffic lane at 7:11.

One thing I always do, and it makes me crazy, I always get my really good ideas too late to be useful. What I should have done was grabbed one of our automatic bill payment forms and invited the customer inside to fill it out. I would explain that she would no longer have to wait for an endless line of cars to pay her bill. With ever increasing prices in both gas and postage, auto-pay is a convenient and cost effective way to ensure your bill is paid on time.

Automatic bill payment is easy. Nearly 25% of our customers take advantage of this free service. All of the details and the application form can be found on the back of your bill. There is no charge to the customer for this service. If you would like more details about auto pay, call the utilities at 763-972-0557.

Landscaping Around Meters and Transformers

The Delano Municipal Utilities crew wanted me to thank our customers who trim the shrubs near the electric and water meters, and to remind those who haven't trimmed yet to please clear a path for them. Once a month our readers go out in every kind of weather, usually spending two full days reading all the meters in town. From what I hear, in spring and fall it isn't so bad, but in August and January, it can be brutal. The quicker they can get in, read the meter, and get out, the better they like it. Fighting an overgrown shrub in front of the meter can make the job a lot tougher.

The same can be said for the transformer that serves your home, I know that they aren't the most attractive lawn ornament around, but they serve a critical purpose. If there is a fault or failure in that transformer, the quicker we can get to that transformer, the sooner your lights will be on. We do our best when working around our equipment to restore your lawn after we dig it up for repairs. Thank you for keeping landscaping around transformers and meters to a minimum.