The U.S. Constitution requires that each decade the Census Bureau takes a count — or a census — of America’s population. It determines how many representatives each state gets in Congress and is used to redraw district boundaries. 2020 census data will determine if Minnesota retains its 8 electoral districts, or if our state loses one.

The census provides vital information for you and your community. Communities rely on census statistics to plan for a variety of resident needs including new roads, schools, and emergency services. Businesses use census data to determine where to open places to shop. Communities use census data to determine where to open new roads, schools, and emergency services. Businesses to plan for a variety of resident needs including new roads, schools, and emergency services. For 2010 census data was used to allocate $675 billion in federal funding.

It is estimated that for every individual that is not counted, Minnesota could lose out on nearly $2,800 per year in federal funding. Potentially, that could be nearly $28,000 per person in lost funding from the federal government over the next 10 years.

For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will implement new technology to make it easier than ever to respond to the census. You will be able to respond online, by phone, or by mail.

There are only 9 questions on the census questionnaire (only 7 questions for each additional person living in the household). There is a citizenship question on the census questionnaire. (Information obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and Minnesota State Demographic Center)

WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE?
https://2020census.gov 
https://www.facebook.com/MCCENSUSCCC/
https://mn.gov/admin/2020census
www.co.mower.mn.us/2020Census.html

The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners Monthly Meeting was held on January 14th, 2020. Agenda items included:
• Election of Board of Commissioners President and Vice President for 2020.
• Update on Ellis water tower project
• Updates to Base Pay Structure
• General Manager employment agreement

Meeting minutes are available at www.austinutilities.com

The 2020 Census - Help Mower County Achieve a Complete Count!
Counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place.
The U.S. Census Bureau is the federal government’s largest statistical agency. It is dedicated to providing current facts and figures about America’s people, places, and economy. Federal law protects the confidentiality of all individual responses the Census Bureau collects.

The law is clear—no personal information can be shared.

Under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information—about individuals, households, or businesses—even to law enforcement agencies.

The law states that the information collected may only be used for statistical purposes and no other purposes.

To support historical research, Title 13 of the U.S. Code does allow the National Archives and Records Administration to destroy census records only after 72 years.

All Census Bureau staff take a legal oath to protect your personal information, and any violation comes with a penalty of up to $500,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Connections
Northeast Power Plant
If you travel to the Northeast area of Austin you may notice activity at our Northeast Power Plant. The power plant is in the process of being demolished over the next two years. Demolition started in December 2019. The power plant was decommissioned in June 2016 due to outdated and inefficient technology. AU attempted to sell the building and property not long ago, but had no takers. Steve Bisset, a long time Plant Operator, had this to say, “I have a lot of good memories running the power plant and I enjoyed the work, but I understand that things change, especially technology, and the power plant just didn’t fit in the power market anymore.” Steve is currently a Dispatch and System Operations Controller.

The Northeast Power Station (as it was originally termed) was commissioned in November 1971. It was built at a cost of $8 million dollars to meet the Austin Community’s ever increasing demands for electrical energy. In its prime, the Northeast Power Station employed almost 30 staff members. The state of the art steam turbine generator had the ability to run on either pulverized coal or natural gas with a capacity rating of 3 megawatts of power. The plant was equipped with the most modern equipment available at that time.

AU has budgeted $750,000 for abatement and demolition costs in 2020 and anticipates the project will be completed in 2021 with an estimated total project cost of $2.2M. Phase One has AU staff taking down some of the smaller out buildings and structures. Alex Bungardner, current Utility Operations and Energy Resources Director remembers his time at the plant fondly as well. “The power plants in Austin served the needs of the community for many years. Technology, coupled with changes in the electric market and additional grid-tied infrastructure in Austin, has allowed Austin Utilities other ways to supply energy more cost effectively to its customers. However, I do look forward to a day when the Austin community will once again have local generation resources.”

The Austin Utilities Connections for Better Living™

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Austin Utilities
Board of Commissioners

General Manager employment agreement

PAINT THE TOWN PINK
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS
THE HOMES OF MILLION

Connections

Customer Newsletter
February 2020

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Large Customer Appreciation

This year at our annual Large Customer Appreciation meeting our keynote speaker, Jukka Kukkonen, PluginConnect, talked about the future of electric vehicles (EVs). AU currently provides the community with an EV Charge Station in the downtown municipal parking lot. AU has plans to add more charging stations and EV programs in 2020. Mark Severtson from the Hormel Institute said, “I look forward to AU’s annual meeting. This year’s meeting provided a lot of great information about electric vehicles that actually has me thinking more about the future of that technology.” Watch for an upcoming newsletter to learn more about AU’s plans for promoting EVs.

I’m a snowbird, why can’t I stop my service when I’m gone to avoid the monthly customer charge?

We have many customers who like to travel and request to have their service turned off to avoid the monthly customer charge, especially during the winter months. Believe it or not, it is probably more cost effective to leave your service on and can often cost less than disconnecting and reconnecting. There is also the convenience of leaving your service on. It’s hard to put a value on coming home to a house that is ready for you, and not having to take time to light gas pilots and reset all your clocks. Below are our procedures for your comparison:

- Electric Meters: AU policy requires that electric services that are turned off for more than three months must be inspected before they are re-energized. This is for safety purposes and must be done at the customer’s expense by a licensed electrician. The cost typically outweighs the $14 per month customer charge.

- Gas Meters: Gas meters that have been turned off require a $100 connect fee when re-connected. If it has been more than one year they must hire a plumber to perform pressure checks for safety. This can be compared to paying the $17 per month customer charge.

- Water Meters: There is no fee to turn off or reconnect a water service. Customers must sign a Hold Harmless Agreement to protect the utility in the event of freezing water lines. In addition, customers are not protected by our water service fund in the event of a water service break as the $3 per month water service fund fee is no longer billed while water service is disconnected. This can be compared to paying a $15.50 per month customer charge.

Scholarship Announcement

Austin Utilities is offering a $500 scholarship for local graduating high school seniors. The winning essay will automatically be sent for further consideration to the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship which awards $2,000, $1,500, $1,000, and $500 scholarships provided by MN Municipal Utilities Association. Those eligible must be, or have as a legal guardian, a customer of Austin Utilities. The topic of the essay is, “Municipal Utilities, Good for All of Us.” Deadline for submitting is April 1st, 2020. See our website for more details.

Sniff Out a Natural Gas Leak!

Smell an odor like rotten eggs? GET OUT and CALL AU at 507.433.8886

Todd Jorgenson has been employed with Austin Utilities since 1992 after completing his career in the Air Force. Todd started as a laborer, became an Engineering Corrosion Technologist, Gas & Water Construction Supervisor and was then promoted to his current position as Director of AU’s Gas and Water Operations. He says the most rewarding part of his job is the satisfaction that comes with knowing through his work he’s helping to constantly improve Austin’s gas and water systems. Todd is known as the kind of guy to say “Do it right the first time.”

During his career he has been involved with numerous industry organizations including the American Public Gas Association, the SE Minnesota section of the American Water Works Association, and he serves on the municipal advisory board of the Plastic Pipe Institute.

Todd has been married to his wife Laurie for 38 years and has two daughters, Amber and Kellie, and two grandchildren, Lukas and Scarlette. When he’s not on the job, Todd enjoys golf, traveling and spending time with grandchildren. Todd is planning to retire from his position at Austin Utilities in early 2021.