NEW Customer Advisory Panel

Interested in making a difference in the community? Apply for our NEW Customer Advisory Panel (CAP). The goal of the CAP program is to gather input, ideas, and feedback from a group of customers on a variety of utility-related topics during quarterly meetings held at AU. Space is limited to 12 customers. More information about this new program is available on our website. If you are interested in applying, you can complete an application online or pick one up in our office.

NATURAL GAS UTILITY WORKERS’ DAY IS MARCH 18TH


TIMELINE FOR 2020

MARCH
- All households will receive either a postcard or a paper survey
- 1st reminder sent by letter
- 2nd reminder sent by postcard

APRIL
- 3rd reminder by letter in mid-April
- 4th reminder by postcard in late April with paper form

MAY-JUNE
- Follow-up begins first by phone, then in person

360 Years of Combined Experience

The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners
Monthly Meeting was held on February 11th, 2020. Agenda items included:
- Distributed Generation tariffs
- Resolution for equipment lease
- Designating firm to perform 2019 audit
- Update on new customer bill and Marketing recap
Meeting minutes are available at www.austinutilities.com

Cold Weather Rule Ends April 15th

This rule protects a residential utility customer from disconnection due to non-payment from October 15th-April 15th when the disconnection would affect the primary heat source for the residence and certain financial conditions are met. This protection ends on April 15th. Contact an Austin Utilities Customer Service Representative at 507.433.8886 if you have concerns about your account balance or need to make payment arrangements.

The Austin Utilities Office will be closed
Friday, April 10th 2020

Connections

March 2020
Customer Newsletter

AU Launches New Bill Format

Get ready for a new bill that gives you access to your energy use the way you want to see it. Whether you are a skimmer, a swimmer, or a diver, you‘ve got the information you want to see at your fingertips.

Skimmers just want the basic information. We‘ve made it easy to see how much you need to pay and what your due date is at a glance as soon as you open your bill. The colors of the circle identify how much each utility contributes to your overall bill.

Swimmers want a little bit more information. Our usage graph shows how your electric and natural gas use is trending over time, compares it to the same month last year, and shows if weather changes had an impact on your bill.

Divers want all the data. For these customers, we break down all the detail used to calculate your bill so you know exactly how your charges are calculated.

Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners

Geoff Baker
geoff.baker@mcfgtl.com

Thomas C. Baudler
tbaudler@baudlerlaw.com

Tyler Hulsebus
thulsebus@charter.net

Jeanne Sheehan
jsheehan1445@gmail.com

Steve Greenman
greenman@greenmanhvac.com

Austin Utilities Office
will be closed
Friday, April 10th 2020

Cold Weather Rule Ends April 15th

This rule protects a residential utility customer from disconnection due to non-payment from October 15th-April 15th when the disconnection would affect the primary heat source for the residence and certain financial conditions are met. This protection ends on April 15th. Contact an Austin Utilities Customer Service Representative at 507.433.8886 if you have concerns about your account balance or need to make payment arrangements.

Another feature in the new bill design is a change in the term Customer Charge to Service Availability. We believe this will help customers better understand what that charge is for. Customers who receive a bill in the mail will receive a “How to Read Your Bill” brochure with their new bill in March. Customers who receive paperless billing can find more information about the new bill format on our website. We hope you enjoy the new bill format. Feel free to get in touch with us for questions or comments.
Rain Barrels For Sale

Get ready for April showers with a new rain barrel. Rain barrels capture and store rainwater draining from your roof. They are a great way to reduce the flow of storm runoff.

Austin Utilities is partnering with the Recycling Association of MN to offer Rain Catcher Rain Barrels for only $79 plus tax. The barrels are constructed of recycled, UV inhibited, BPA free polyethylene and includes debris screen, garden hose, shut-off thumb valve, hanging hose clip, overflow hose, and linking kit.

Specifications:
- Assembled Dimensions: 24”D x 24”W x 32”H
- Total Volume: 6 cu ft / 45 Gallon
- Plastic: Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE)

Quantities are limited and all orders must be pre-paid. Purchase online at recycleminnesota.org, starting March 1st and select Austin Utilities as the partner organization. Rain Barrels can be picked up at Austin Utilities on April 30th.

Customer service is located in advance, and the excavation done by hand.

3. Buried gas piping should be:
   (a) periodically inspected for leaks.
   (b) periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic.
   (c) repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered.

4. When excavating near buried gas piping, the piping should be located in advance, and the excavation done by hand.

5. Austin Utilities and plumbing and heating contractors, can assist in locating, inspecting, and repairing the customer’s buried piping.

Customers with buried natural gas piping should feel free to contact Austin Utilities at 433-8886. You can also find information at www.austinutilities.com.

NOTICE

In compliance with the Code of Federal Regulation #49, Part 192.16, Austin Utilities must notify each customer who owns buried natural gas piping after the meter.

1. Austin Utilities does not maintain the customer’s buried piping.
2. If the customer’s buried piping is not maintained, it may be subject to the potential hazards of corrosion and leakage.
3. Buried gas piping should be:
   (a) periodically inspected for leaks.
   (b) periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic.
   (c) repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered.

Employee Spotlight

ANN CHRISTIANSON
FINANCE MANAGER

Ann Christianson has been on AU’s staff since 1991 when she started as an Accountant. Ten years later she was promoted to Finance Manager. Ann is the youngest of 8 children and grew up on a family farm near Adams, MN. She learned early on that following a budget and carefully managing money was important. She started her finance career after college with a local CPA firm before joining Austin Utilities.

Ann has been married to her husband Ken for 29 yrs. They have a daughter, Abby, a son, Isaac, a granddaughter, Kinsley, and another grandchild on the way in August. When she has time to herself she enjoys mystery and thriller novels, traveling, and spending time with her family.

Ann says the most rewarding part of her job is finding that balance between keeping rates affordable for our customers and maintaining a safe and reliable utility infrastructure for all of us. She feels truly fortunate to have spent so much of her career at Austin Utilities but she says retirement is planned in the next 3 to 5 years, especially since her husband retired last year.

Scholarship Announcement

Austin Utilities is offering a $500 scholarship for local graduating high school seniors. The winning essay will automatically be forwarded 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.

How do I find out what’s going on at AU?

It’s easy to be in the know at Austin Utilities. As a public utility, we aren’t just here to provide you with your utility needs; we are here to provide a benefit to the community. If you want to stay informed about new programs, educational opportunities, public events and so much more, here are a few ways:

Attend public board meetings held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 4 pm. Agendas are posted in our lobby and on our website. It’s a great way to see your utility leaders in action making decisions.

Check out our monthly newsletter. Our monthly 4-page newsletter is inserted into your envelope with your utility bill. Customers who receive e-bills have a link to the newsletter included in the email. We also post our newsletters on our website.

Follow us on Facebook at Austin Utilities. We have an active Facebook presence. Not only do we post information about programs and upcoming events, but we also sent out customer alerts for outages, peak alerts, and scams that are active in the community.

With so many ways to stay informed about your local utility, you are sure to find one that suits your preferred method.

AU has been busy connecting with the community this past month.

- Salvation Army Red Kettle Creation Winner - AU
- Serve a Meal for Salvation Army
- United Way Community Connect booth (pictured)
- 2019 Customer donations to HeatShare (pictured)
- Community Impact Pizza Ranch fundraiser for HeatShare
- United Way Employee Pledge donations (pictured)

AU Customer Donations to HeatShare
Stacy Wisemore-Sal. Army, Melissa Swenson & Jenny Loucks

HISTORY

United Way Employee Pledge Drive
Butch Goergen, Melissa Swenson, Molly Lanks - UW, Jenny Loucks, Mark Hibaur & Dave Thompson

Connections for Better Living

SUBMISSIONS

If you are interested in submitting stories to the Employee Spotlight section, please contact Austin Utilities at 433-8886 or email Ann Christianson at a CHRISTIANSON@AUSTINUTILITIES.COM.