



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Going Digital in '09*

### Winter safety reminders

- Please do not pile snow on or near HMU electric or telecom boxes.
- Watch for boxes, gas meters and fire hydrants when using bobcats, tractors or snow plows.
- Please keep areas around meters clear for HMU meter readers.
- Watch Ch12 for postings of school closings or snow emergencies

#### See us on the web:

- [www.har-tel.com](http://www.har-tel.com)—for information on HMU telephone, cable TV and Internet.
- [www.HMU-harlan.com](http://www.HMU-harlan.com)—for questions on electric, gas, water, billing, administrative and HMU Board information
- [www.harlanet.com](http://www.harlanet.com)— local weather, local and regional links, emergency messages, Harlan Theater listings.

February 17th is approaching fast. If you watch any TV, you've probably seen the public service announcements and know it's the day broadcast TV stations will switch from an analog to digital signal. Over the last couple of years, we've run a series of articles in this newsletter trying to explain what the conversion is all about and how it affects you, the viewer.

The change affects people that still use an antenna to receive TV signals and have not added a converter box to an old TV or purchased a TV that is equipped with a digital tuner.

If you have cable TV or satellite service you will not be affected. Your provider will capture the new digital signal, process it as necessary and send

it to you.

Some people ask us if they have to buy a new TV because of the conversion. The answer is no. Any TV will still work fine if you purchase the appropriate converter box at your local TV dealer, electronics store or numerous retail outlets or you have Cable TV or satellite service.

While the conversion date is scheduled for February 17th, the actual transition will take time. Later this month, you will probably start to see a change in your TV picture quality as Channels 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13 prepare for the conversion. Some stations may operate at reduced power meaning the signal we receive at the HMU tower is very poor. We hope this does not hap-

pen but it is a possibility and is something out of our control.

After the conversion, we anticipate picture quality will improve due to the clarity of a digital signal.

A conversion of this scale has never happened. One goal as a cable TV company is to provide you with the highest quality signal and we've been planning and working to accomplish that goal.

We will continue to talk with the TV stations to ensure the best service possible before, during and after the conversion. If you have HMU cable, please know we will stay on top of any service issues and do the best job we can to remain Harlan's Premier Provider.

### Budget Billing

Budget Billing is designed to help you level out peaks and valleys in your utility bill by paying the same amount each month. The amount you pay is based on the previous year's use. If the amount of energy you use

this year changes due to weather or other factors, the actual amount you owe may be different than your Budget Billing amount.

If the current year is colder than last, you may not be paying enough

to keep your bill current. If the winter is warmer, you may be paying too much.

It's always good to check your actual account balance on your monthly bill and compare it to your Budget Billing amount.

## HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

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### Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Preventable

Carbon monoxide (CO) gas is an odorless, colorless gas created by an incomplete burning of oil or gas by-products. Potential sources include automobiles, gas appliances, gas furnaces, chimneys, charcoal grills and portable kerosene heaters.

Some common symptoms of CO poisoning are: nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, persistent cough, fatigue, eye and upper respiratory tract irritation, wheezing or increased angina in people with coronary

disease.

When there is a suspected CO problem in the home, it is important to promptly leave the building and then call emergency responders to gain medical attention if necessary. Have a qualified person test CO levels within the home before returning. HMU will perform a CO test.

While CO alarms can be a useful secondary line of defense, the primary line of protection is prevention, which includes regular, professional, inspection of gas and other fuel burning appliances. Never leave a car

running in a closed garage, especially a garage attached to or under living quarters. Chimney flues should be cleaned regularly. Never use charcoal or propane grills inside as a heating source or for cooking.

While deaths due to CO are rare, the public, health care providers and emergency responders must continue to be vigilant in combating this largely preventable occurrence.

Simple regular maintenance and inspection of appliances and safe habits can lower your chances of carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Winter Energy Saving Tips

You can save as much as 10 percent on your heating bill simply by turning back the thermostat 10-15 percent for eight hours a day. One way to do this is with a programmable thermostat.

HMU offers a rebate of up to \$25 for the purchase and installation for programmable thermostats. Talk with your heating and air conditioning professional for recommendations on

which thermostat works best for your system and lifestyle.

Replacing furnace filters on a monthly basis means your forced air furnace doesn't have to work as hard to circulate the air so it runs less and uses less electricity. Replacing filters during the winter is especially important for homeowners with fur bearing pets.

Keep heat and cold air vents clean and

free from blockage.

Check the seals around doors and windows to prevent cold air from coming in. Over time, the seals can dry out and become brittle and broken. Many easy to install window and door seals are available at local hardware stores.

For long term savings:

- Install high efficiency furnaces.
- Install energy effi-

cient doors and windows.

- Increase attic and wall insulation.
- Check and seal foundations as well as cracks in any masonry exposed to the elements. Cold air could be coming from areas you haven't found yet.

For more energy saving tips, visit [harlan-net.com](http://harlan-net.com)



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Phil let me down.*

### Celebration Scheduled

We've scheduled this year's annual Municipal Celebration for Wednesday, June 17th from 5-7 at Vet's Auditorium. RSVP cards will be sent in future newsletters.

We look forward to seeing you.

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Punxsutawney Phil, the weather forecasting groundhog in Pennsylvania, let me down again this year. I was hoping for an early spring but according to my favorite marmot, it will be delayed.

Not only am I personally eager for temperatures to warm up but the potential for variable weather conditions this time of year leading to ice storms is always a concern to electric and telecom providers. One need look no further than Arkansas and Kentucky to see the potential for widespread damage and outages due to ice.

One of the main

reasons HMU wants to put lines under ground is to reduce the possibility of weather related outages.

We began placing lines underground in earnest during 2005 with a major rebuild of the 10th street feeder line and other overhead lines in the central part of Harlan. During late 2006 and into 2007, portions north of and along Cyclone Avenue were converted.

The next phase includes the areas generally described as 19th street from Chatburn to Cyclone Avenue, along Chatburn Avenue east of 19th and the remainder of

the overhead lines on 7th, 8th and 9th streets. Also included in the next phase of construction is an area generally described as east of downtown.

We want to begin initial construction sometime during 2009.

Another of the lessons learned during the widespread outages in the South is the importance of an operational water plant. We're still proceeding with plans to build a new plant out of the flood plain.

Watch for project updates in this newsletter.

### Auto Pay

Auto pay makes sure utility bills are paid *in full and on time*.

- **No need to write a check.** You authorize your financial institution to automatically deduct the amount of your bill from your checking or savings accounts.

- **Eliminates late payment penalties.** Late payment penalties are a thing of the past because Auto-Pay remembers for you.
- **Monthly statement approval.** You'll still receive a monthly statement for review

and approval. This allows you adequate time to inspect all charges and report any concerns before the charges are paid by the institution.

- **Auto-Pay is a free service from HMU.**

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## Gas Safety

Gas connectors are corrugated metal tubes used to connect gas appliances in your home to gas sources.

Certain older gas connectors made of uncoated brass (example pictured) are susceptible to cracking, breaking and deterioration due to moving, bending, corrosion or the way they were made. The connectors have a flaw in how the tubing was joined to the end pieces. Over time, the end pieces can separate and cause a gas leak, which could lead to property damage or injury if not replaced immediately.

To our knowledge, these brass connectors have not been manufac-



tured for about 20 years, but many are still in use. Not all uncoated brass connectors have this flaw, but all should be inspected by a professional and replaced with stainless steel connectors. Gas appliances in your home that should be checked include: Range, oven or cook top,

clothes dryer, hot water heater or auxiliary area heaters. **Do NOT attempt to move the appliance yourself to check the connector.** Contact a licensed plumber or qualified professional appliance repair service to inspect your connectors and replace them if necessary.

## HMU Employees recognized

Three Harlan Municipal Utilities employees received recognition for their years of service to HMU and its customers at the HMU Employee Recognition Banquet held Saturday, January 17th.

Receiving awards and their years of service:

- Journeyman Lineman (Electric)

Dave Goede—30 years

- Lead Technician (Telecommunications) Dan Murray—15 years
- Customer Service Technician (Telecommunications) Ken Holloway—15 years.

Pictured at right are Ken Holloway and Dan Murray





# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

Talkin' with Tom— *Ownership has its privileges.*

## Celebration Scheduled

Annual Municipal Celebration:  
Wednesday, June 17th from 5-7 at Vet's Auditorium. RSVP cards will be sent in future newsletters.

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HMU, and by extension, you, our customer, own 0.8 of one percent of the Louisa power plant in Muscatine. This means in exchange for paying our fair share of ownership costs, we also own and control the equivalent amount of electricity generated by the plant.

Louisa is our second source for electricity. It's there when we need it to meet customer demand. When we don't need it, we still own it and have the responsibility to put it to prudent use.

In 2004, HMU signed a contract with Mid-American Energy

to sell this excess power on the open market at prevailing rates. The agreement has turned out to be a good source of additional revenue for HMU. This revenue is placed in a general account and has helped fund capitol projects, such as the electric system upgrade, operating costs and equipment purchases. We've been able to delay increases in electric rates for five years partially due to the sale of this excess power.

During December of 2008 and January of 2009, we sold \$125,992.50 of electricity from the plant.

This additional revenue was credited to our customers, which lowered the Electric Purchase Adjustment (EPA) portion of your bill in February and March. The amount of credit toward the EPA is based on your actual electric use.

Ownership has its privileges. Our ownership in Louisa gives us a flexible source of power for our customers and an additional source of revenue that has allowed us to defer rate increases while upgrading the electric infrastructure.

## Digital TV transition—We're ready!

It's an exciting time for broadcast TV stations as they transition from an analog to digital signal.

Going digital means a sharper picture and enhanced audio plus the ability to offer programs in high definition. While

some stations now have until June to convert, Channels 6 from Omaha and 13 from Des Moines have already switched to digital.

Those that receive TV through an antenna may need to take action to continue

to receive the stations. HMU cable customers have nothing to worry about. HMU will capture the new digital signals, convert them as necessary and send them to you ensuring you are able to watch your favorite programs.

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## Underground Gas Pipe Maintenance Notice

If you have a natural gas line that runs underground, for example to a heater in a garage, this line is after the gas meter. Here is a safety recommendation:

We operate our gas system with an emphasis on safety. We're required to design, operate and maintain our underground natural gas pipeline system according to prescribed federal standards.

**HMU does not maintain any gas pip-**

**ing that occurs AFTER the meter. This is the responsibility of the customer who owns the pipe. If a buried pipe is not properly maintained it may be subject to corrosion or leakage.**

To ensure continued safe and reliable operation, these lines should be checked periodically. You, or the building owner if you live in rental property, are advised to contact a licensed plumber or heating contractor to assist you in locating

and inspecting your buried gas lines. If any unsafe condition is discovered, repairs should be made immediately.

If we can answer any questions related to natural gas, please call us at 755-5182. As always, call Iowa One Call at 811 or 1-800-292-8989 before digging!



## Budget Billing—*Now is the time to enroll.*

Budget Billing helps avoid wide swings in seasonal utility payments and makes it easier to budget month to month.

HMU's Budget Billing program runs from April through March of each year. If you are interested in leveling out your utility payments over 12 months to avoid seasonal heating and cooling billing peaks,

April is the best time to enroll. Billing history of at least one year at your current residence and a non-delinquent account is required to enroll.

New Budget Billing payments will be calculated in April for bills due in May. Current Budget Billing customers should review your account balance and determine if your budget payments are going

to cover your actual usage for the last year.

The "Account Balance" shown on your statement is the amount you owe before payment of this bill. If it is a negative amount (CR), you have a credit balance and have paid in more than you have actually used. If it is a positive amount, this is the amount you still owe.

Now is a good time to use up any excess credit or to settle up your remaining balance by making an additional payment. Any positive or negative balance remaining when we recalculate budget Billing will be rolled over into your new payment.

Budget Billing is a free optional service from HMU.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *The Impact of a National Energy Policy*

### Celebration Scheduled

Annual Municipal Celebration:  
Wednesday, June 17th from 5-7 at Vet's Auditorium.  
Look for your RSVP card next month.

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There has been a flurry of activity coming out of Washington regarding national energy policy. Details are yet to be determined but the new proposals are generally designed to decrease energy use and carbon emissions while increasing the amount of renewable energy.

There are some new terms in our energy vocabulary.

"Smart Grid" - (From Wikipedia) *A smart grid delivers electricity from suppliers to consumers using digital technology to save energy, reduce cost and increase reliability.*

The intent of the Smart Grid is to use technology to send pricing information to consumers so they can modify behavior as to when and how they use electricity and to assist in peak load management. It's believed that when electricity is in demand and prices are high, customers will cut back on their use or increase energy effi-

ciency.

"Cap and Trade" - Is a common term for one form of emissions trading. It's an administrative device used to decrease a defined pollutant from carbon producing facilities. This policy includes coal fired power plants.

(From Wikipedia) *A central authority, such as the Federal Government, sets a limit or cap on the amount of a pollutant that can be emitted. Companies or other groups are issued emission permits and are required to hold an equivalent number of allowances, or credits, which represent the right to emit a specific amount. The total amount of allowances and credits cannot exceed the cap, limiting total emissions to that level. Companies that need to increase their emission allowance must buy credits from those who release less.*

One of the main points of discussion on both of these topics is what is the economic

impact on the customer if these policies are enacted?

At this point, no one knows how any new policies will affect rates as there are several proposals on the table. Ultimately, the retail cost of electricity is composed of all of the costs associated with generating, administering and delivering the electricity to you.

If generation costs go up due to cap and trade requirements, the cost of electricity goes up. If new technology is installed to monitor the transmission grid, that cost is included in your electric rate.

I try to stay away from commentary in my column, but I fear the new initiatives, while noble in intent and worthy in their goal, will cause a drastic price increase to consumers. I urge our policy makers to proceed with caution and protect customers from high prices.

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## Storms and outages

Spring brings storms and storms can cause outages. Here are some reminders for outages:

- \* Have an emergency plan in place if someone in your household relies on electrically powered life support or medical equipment. Your plan should consider the outage could last a long time. Have a back up generator or a safe place to go if necessary. A reminder: **HMU does not provide emergency generators nor support cus-**

**tomers owned generators.** It is up to you to make sure you have back up power if you need it.

- \* Treat all downed lines as power lines and call HMU 24 hours a day if you see lines down in Harlan.
- \* Keep safe. Do not attempt to go near or move downed lines and do not allow anyone else to go near the lines.
- \* Remember to keep pets secure and not allow them to roam

after storms. They could come in contact with a downed line.

- \* Keep emergency supplies such as flashlights, radios & extra batteries in a place that's easily accessible in the dark. Remember to keep a non electric can opener handy.
- \* Use surge protectors and uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) on computers and other critical electronic equipment to lessen the chance of damage.

## Grab the phone and call before you dig!

Many electric, gas, water and telecommunication lines are underground. You can be severely injured or killed if you strike an underground line while gardening, tilling, digging, or installing posts.

**Call Iowa One Call  
1-800-292-8989  
or 811 before  
you dig!**

Iowa One Call must be notified anytime an excavation or digging is made in excess of 12 inches.

- Call Iowa One Call toll free.

- They will notify all affected utilities.
- A trained locator will mark all underground utility lines.

Calls to Iowa One Call are monitored. An immediate response can be coordinated for emergency

requests. Non-emergencies require a minimum 48 hour prior notification.

Iowa One Call is a free service. Read the enclosed brochure for more information.

**Plan Ahead -  
Be Safe!**





# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— 2009 Water report

### Municipal Celebration RSVP

We're gearing up for our annual Municipal Celebration on June 17th and you're invited to attend. If you are planning on joining us this year, please fill out the enclosed RSVP post card and drop it in the mail. We're looking forward to seeing you!

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Providing clean, safe water is one of our highest priorities. We recently completed our annual Consumer Confidence Water report for calendar year 2008. This required report is designed to be a plain language explanation of water quality and relevant health concerns.

The complete report was published in the April 24th and 29th Harlan newspapers. Copies are also posted around town at large employers, schools and select apartment complexes. Copies of the report are available

at the HMU office at 405 Chatburn. You can read the report on-line at [HMU-Harlan.com](http://HMU-Harlan.com).

In order to maintain a safe water supply in a fiscally prudent manner for years to come, we continue to look toward building a new water plant out of the flood zone. The new plant will be located south of Chatburn Ave. on the east side of Southwest Ave. We've entered the engineering design phase and we expect to see the first drafts of the plans this fall.

As a veteran, Memorial Day holds a

special place in my heart. I encourage you to participate in Memorial Day activities. Whether you attend a formal service like the one at the Harlan cemetery, take the time to hang a flag on your home or simply pause for a moment for thoughtful reflection on the significance of the holiday, make an effort to honor and remember our country's service people who have given their lives while serving.



**In honor of Memorial Day,  
The HMU office will be closed  
Monday, May 25th.  
Emergency calls taken at 755-5182**



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## May is National Electric Safety Month

This month is a good time to look around your home and eliminate potentially deadly electric hazards.

**Start with your wiring.** Homes over 40 years old may not be wired to handle a modern electric load. A complete electrical inspection may be in order to ensure your wiring and fuse box can handle today's electric demand.

**Check outlets.** Older homes may still have two prong out-

lets. Adapters or 'cheater' plugs that convert three prong cords to two prong outlets are a temporary fix. Replace outlets with modern three prong receptacles and keep things safe. Cover unused outlets accessible to children.

**Check power cords.** Make sure all power cords are in good condition not frayed, cracked, cut or chewed by pets. Never remove the ground pin (the third prong). Change the

outlet to accommodate the plug.

**Extension cords.** Another temporary fix. If power is needed in an area that doesn't have an outlet, install a new receptacle instead of permanently using an extension cord.

**Outdoor Safety.** When painting, cleaning gutters or doing work requiring a ladder, always look up for overhead power lines.

## Summer Energy Saving Tips

Hot weather is on the way. Here are some energy and money saving tips that will help keep you cool this summer while lowering your energy bill.

- Now is the time to have a qualified service person check your central air sys-

tem, including filters and ducts, to ensure efficient operation.

- During the cooling season, check and clean filters regularly. Systems with clean filters use less electricity.
- Set air condi-

tioners at 78 degrees unless you have an elderly or young family member that needs it cooler for health reasons.

- Draw shades and blinds to shade the sun.
- Use ceiling or box fans to circulate air.

- Turn off lights and appliances not in use.
- Install a high efficiency A/C unit. HMU offers rebates for energy saving systems. See us for details.

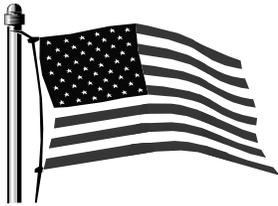
For more energy saving tips, visit [harlannet.com](http://harlannet.com)



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Lost; the sequel*

### Celebrate Independence



HMU office closed  
Friday July 3rd.

Emergency Calls  
taken

at 755-5182

Have a safe and  
Happy 4th of July  
from all of us at  
HMU

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Fans of the TV show *Lost* know the series is full of plot twists and turns. If you don't watch regularly, it can be tough to keep up. The Midwest Independent Transmission Systems Operators (MISO) negotiations are similar. Daily, sometimes even hourly, vigilance is required due to changes, the large number of players involved and characters that move in and out of the story. If one does not keep abreast of changing developments, one can easily become lost. Regular readers of this column and viewers of HMU Board meetings know that MISO is a recurring topic. The reason is the potentially large impact and long term financial implications on HMU. At the core of the issue is the transfer of electricity from one point to another across inter and

intra state power lines. The current electric grid is a patchwork of lines owned and controlled by numerous public and private energy companies.

The MISO agreements are, in theory, designed to pull together all of these companies together and ease the transportation of electricity under one united entity.

HMU is unique within MISO due to our physical location and the fact we own part of the generation capacity of the Louisa Generation Station (LGS) in Muscatine, Iowa, within MISO's Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) balancing area. (As background, Mid American Energy, the majority owner of LGS, is joining MISO which forces HMU to also) We have grandfathered agreements

relating to transportation of electricity from LGS to Harlan.

The devil has been working out the details to retain current benefits, maximize any new benefits and mitigate the financial burden on HMU and therefore you.

The concept of Regional Transmission Organizations like MISO is fairly new in the US. Mistakes, very costly mistakes, have been made in other areas. Those mistakes lead to higher energy costs for customers.

While like some TV serials, it seems like MISO will never end but I am hopeful that we will one day sign agreements and all the players will walk happily into the sunset never to be lost again.

### Dispute Resolution Notice-Telephone service

If you have any dispute or complaint regarding your HMU local telephone service, please contact us for assistance. Normal office hours are 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. Or you may write to us or stop at 405 Chatburn, Harlan, Iowa 51537. We can be reached by calling (712) 755-5182.

If HMU does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board, 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, IA, 50319-0069 (515)281-3839 or call toll free (877)565-4450.

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## Storm Safety

Summer storms can blow in quickly and cause downed power lines. Here are some safety tips:

- Treat all downed lines as power lines. Telephone or Cable TV lines can be dangerous too.
- Do not attempt to move any downed lines. You may put your-

self in danger or cause further outages.

- Do not drive around after a storm. You may put yourself in danger or slow work or emergency crews trying to respond. Avoid areas where crews are working. Some danger may still exist.
- Keep pets inside

or on a leash so they do not come into contact with lines.

- Help prevent outages by keeping trees trimmed and out of power lines.

If you see lines down in Harlan, call HMU at 755-5182 24 hours a day .

## Project Share

Project Share is a plan created by HMU to assist needy households in paying energy bills and make home improvements to reduce future energy bills.

You can help by adding a regular Project Share contribution to your monthly utility payment or by making a direct donation to Project Share. Your contribution is

voluntary, flexible, and tax-deductible. People qualifying for help will be carefully identified by an area social service agency and the entire program is overseen by a local committee.

Fill out this coupon and return it to the Harlan Municipal Utilities, P.O Box 71 405 Chatburn Ave., Harlan, IA 51537 to participate.

Dear Harlan Municipal Utilities,  
I'd like to help a neighbor in need with a contribution to Project Share.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to Project Share. I understand this amount will be added to my bill.

I have enclosed a one time \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation to Project Share.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Municipal Celebration*

Always Call  
before you dig



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

Summer yard work can mean digging. Call before you dig. It's quick, it's safe and it's the law.

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- [www.harlannet.com](http://www.harlannet.com)— local weather, local and regional links, emergency messages, Harlan Theater listings.

I shouldn't be surprised but once again, I am amazed at the turnout for our Municipal Celebration. It means a lot to us to see all of you show up. This year's version was the largest ever.

The Celebration gives me an opportunity to see familiar faces and yet some of you I'm meeting for the first time. While the time we get to spend together the night of the Celebration may

be short, I do appreciate you introducing yourself and the brief time we spend together.

My special thanks go to the HMU employees for their willingness to do what is necessary to make the celebration successful. It takes a lot of planning and coordination before the event. The day of the celebration is always a little hectic but somehow the details fall into place and

they manage to pull it off before the doors open. Plans are already in place for the 2010 Celebration.

On behalf of the Board and Employees, thank you for attending.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Board is scheduled to hear an update on the engineering for the new water plant at the July 9th meeting. I'll have more on the water plant in a future newsletter.

The Board is also expecting to receive bids on the electric rebuild project at the August 27th meeting. Construction could begin in 2009, depending on weather, but it looks like that project will start in 2010.



**HARLAN  
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## Energy Saving Tips

Here are some easy energy saving tips for hot weather

- Set air conditioners at 78 degrees unless you have an elderly or young family member that needs it cooler for health reasons.
- Draw shades and blinds.
- Check and

change your A/C system filters regularly. Systems with clean filters use less electricity.

- Have a qualified service person check your central air system, including filters and ducts, to ensure efficient operation.
- Use fans to circulate air.

- Turn off lights and appliances not in use.
- Install a high efficiency A/C unit. HMU offers rebates for energy saving systems. See us for details.

## Dispute Resolution Notice

The Harlan Municipal Utilities will always do its best to see that your utility service works efficiently at all times. However, if you do have questions or complaints about the service, you can contact an HMU utility representative at the following address and phone number:

**Harlan Municipal Utilities**  
**405 Chatburn Avenue**  
**Harlan, IA 51537**  
**(712) 755-5182**

HMU representatives are available Monday through Friday between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If your complaint is related to service disconnection, safety, or renewable energy, and we do not resolve it, you may request assistance from:

**Iowa Utilities Board**  
**350 Maple St.**  
**Des Moines, IA 50319**  
**(515) 281-3839 or**  
**1-877-565-4450 or by**

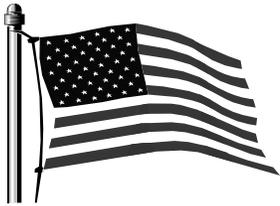
**E-mail to [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us)**



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Commitment*

Always Call  
before you dig



HMU office  
closed  
Monday

September 7th  
for Labor Day.

Emergency Calls  
taken at  
755-5182

### See us on the web:

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As a high school basketball coach molding the minds, bodies and skills of young men, I stressed the concept of commitment. Commitment means doing what is necessary to achieve a certain goal or outcome regardless of the obstruction or distraction. Many times, my players would rather be doing all the things that normal teenage boys do rather than taking the time to shoot free throws or extra conditioning.

It is commitment based on a strong values system that keeps you going when everything seems to tell you to stop. A commitment also means a non-negotiable agreement between two parties.

One of HMU's duties is to provide our customers with clean and safe drinking water. It is why the Water Utility was

formed 108 years ago and one to which we are committed. Nothing can stop us from meeting that obligation. In order to fulfill that commitment for the long term, HMU will need to build a new water plant.

Some people have said that due to the economy, this is not the time to proceed. Are economics one factor that need to be considered before proceeding? Absolutely. The cost of a new water plant will affect rates in some way. Yet, in a down economy, construction costs drop as bidders vie for the work. Some materials can be purchased at lower prices as there is less demand and vendors are willing to decrease margins in order to move inventory. Bonding costs and debt service obligations decrease. These factors lead some to say this is the best

time to build a new plant.

The HMU Board and staff have spent a significant amount of time researching the best and most cost effective type of plant to build. This effort is driven, in part, by their commitment to provide you with fresh, clean water.

I believe all of the time and effort committed to this project by the Board, management, employees, engineers and contractors has lead us to select the most effective and cost efficient plant we can build. The design fits our needs for now and the foreseeable future. The cost is reasonable for the technology. The location is far less vulnerable to flooding.

We remain committed to that most sacred commitment; safe, clean drinking water.

## Gas safety and reliability

As part of our Gas Operation and Safety plans, we will be doing our annual key valve maintenance during the first week in September. This maintenance consists

of lubricating, inspecting, and turning approximately 60 gas valves.

Key valves are those identified as being critical to the safe operation of the distribution system.

These are the valves we would close, which in turn stops the flow of gas to certain parts of town, should there ever be an emergency.

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## Auto Pay and billing reminder

Auto Pay is a free and convenient payment service available to HMU customers for automatic payments of:

- Electric, gas, water, sewer and landfill services combined
- Telephone, Cable TV and Internet

There's no

need to write a check and you'll never worry about late payments.

Customers using a credit card for Auto Pay are reminded to contact HMU and update your file when you receive a replacement card. The three digit number on the back of the card changes each time a new

card is issued.

When dropping off your payment, please be sure to include the stub from your bill. This ensures your account is credited promptly and correctly. It also lets us know to which account, electric, gas, water or telecommunication, you wish to apply the pay-

## Energy efficiency

Eco@home is a quarterly publication sent to our electric, gas and water customers. It contains practical and easy to implement ways to "Go Green" and save electricity, natural gas and water, which means lower utility costs.

The mailing database for Eco@home is updated every four to five months from a list of current customers.

If you are a new HMU customer, you should receive your first copy in the next couple of months. If you've been an HMU customer for over six months and have not received a copy of the magazine and would like to, please contact Doug Hammer at HMU to add your name to the next mailing list.

The summer is winding down but hot days still loom ahead.

If you need to replace your air conditioner or are installing a new energy efficient furnace before winter, please check on our appliance rebate program.

Rebates are also available for Energy Star qualified refrigerators, washing machines and programmable thermostats.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

*Talkin' with Tom—"Will You Still Need Me; Will You Still Feed me, When I'm 64?"*

I typed this latest edition of Mr. Tom's Neighborhood one day prior to the launch of the Beatles' new video game. It seemed appropriate to use a line from one of their songs as the title for this month's newsletter. Especially in light of the fact I recently did turn 64.

When one reaches this point in life, there's a tendency to look back and wonder where all the time has gone, and marvel at some of the changes that have taken place. Such as: man landing on the moon. Computers large enough to fill a room reduced to a size that sits on your lap. Cellular telephones small enough to sit in the palm of your hand enabling you not only to talk to anyone in the world, but also to text them, or even watch a movie. (This last change, given my deteriorating eyesight, is not a positive one for me.)

Change, for the most part, has benefited all of us to some degree. But, as with the inven-

tion of gun powder, some changes have also brought along new challenges.

Take the electric industry for example. Electricity has brought convenience to our homes, improved production, and raised our standard of living. Now, however, new challenges are in front of us. First, there's the high profile media topic of environmental issues and the use of renewables. That subject will no doubt be bantered about for some time to come and could result in action that will raise electric rates considerably without actually producing quantifiable results. (Seen any articles on how much energy has actually been saved by extending daylight savings time?).

Then there's the challenge of deregulating the electric transmission system by turning it over to "independent third party" RTO's (Regional Transmission Operators) such as MISO (Midwest Independent Transmission Operator). If you have

watched the televised versions of our HMU Board of Trustee Meetings the past two years, you are likely aware to the on and off activity involving Mid-American Energy Company (MEC) integrating its transmission assets into MISO. Also, if you have witnessed our meetings you will know that MEC integrated into MISO at a fast track pace recently when it looked as if the integration was not going to take place. Effective September 1<sup>st</sup> the MEC/MISO integration occurred after a harried and sometimes confusing race by all us municipal electric utilities affected by MEC's movement.

Now, we await the results. We are confident the change will increase our costs. What we don't know is if the change will also result in increased revenues in the electric marketplace outside Harlan, Iowa, that will not only negate any increase in costs, but add to the revenue stream that has benefited HMU these past five

years.

The recent change with MEC/MISO has added a significant amount of work for us, while simultaneously not providing much in the way of certainty. What concerns me is the mentality of "The Next Big Thing" (I had to work in some Country & Western music to counter balance the Beatles.) seems to have gained a foothold in the rather conservative, and sometimes plodding, electric utility industry. Again, this may be good in the long run. But, I fear we may be retuning to the days when large holding companies again control the electric utility industry as they did prior to their break-up by the feds in the 1930's. We shall see.

Then again, some things seldom change. Illinois lost another football game this weekend after being touted as a pre-season Top 25 team nationally. And, the Cardinals are WAY AHEAD of the Cubs in baseball.

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**Natural Gas  
Safety**

Operating a safe gas system is our highest priority. Enclosed with the newsletter is a brochure on natural gas. Please take the time to read it and share it with family members.

- ALWAYS call 811 or Iowa OneCall at 1-800-292-8989 before you dig to make sure there are no gas lines in

the way. Locates are a free service of HMU.

- Insist others performing work for you call before they dig.
- Learn how to recognize a gas leak and what to do should one occur. See the brochure for signs of a gas leak.
- Do not cover or obstruct gas meters. Make

sure you can get to a meter if necessary.

- Keep our number by your phone and call us any time of day if you suspect a gas leak. You can reach us at 755-5182 24 hours a day.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

**Project Share**

Project Share assists needy households in paying energy bills and making improvements to their home to reduce future energy bills.

You may add a regular contribution to Project Share through your monthly utility payment or by making a one time

direct donation. Your contribution is voluntary, flexible, and tax deductible. People qualifying for help are carefully identified by an area social service agency and the entire program overseen by a local committee. Contact HMU for more details.

Dear Harlan Municipal Utilities,  
I'd like to help a neighbor in need with a contribution to Project Share.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month. I understand this amount will be added to my monthly utility bill.

I have enclosed a one time donation to Project Share in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Pipeline*

### Medallion Hunt

HMU Cable TV will again sponsor the Harvest Fest medallion hunt.

A 2 inch medallion will be hidden somewhere on public property within Harlan. Clues to its whereabouts will be aired on HMU Channel 12. A new clue will be available each day at noon beginning October 19th. The medallion will be hidden in plain view. You will not have to move anything or dig to find it. Find the medallion, return it to HMU and receive a \$100 finder fee.

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I recently attended a conference with members of Iowa municipal utility telecommunications providers where we discussed the status of broadband service and tried to project where service will be in 5-10 years.

We all agreed on one thing. More and more people are signing up for broadband service and users require more bandwidth than before as new forms of entertainment and information appear. Our bandwidth growth rate is exponential. What used to be deemed 'enough' bandwidth capacity is now barely enough to power one business of significant size.

New applications, besides the Internet for entertainment, are emerging. I envision many of the upcoming Smart Grid and energy efficient applications to be broadband based. Local and long distance voice services are migrating to broadband. Video from TV and movie studios are available on line or via download. These services will require a larger 'pipe' or capacity over time.

One topic of discussion included the concept of metered services, similar to traditional utilities, where bandwidth is measured and billed on an 'as used' basis. While this sounds simple and fair in concept, it would be

difficult to implement.

Cost effective equipment to measure use and integrate with a billing system is not available plus this form of payment would be new to long time users familiar with a flat per month fee.

The technology to provide technology changes. New ways to deliver or compress data without losing quality emerge almost weekly but there is a hefty financial price to pay for the technology.

As time goes on, we know the broadband pipeline will only continue to grow. It will be interesting to see just how large it gets.

In honor of Veteran's Day,  
The HMU office will be closed  
Wednesday, November 11th.  
Emergency calls taken at 755-5182



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## Bits and Pieces

⇒ If you need to replace your furnace this winter, remember HMU offers rebates for high efficient gas furnaces. Rebates start at \$250 for 92% efficient furnaces and go up from there.

⇒ Please call us when your streetlight is out.

⇒ As winter sets in and you spend more

time on the computer, make sure your virus and malware protection is up to date. Practice safe Internet use and make sure all members of the family know what is and isn't acceptable on line behavior.

⇒ If you use a supplemental form of heat, like a space heater, read and follow all

safety instructions.

⇒ If you suspect carbon monoxide (CO) in your work or home, call us anytime day or night and we'll perform a free test to see if CO is present.

⇒ Watch replays of HCHS football and volleyball on HCTV channel 23.

## Winter Energy Saving Tips

October is the time to start thinking about cutting your winter heating costs.

By using a few inexpensive energy-efficient measures, you can reduce your energy bills by 10% to 50%.

- Install a programmable thermostat.

They also qualify for a rebate from HMU.

- Replace furnace filters now and check them throughout the winter.
- Check windows and doors for air leaks. Cover windows with film insulation if necessary.

- Schedule a furnace inspection to make sure it's operating safe and efficient.

Installing energy efficient furnaces, windows, doors and insulation cost more but saves more over the long term. A new energy efficient gas furnace or

boiler may qualify for a rebate from HMU.

The new E C O @ H o m e newsletter should also be in your home by now. This quarterly publication offers timely and inexpensive tips on how to conserve energy.

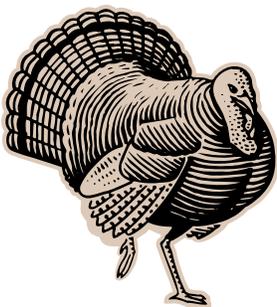


# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Talkin' with Tom— *Annual check up; 2009 audit*

### Thanksgiving hours

The HMU office will be closed Thursday, November 26th and Friday 27th for the Thanksgiving Holiday. Emergency calls taken at 755-5182. Have a Happy Holiday from HMU.



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Just like annual physicals are important to long term health, an annual audit helps HMU stay financially healthy. I'm pleased to report our patient is doing well.

HMU is not chartered to earn a profit with a return to investors. However, it is necessary to operate at more than a break even proposition in order to meet federal and state mandated programs, plan for the future, preserve current infrastructure, upgrade services as needed and maintain high bond ratings.

Across all divisions (Electric, gas, water and telecom-

munications) our total operating revenues decreased 0.98% or \$125,671. Reasons for the decrease include economic conditions, weather, reduced sales through the Louisa plant, and lower interest rates on savings.

Total operating expenses increased 0.59%, or \$53,965 over 2008. This can be attributed to the increase in electric replacement power costs, an increase in the price of wholesale natural gas, and programming expenses in the Telecom division.

Net assets increased by 6.21% or \$1,513,038. As in

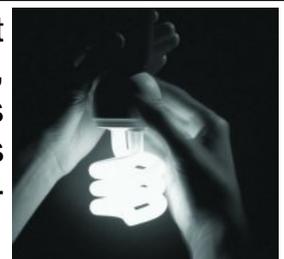
previous years, this increase is mainly attributable to capital expenditures for infrastructure upgrades in the electric, water and telecom divisions. Major additions to our assets include new electrical and telecommunications replacement and upgraded equipment.

Through the year, we paid over \$341,365 in interest payments and lowered our debt principal by \$1,385,856.

What are the benefits of a financially strong utility?

*(See 2009 Audit on back page)*

Purchase energy saving compact florescent lights at Do It Best Hardware, Bomgaars, Fareway or Hy-Vee in Harlan while supplies last and pay as low as \$0.99 per bulb. CFLs save energy and are just one part of an overall strategy to help lower your energy costs.



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## 2009 Audit—continued

- Delayed rate increases. Electric rates have not changed since 2004. Scheduled rate increases have been deferred. Gas service fees have not increased since 2001.
- Infrastructure improvements. Prudent fiscal policy allows us to continue with the long term electric distribution upgrade and overhead to underground conversion. This means increased reli-

ability and lower operation and maintenance expenses in the future.

- The ability to build a modern water plant out of the flood plain ensuring an uninterrupted water supply in case of flooding.

- Increased services. Strong past performance in telecom allowed us to add more HD and digital CATV services.

- Increased bonding capability at

lower rates. Maintaining a strong financial stance means less money is spent on interest payments and more on infrastructure.

We will continue to look for ways to maximize our financial and physical assets while maintaining or minimizing increasing costs. We will seek areas where we can improve and implement those changes as needed.

## Rebates and tax credits available for energy efficiency.

Saving money on heating costs can be as simple as turning down your thermostat when you leave or installing a programmable thermostat to do the work for you. Programmable thermostats are one of the quickest, easiest and lowest cost long term energy saving devices. Plus, you'll

get a rebate of up to \$25 from HMU for installing one.

Many makes and models with numerous features are available at local retailers. If necessary, talk with a licensed heating contractor to see which model fits your furnace and lifestyle.

HMU also offers rebates for replacing old gas fur-

naces or boilers with energy efficient units. Install a 92% efficient furnace and receive \$250. A 94% efficient unit receives \$300 and a 96% efficient unit earns a check for \$350.

Remember, energy efficiency measures you take this year may be eligible for a tax credit for up to \$1,500. The credit

applies to improvements such as adding insulation, energy efficient exterior windows and energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems.

Visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or talk with the person that prepares your taxes for details.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Mr. Tom's Neighborhood— *Meeting adjourned*

### 2009 in review

Watch highlights from the last year on HCTV channel 23. You'll see replays of winter sports, concerts, fine arts events, graduations, the Shelby County Fair and fall sports including the HCHS drive to the state football championship.

See our ad in the Harlan newspaper, the on screen or online guides for programs, days and times.

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In the Chinese calendar, 2009 was the Year of the Ox. For me, it will go down as the "Year of the Meeting". In reviewing my calendar, I see a common theme. Meetings and conference calls. HMU has projects in progress that require thoughtful planning, due diligence and detailed administration.

We've laid the groundwork for completing another phase of our electric system upgrade and overhead to underground conversion. This project is a continuation of the 15 year strategic plan designed to increase electric system efficiency and reliability.

One aspect of the electric project is whether or not to install fiber to the home. A fiber connection would allow energy ef-

ficiency applications, such as remote load control, and help prepare HMU for possible Smart Grid applications. It would also increase telecommunications capability.

A significant amount of time was spent during the first part of 2009 trying to determine how MISO, the administration of cross country electric transmission, will affect HMU. Even after MISO became effective September 1st, HMU, MISO, MEC and WAPA are still resolving details.

We continue to negotiate a long term gas commodity contract. Discussions have lasted 14 months.

We're in the engineering design phase for a new water plant. The size and scope of this project

required we determine appropriate technology and cost effectiveness.

Also under discussion during 2009 was the construction of a new operations center. After the floods of 1993 and 2007, it's apparent HMU must move out of the flood plain. A major flood has drastic implications on all services especially water and telecommunications.

I still have one meeting left on my 2009 calendar and it's the most important one of the year. It's the time I spend the holidays with my family. I trust that you too will make this appointment.

My thoughts and wishes are for you and your family to have a great 2010. From all of us at HMU, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

#### Happy Holidays from all of us at HMU!

The HMU office will close Thursday, December 24th and December 31st at 11:30.

We will be closed all day on Christmas and New Year's Day  
Emergency calls taken at 755-5182



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## Bits and Pieces

- You can use the online customer portal to check not only your monthly or annual energy use but to run copies if you need to apply for assistance or for tax purposes.

- If you apply for energy assistance through an agency like West Central, please keep a copy of your monthly statement. Keeping a copy of your bill will make it easier and quicker to apply.

- With snow and cold arriving, please

keep the area around your gas meter clear of snow and ice.

- Don't blow snow on top of any meter, transformer or utility box or block access to utility facilities in any way. We may need quick access to restore services.

- Make sure water shut off valves and water lines have access to warm circulating air. Enclosing water pipes in cabinets or walls, especially pipes that are near outside walls, could lead to pipes freez-

ing. Keeping pipes warm is especially important if you will be gone for an extended period of time.

- HMU channel 12 carries information on school closings, early dismissals and delays.

- Remember HMU offers rebates for purchasing high efficient gas furnaces and boilers as well as energy efficient appliances like washers and refrigerators.

## New HD networks come to HMU cable TV

Beginning in October of 2008, we began offering expanded digital, HD and Pay Per view services. Our commitment to adding new and more HD networks continues as we will add four new HD networks and two new digital networks to the HMU Cable TV line up on or about January 8, 2010.

Coming to the HMU HD and Digital tier of service:

- Channel 205 - Retro TV - A new network featuring classic TV shows.

- Channel 511 - IPTV-World - More quality programming from Iowa Public Television.

- Channel 145 - MSNBC-HD - News and commentary from NBC in full HD.

- Channel 167 - CNBC-HD - Business and commerce news from NBC in HD.

- Channel 168 - Planet Green HD - See what's new and Green in HD.

- Channel 169 - Science Channel HD - The wonders of science in HD.

In order to add the new networks, it is necessary to make changes to the Expanded Basic cable line up.

- Bravo will move from channel 70 to channel 55.

- E! Entertainment will move from channel 71 to channel 56.

- GSN will move from channel 56 on Expanded Basic to channel 249 on the HD and Digital tier.

- QVC will move from channel 68 on Expanded Basic to channel 279 on

the HD and Digital tier.

- CSPAN-2 will move from channel 72 to channel 68

- MyTV will leave the Expanded Basic tier but will still be seen on channel 210 on the HD and Digital tier.

New channel guides in regular and large print will be available at the HMU office after the first of the year.