



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Mr. Tom's Neighborhood— *Construction Update*

### Support your local meter reader

Please help our meter readers. Keep snow from building up around gas meters and, if possible, clear a path to make it easier for meter readers to get to electric, gas and water meters. A little extra time shoveling a path to your meter is greatly appreciated.

#### 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.



Construction continues on the new HMU operations center. The unseasonably mild winter weather has allowed crews to work outside.

The parking areas, and even the stripes for parking, are done. The roof and the side walls of the garage are done as well as external brick and trim work on the administrative and technical part of the building. Internally, the fire sprinklers and the ca-

bling for voice, data and video are done. The cabinetry and finish trim work nears completion. Some of the drywall and painting is done.

This picture shows the east side of the vehicle storage garage, parking area and what we call the 'lay down yard' where all weather materials, like spools of overhead electric wire or fiber optic cable, will be stored for quick access when needed.

I'm pleased to report that after several years of preparation, planning, engineering, testing and discussion, the new water treatment plant, sited directly north east of the building, will begin.

The DNR has approved our plan. We will receive and open contractor bids this month. I'm hopeful we can begin construction on the new plant in 2012 meaning the plant should be on line in 2013.

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## *Fiber to the home –Part 1*

The fiber to the premise rebuild in the western part of Harlan (roughly 12th street west and Cyclone to Chatburn) is on hold for the winter.

Thousands of main fiber lines have been pulled to the new operations center. This winter finds us installing all the new electronics and connecting all of the individual lines to the customer and the current HMU building.

What are the advantages of direct fiber over the current

system? As more content is transferred digitally, capacity, or the amount of data that can be carried at any one time over a given technology, becomes the limiting factor.

A single strand of fiber, about the size of a human hair, is capable of transmitting a larger amount of data to customers compared to the current system. For all practical purposes, fiber has a virtually 'unlimited' capacity and is more

limited by the components at the end of the fiber rather than the fiber itself.

We used to think of data capacity in terms of kilobytes. (Remember dial up?) or thousands of bytes of data per second. Then megabytes or millions of bytes of data. With fiber, you can start discussing gigabytes (billions) or terabytes (trillions) of data per second.

Next month: "OK. It's fast. What does that mean to me?"

## *Carbon Monoxide poisoning is preventable.*

Carbon monoxide (CO) 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.

If you suspect a build up of CO in your home or business, it is important to promptly leave first 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 inspections of gas and other fuel burning appliances. Chimney flues should be cleaned regularly. Never use charcoal or propane

grills inside as a heating source or for cooking. Never leave a car running in a closed garage, especially a garage attached to or under living quarters.

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



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Mr. Tom's Neighborhood— *My Favorite Marmot*

What's a February newsletter without a mention of my favorite groundhog Punxsutawney Phil and how did he become a staple of my column?

I'm not sure when it all started but Phil's appearance does have relevance to HMU.

Phil pops out of his burrow on February second. Due to notification requirements and administrative time necessary for large projects, February is when we plan our major construction for the year. Phil's prognostication on winter weather is coincidental but we are eager for spring to arrive so we can finish old projects and begin new ones.

Last year, we had two very large projects in the works; construction of a new operations center, and the latest phase of the overhead to underground conversion including installing fiber to the home in the western part of town.

The electric part of the rebuild is almost complete. Services have been swung over from overhead to underground. The lines are still in the air but they are inactive. Once all the telecom services from all providers are off the poles and placed underground, the remaining electric lines and poles can be removed.

The Operations Center nears the major goal of 'substantial completion' meaning it is almost ready for occupancy. That does not mean we will move all the office and operation functions immediately. There will be a transition time as we finalize details. We have to integrate telephone systems and make sure the new headend connects to the old headend so service outages are kept to a minimum. I expect us to have a slow and steady transition throughout spring. No date has been set as to

when we will be fully operational in the new building.

The next major project is the construction of a new water plant. We received and opened bids for the plant on January 19th. Oakview Construction of Red Oak was low bidder at \$6,125,995.50. The bid is subject to final approval by the Iowa DNR and legal review. If the bid meets these tests, and I think it will, and the weather cooperates, we can begin construction as early as March.

Construction is expected to last 450 days, or about 15 months, meaning the plant should reach substantial completion around July of 2013.

To some, Groundhog Day means six more weeks of winter. To us, it means we have about six weeks to prepare our projects for the rest of the year.

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## Gas Safety

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

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

manufactured for over 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 ser-



vice to inspect your connectors and replace them if necessary.

***If an HMU employee finds a brass flex connector on an appliance in your home, the appliance will be red tagged and shut off at the appliance, if possible, or gas to the home will be shut off until the line is replaced. This is for your safety.***

## HMU employees recognized for service

Eight Harlan Municipal Utilities employees were recognized for their years of service at the Employee Recognition Banquet on Saturday, January 14th.

Receiving longevity awards were:

Randy Musich, Line Crew Foreman, for 40 years of service.

Denise Buttry, Customer Service Representative Telecommunications, for 30 years of service.

David "Pete" Clark, Utilityman, for 30 years of service.

Kevin Bissen, Water System Operations Technician, for 15 years of service.

Rich Bielenberg, Water Systems Operation Technician, for 15 years of service.

Tom Gaffigan, Chief Executive Officer, for 10 years of service.

Amy Jameson, Marketing Associate, for five years of service.

Donald Cote, Water Systems Operation Technician, for five years of service.

Awards were presented by Board member Mary Johnson and HMU CEO Tom Gaffigan.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Baseball blackouts

Each major league baseball team is allowed to designate certain geographic areas as their home area. These designated areas may be subject to TV blackout restrictions meaning games from that team will not be shown in the home area.

The MN Twins, Milwaukee Brewers, Chicago Cubs, Chicago White Sox and St. Louis Cardinals have all designated Shelby County, Iowa as part of their home area meaning games featuring these teams may be blacked out on the HMU cable system even if the programming guide lists the game.

Games are automatically blacked out by the networks and HMU has no control over which games are shown or blacked out.

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## Energy Efficiency—Your level of service

One way to get the best value for your energy dollar is to ensure you have the proper electric service. Your current level of service and associated monthly fee is listed on your bill. Time and applications may change your classification, especially for businesses.

This month, we'll review different levels of electric service. Next month, we'll cover Natural Gas.

**Single Phase-small.** Virtually all residences and most small businesses fall under this classification. This is a typical service for customers that require up to 200 amps (one measure of the quantity of electricity) available at one time.

**Single Phase-large.** Designed as the next step up for the few residences or businesses that require over 200 amps of service but do not require three phase service.

These medium to large sized business or facilities may have a number of motors, compressors, pumps, large heating or cooling loads or a large lighting load which requires above average service.

### Three-Phase.

Three phase service is designed for commercial or industrial users requiring a large amount of electricity or have motors or compressors that are built to run on three phase service. Some large heating and cooling applications may use three phase service. Businesses with high demand motors, like in a freight elevator or conveyor belts may need three phase service.

**Time of use (TOU)**—Businesses willing to shift their peak electric use to another time of day may be eligible for a TOU rate. While this may offer savings, shifting to TOU generally means a

major shift in operations.

**Demand**—This is for commercial or industrial applications that may not have a consistently large load but require a large amount of electricity be available at one time.

**Residential electric heat**—Designed for residential customers that use only electricity to heat their home but may use an alternate fuel for heating water, cooking, etc.

It's impossible for HMU to know what happens 'behind the meter' therefore being a conscientious consumer means taking a look at your specific application, talking with a qualified electrician if necessary, and letting us know if you feel a change of billing classification may be in order.

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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 piping 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—April 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.



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## Hydrant flushing

We'll flush hydrants the week of April 23rd. Check water quality before doing laundry or dishes. If your water appears cloudy, let it run until clear. If it does not clear in a reasonable amount of time, call us.

## Call before you dig

Spring yard work means digging. Always call to have your underground utilities located before you dig.



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## Natural gas—Your level of service

Part two of our series on level of service focuses on natural gas. One way to get the best value for your energy dollar is to ensure you have the proper size service. Your current level of service and associated monthly fee is listed on your bill.

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**Residential.** All residences fall under this classification. This is a typical service for homes.

**Commercial, small.** Designed for businesses and industrial applications requiring less than 1,000 cubic feet of gas per month. These medium to large size businesses or facilities may have a num-

ber of furnaces or boilers for heat, or use gas for large scale cooking or heat treating operations.

**Commercial, large.** This service is designed for commercial or industrial users requiring at least 6,000 cubic feet of gas per year with at least one month per year of 1,000 cubic feet. Facilities at this level tend to be large buildings or businesses that use gas for industrial heat treatment, large scale cooking or have a large heating load.

**Interruptible.** Interruptible customers reach a contractual agreement with HMU that allows us to ask them to stop using gas on

critical supply days and switch to an alternative heating source such as fuel oil or electricity. Their service can be 'interrupted' without jeopardizing business operations or without losing a source of heat.

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It's impossible for HMU to know what happens 'behind the meter'. Therefore, being a conscientious consumer means taking a look at your specific application, consulting with HMU personnel and requesting any changes to your level of service.

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## Bits and Pieces

- Spring is the time for construction. Watch for construction vehicles and drive safely in construction zones.
- **April is the time to sign up for Budget Billing. It's a quick and easy way to level out your monthly utility bills.**
- April is also a great month to schedule a tune up for your air conditioner to make sure it operates at peak efficiency during the summer.
- Major League Baseball (MLB) teams designate a home TV territory that is subject to blackout. The Chicago Cubs, Chicago

White Sox, Milwaukee Brewers, Minnesota Twins and St. Louis Cardinals have designated Shelby County, as part of this home TV territory. We've been reminded by TBS (channels 14 and 114) that regardless of where a game is played, each TBS cablecast of a game will be blacked out within the home television territory of each participating team. So even if the game appears in the program guide, the actual game may be blacked out on our system.

HMU does not control blackouts. They are

controlled by MLB, the teams and the network covering the game. If a game on TBS is blacked out, HLN (Headline News) will appear on channel 14. Channel 114 will go blank. Blackouts may occur on any network that carries MLB.

- The annual HMU Municipal Celebration is scheduled for Tuesday, June 12th. Watch for your RSVP post card in next month's bill.
- Construction on the new water plant has begun. Watch for updates in future newsletters.

## 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

## Municipal Celebration RSVP

We're gearing up for our annual Municipal Celebration on June 12th and you're invited to attend. If you are planning on joining us, 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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## Mr. Tom's Neighborhood — Water Works

We publish our water quality report once a year. This report is designed to inform you about the quality of water we deliver to you every day. Watch for this report in the Harlan newspaper. We also deliver copies to various employers, apartments and other public places. Copies will be available at the HMU office.

Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. We want you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment pro-

cess and protect our water resources. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water.

As evidence of this commitment, construction of the new water treatment plant has begun. The new plant will offer significant improvements over the current plant. It will operate more efficiently while meeting quality guidelines in a more secure location.

As I write this in early May, the base of the water retention tank has been poured. The treatment portion of the complex will be built west of the tank

as a separate building through the summer.

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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 serving our country.

In honor of Memorial Day,  
The HMU office will be closed  
Monday, May 28th.

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

## Independence Day



In honor of Independence day, the HMU office will be closed Wednesday, July 4th. Call 755-5182 in case of emergency.

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

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## Mr. Tom's Neighborhood — *Thanks for the Memories*

I have thought long and hard about the subject matter for this month's newsletter. Not too long, or too hard though, for I have reached the point in life that most look forward to; retirement. But, for some of us retirement is the end, not a new beginning. Perhaps it's due to the fact there are no more battles to fight, be they in the former Republic of South Viet-Nam as a young Marine squad leader, or as a professional in the utility business where I have spent my working days since June 1, 1970. If I may quote from an editorial in the Omaha World-Herald; "Now, our pasts are growing longer and our futures are growing shorter, yet we still remember those soldiers with whom we served."

This newsletter is going to focus not on the fine young Marines and Corpsmen with whom I served, but on the "soldiers" with whom I have had the distinct pleasure of working amongst, and in many cases leading, during my forty-two years in the utility

business.

Specifically, I will try to recognize all the "soldiers" that have been such a part of my life for the past eleven years as the Chief Executive Officer of Harlan Municipal Utilities.

When I began glancing into the rearview mirror at my tour of duty at HMU I recalled the first Mr. Tom's Neighborhood [June 25, 2001] titled; "Permission to Come Aboard Sir?" I invoked a nautical theme and remarked; "It is a good ship whose command I have assumed. She has some years on her, and several coats of gray paint. But, she is being refitted, and her crew is well trained, sound, and true."

I went on to say, "To be certain, there will be changes during my watch. Some changes will be driven by the uncertain waters we will navigate in the sea of energy. Other changes will involve refocusing and retraining our crew to meet the continuing demands of an ever-changing work environment. Whatever the changes, they will

be to the benefit of our customers and crew."

There have been changes. We became leaner in personnel by reducing the number of management employees in 2003, thereby lowering costs and pushing the responsibility and accountability farther down into the employee base. Our employees are continuing to take on greater challenges, and their education is ongoing to keep pace with the ever-changing technical and regulatory requirements.

The several coats of gray paint on the good ship HMU wore thin, and we are in the process of moving from our existing operations center and 1930's era water treatment plant to new facilities out of the flood plain.

I don't want to overlook the fact that we spent a year negotiating a favorable contract with our natural gas commodity supplier BP. The contract insures HMU of an adequate gas supply for years to come, and the purchases made by our gas utility staff

have brought hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy savings to Harlan.

Financially, HMU is in good shape, but there will be continuing challenges for our Board of Trustees, and the new CEO, Darrel Wenzel. I welcome Darrel to HMU. He is an excellent replacement and will do an outstanding job of leading HMU.

At great risk of leaving someone out, I am now going to recognize a number of "soldiers".

First, the Board of Trustees, both past and present, who hired me and allowed me to do my job. Especially Al Burchett who has been my mentor from day one, and who believes in and supports this utility like no other.

To Rob Hall, Jon Burmeister, Tim Ernst, Al Powers, Jared Kline, Larry Butler, Dale Sorensen, Marlin Vrbas,

the staff at IAMU, Sarah Coleman & Dave Martin of Martin Design, Brad Von Gillern, and the legal counsels at Ahlers and Cooney; my thanks for your efforts, guidance, and friendship.

Thanks to all the local bankers, both business and personal, with whom I have worked since arriving in Harlan.

Thanks to John Euchner of NVREC & Bruce Heyne of Walnut Communications for working with me on a number of projects.

Thanks to my peers in the Iowa Municipal Utility business, especially Allen Bolderman, former General Manager of Atlantic Municipal Utilities who retired "because there are too many fish to catch and too many books to read". Also, Mark Ramthum the Denison Municipal Utility General Manager

who, along with Allen and me, made up the West Side Boys. It's been a heck of a trip!

Thanks to the oldest member of the Tom Gaffigan Fan Club, Rosemary Reinig, and the youngest member (shortest too), Dawn Gardner, for just being you.

To my three favorite Cub fans; Don Kaufman, Chris Kelly, and Terry Derby. Thanks for keeping the dream alive...and being cannon fodder for the Cardinals.

It goes without saying the most important "soldiers" are the HMU employees whom it has been my honor and privilege to lead the past eleven years. I learned a long time ago as a high school basketball coach that players win games and coaches lose them. And our employees are definitely winners.

Last, but certainly not

least, I will thank and give long overdue recognition to the "soldier" who has stood alongside me through thick and thin the past 44 years, my wife Marlene. It's time to saddle up and head home mom.

I will close with this last quote from my first news letter. I think it is still pertinent. I hope you will agree. "As the new Captain of the good ship HMU I will lead by example, and no crewmember will be asked to do anything the Captain wouldn't do. Leadership from the front is my style. Duty, honor, and integrity will be the watchwords of our organization. And you, our valued customers, will be the judges of how successful we are."

Semper Fidelis...HTG

## Water Rate Adjustment Notice

Dear HMU Customer,

On May 10, 2012 the Harlan Municipal Utilities Board of Trustees voted to increase water rates in order to pay for the new Water Treatment Plant. The total cost of the plant is estimated to be \$7,035,000.

The existing Water Treatment Plant sits in a flood plain. The original portion of the plant was constructed in 1930. The current plant uses a lime softening process and is the only one of its kind re-

maining in the state of Iowa. The new water treatment plant will be built out of the flood plain adjacent to the new HMU Operations Center. We have chosen state of the art Nano-filtration technology for this plant. It is scalable if we need to expand the plant in the future.

This water rate adjustment must increase revenues \$379,317 per year. Basically, we need an average of \$13.10 per month more per customer, regard-

less of water service size, to fund the required revenue. The Board of Trustees considered six possible funding options and chose to raise one-half of the needed income from a fixed charge per month of \$6.55 on each customer's bill, and the remainder of the revenue would come through the commodity charge. The board felt this was the fairest way to reflect that every customer, regardless of size, has a stake in our new Water Treatment Plant, plus rec-

ognize that each customer uses a different amount of water for personal or business needs.

While raising utility rates is never a pleasant experience, our new Water Treatment Plant is a necessary and vital addition to our community that will be of benefit for many years to come.

The new water rates will be reflected on HMU Utility Bills mailed in July, 2012.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Why Public Power?

### Local ownership and control.

The HMU Board of Trustees — people that may be your friends and neighbors — are working in the best interest of Harlan rather than out-of state investors.

### Call before you dig

Summer means construction. Always call to have your underground utilities located before you dig.



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

## Hello Harlan! - Darrel Wenzel

As the new CEO of HMU I wanted to begin my first newsletter article by extending a heartfelt “Hello” to the citizens of Harlan.

My wife Marianne and I are in the process of relocating to Harlan from Independence, Iowa. We both have family in the Omaha area and Harlan is an ideal community for us to be closer to family.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Mr. Tom Gaffigan for prolonging his retirement date to help me transition into

HMU. With HMU involved in multiple projects like burying the electrical distribution system, installing fiber-to-the-premise telecommunication services, building a new Operations Center and building a state-of-the-art water treatment plant, it was a real blessing to have Tom share his knowledge of HMU operating procedures with me.

As you will read in this month’s newsletter, we will be officially operating out of the new Operations Center on Wednesday, August

1<sup>st</sup>. The HMU staff is busy transitioning equipment, inventory and other necessary systems over to the new facilities in addition to keeping up with contractors and, of course, normal daily operations.

I am honored to be given the responsibility of stewardship over such a renowned organization that the citizens of Harlan began in 1891.

Marianne and I look forward to meeting you and getting to know the great folks here in Harlan.

## We’re moving August 1, 2012

HMU is ready to move into our new operations center.

We will move our front office the end of this month and begin daily operations at the new facility Wednesday, August 1, 2012.

Beginning that day, you can conduct normal business, such as dropping off payments or

changing service, at 2412 Southwest Avenue. We’re about two blocks south of Chatburn Avenue on Southwest Avenue.

We’ll also hold an open house on August 1<sup>st</sup> between 7:30 AM and 4:00 PM. Stop in for treats and a tour!



## HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

405 CHATBURN AVENUE  
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FAX: 712-755-2320

E-MAIL:

HMU@HARLANNET.COM

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PROVIDER OF ELECTRIC,  
GAS, WATER AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS.



## BITS AND PIECES

- Auto Pay is a quick and easy way to make sure your utility bill is paid in full and on time. You can have the payment withdrawn from your checking account OR charged to your debit or credit card. We also take debit or credit card payments anytime.
- Thanks for such a great turn out at our annual Municipal Celebration. We served about 1,000 pieces of chicken and 600 hot dogs. Congratulations to giveaway drawing winners Janie Goeser (Bistro set) and Lois Gordon (TV).
- Disney Jr. and Style are now in the HMU cable TV line on the HD/Digital tier. Disney Jr. can be found on channel 219 and Style on channel 258.
- Find summer energy efficiency tips on [harlannet.com](http://harlannet.com) or stop by our office for energy saving information.
- Don't forget that HMU offers rebates for energy saving central air and window air conditioners. Both commercial and residential rebates are available. See us for details on rebates for A/C units and major appliances like washing machines, refrigerators, and dishwashers.

## AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

Beginning in July, fiber to the premise (FTTP) arrives in the western part of Harlan. The next step in high speed data transfer is direct fiber.

Fiber offers increased reliability compared to coax because it requires less support equipment. Plus, the amount of data that can be sent over one strand of fiber means you can process more information with less

infrastructure.

Current applications include telecommunications including the ability to greater personalize Internet access speeds. Future uses could include energy efficiency applications, load and system monitoring, remote meter reading and control, whole house interactivity, and, well, just about anything you can envision that requires interactivity between devic-

es and data transfer.

The first area served by HMU FTTP is an area generally described as west of 12th Street and from Cyclone to Chatburn. Installation crews will begin converting customers in this area from coax to fiber the week of July 16th. Watch for HMU and JCS, our subcontractor, trucks and crews in the area.

Homes and businesses in the conversion area will receive a new 'outside box' and, if you have HMU Internet service, some internal wiring. We will try and schedule appointments to make the conversion quicker and easier.

There is much work to be done. The project could last until October.



Closed  
Labor Day



The HMU office will be closed Monday, September 3rd for Labor Day.

Emergency calls taken at

755-5182

The new HMU office at 2412 Southwest Avenue is now open. Please drop off payments or check on your account at the new building.

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- [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.

# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## Operations Update—Darrel Wenzel

I start this month's article with a nod of appreciation and gratitude to Eldo and Dee Schornhorst for their many years of residency and contributions to the community of Harlan. Eldo and Dee will be leaving Harlan to be closer to family. Marianne and I are purchasing their home and will be officially moving in the week of August 15<sup>th</sup>. It is bittersweet for us. We are gaining a permanent residence in Harlan, and are excited to get settled in, yet, Eldo and Dee are moving away. Please join me in wishing Eldo and Dee the best in their move and future endeavors.

While this summer's heat is starting to wear on everyone, we appreciated the few days of cooler, near normal weather that has blessed us in early August. The forecast shows we are not done with the dog days of summer. School starts August 15<sup>th</sup> and the heat is forecast to return, just in time for school to start, which seems to be the norm.

HMU set two new electrical load peaks the week of July 25<sup>th</sup>. On July 25<sup>th</sup> the new peak load was 15.7 MegaWatts for Harlan. When we set new peaks, HMU has to run one of the two diesel gen-

erators to carry the extra electrical load. At today's price for diesel fuel, it costs approximately \$0.34 cents/kWh to produce electricity. It goes without saying, HMU would prefer to not run the generators if possible.

We experienced an area wide outage on the West side of town due to an underground 600 amp wire failing during this extreme heat. Crews were able to re-route power and restore electricity in a little over an hour. Crews will begin immediately working to replace this older cable that was buried over 34 years ago. It's critical to replace this main distribution line in a timely manner as it is also a redundant loop feed for the other substations.

We have been fortunate during these drought conditions with our availability of water from the shallow wells. Water demand has been up slightly this summer and we have been able to meet the increased demand without a problem.

Construction continues on the new Water Treatment Plant with most the work being done on the containment walls and necessary piping from the wells. Plans are to have all of the walls up and roof on before the onset of winter.

Fiber optic installation crews are in town and connecting customers to the new Fiber To The Home telecommunications system. Our contractor, JCS, is performing the installations and, as of August 1st, have approximately 100 of the over 500 installations completed. We anticipate all installations will be completed by the end of October.

HMU officially opened the doors of the new Operations Center and held an open house Wednesday, August 1<sup>st</sup>. I hope you had the chance to visit and tour the new facility. The new Operations Center is open for business even though we are still transitioning some of the older files, video equipment and management team between the two buildings. All customers must go to the new building at 2412 Southwest Avenue for services.

The end of summer always seems to bring a touch of sadness as another season passes by, however, this year, I am looking forward to the Fall season, and a little relief from the extreme heat.

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## Dispute resolution notice

The Iowa Utilities Board requires that all utilities in the state publish an annual notice advising customers of their right of appeal on certain complaints and where a qualified utility representative can be reached. The following is a required notice to HMU customers:

Customers of Harlan Municipal Utilities who desire assistance in the resolu-

tion of a complaint may ask for the customer service representative at:

**Harlan Municipal Utilities, 2412 Southwest Avenue, Harlan, Iowa 51537**

or call HMU at (712) 755-5182 Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If your complaint is related to electric or natural gas service disconnection, safety or renewable energy, and Harlan Municipal

Utilities does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from:

Iowa Utilities Board  
350 Maple Street  
Des Moines, IA  
50319-0069

Phone:

1 (877) 565-4450  
(toll-free)

Online:

[www.state.ia.us/iub/](http://www.state.ia.us/iub/)  
E-mail: [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us)

## Payment Options—

HMU offers several time and money saving ways to pay your utility bill. All are designed to fit how you like to do business.

Auto Pay ensures your utility bill is paid on time every month. The payment is automatically deducted from your checking, savings or any designated account. You still receive a monthly bill so you know how much was deducted.

Payments can also be auto deducted from a debit or credit

card. This is especially attractive to customers that earn bonus points through a credit card or like to have all bills on one monthly statement.

Auto payments can be combined with Budget Billing so you know exactly how much will be deducted every month. This helps prevent wide swings in your bill due to seasonal use and allows for monthly budgeting.

You can drop off payments at: Mid-states Bank, Bank of the West, and Shelby

County State Bank downtown location. This is an easy way to make a payment as you run errands.

However, the banks do not post your payments. Payments are posted to your account only when we physically receive them in our office. It may be several days between the time you drop off a payment at any of the above locations and it is received at our office. Please make allowances for

this time lag if you drop off a payment on or near the due date at any location other than the HMU offices.

You can always drop off a payment at our new location at 2412 Southwest Ave. either in person or in the drop box. Cash payments should always be made in person during office hours.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

*Competition – Technical Advancements - Customer Loyalty—Darrel Wenzel*

## Fall energy saving tips

Now is the time to prepare your home or business for winter weather with these easy tips.

- Have a professional furnace tune up and change filters if needed.
- Purchase and install a programmable thermostat.
- Check windows and doors for air leaks.
- Check insulation levels in attics and walls.
- HMU offers rebates for energy efficient furnaces and insulation.

### See us on the web:

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- [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.

The telecommunications competition in Harlan is “Above Average”. Harlan customers are very fortunate to have so many choices in telecommunications providers. Most communities our size across the United States still have one telephone company and one cable company providing “Below Average” service at best.

True head-to-head competition has been great for Harlan consumers in terms of customer service and cost. In communities with only one cable company, basic cable costs are typically \$20 higher each month. My best conservative estimate would put consumer savings since HMU starting offering services in the mid

1990’s at \$8 to \$10 million dollars! Money that would have previously gone to corporate cable company shareholders in the past, stayed here in Harlan helping our local economy.

Because HMU is a not-for-profit entity, our rates are lower than for-profit cable providers. However, we face the same challenges as the big cable providers – bringing timely state-of-the-art technology to our customers.

HMU’s recent Fiber To The Premise (FTTP) or Fiber To The Home (FTTH) initiative demonstrates HMU’s commitment to the Harlan community that we are dedicated to bringing state-of-the-art technology to our customers. While we are

about one-third of the way done with this fiber rollout, we still need to maintain a full line of robust services to all of our customers and keep our rates in check.

This is where customer loyalty becomes critical. We need you. Without you, HMU would not be able to add the new technology, keep rates way below the major cable companies, and provide you with world class customer service. I hope anytime you need to call for service, you find HMU exceeds your expectations. If we fail to meet or exceed your expectations, I hope you will call me directly and let me know how HMU can improve.

## 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 is 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 Through my monthly utility bill.

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

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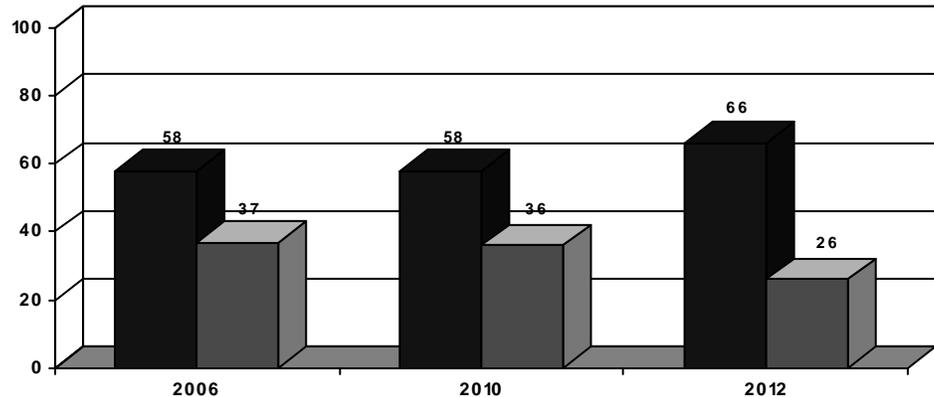


Watch  
HCHS  
football and  
select  
volleyball  
games on  
HCTV  
channel 23

**Quick hits**

- The fiber conversion in the west part of Harlan continues. We expect to have customers converted by the end of October.
- Construction on the new water plant continues. We expect construction to be done in first quarter of 2013 and the plant on line in the second quarter.
- Thanks to those that participated in the Gas Awareness telephone survey earlier this year. The results are in and we're pleased with what we learned. Almost 67% of the respondents know to call Iowa One Call before digging. This is an increase of 8 percent over the last survey in 2010 (See the chart below).

About 90% of the respondents said HMU does an excellent or good job of keeping the public informed about pipeline safety. Help us increase those numbers and gas safety awareness by reading the brochure enclosed with your bill. ALWAYS call Iowa One Call before digging to ensure safety.



■ Call ONE CALL/811/Call Before You Dig      ■ Call HMU/Local Utility

**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.

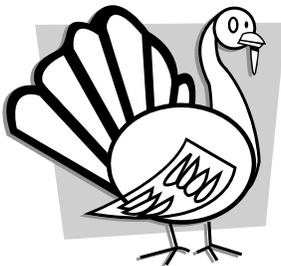
- ALWAYS call 811 or Iowa OneCall at 1-800-292-8989 before you dig to make sure there are no gas lines in the way. Locates are a free service of HMU.
- Insist others performing work for you call before they dig.
- Learn how to recognize a gas leak and what to do should one occur. See the brochure for 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.



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## *Nice Surprise—Darrel Wenzel CEO*

### Thanksgiving Holiday



The HMU office will be closed Thursday November 22nd and Friday the 23rd for the Thanksgiving Holiday. Emergency calls taken at 755-5182

I've owned three "water softeners" during my lifetime and purchased countless bags of water softener salt through the years. HMU softens the water before sending it out into the distribution system and eliminates the need for citizens of Harlan to purchase and maintain water softeners.

What a nice surprise to learn that I don't need to lay out the cash for a softening unit or the monthly expense of buying salt to keep my water soft and pipes unclogged. I'm not going to miss lugging around the heavy

salt bags, not to mention the extra cash in my wallet.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention just presented HMU an award for consistent and high quality water fluoridation practices. Some of you may have noticed Harlan's recognition in the September 23, 2012, Omaha World Herald, Midlands section, or perhaps in a recent Harlan Tribune article or even heard about the award on KNOD, Harlan's local radio station. There are over 500 communities in Iowa and Harlan was one of 79 Iowa commu-

nities recognized for this healthy practice.

HMU Water Department employees take great pride in their work to keep Harlan's water safe, healthy, and soft. HMU water department employees must be qualified and take ongoing Continuing Education courses to keep their certifications current. These unsung heroes take meticulous care of Harlan's water supply and deserve our gratitude for a job well done.

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

### Check your account online!

It's now very easy to check your electric, gas or water account online, view consumption data or make electronic payments.

1. Obtain a copy of your bill showing the account number.
2. Visit [harlannet.com](http://harlannet.com) or [HMU-harlan.com](http://HMU-harlan.com).
3. Follow the link to the online account set up.
4. Set up your own personal, secure account.
5. Log in whenever you want from wherever you have Internet access.

This is a free service from Harlan Municipal Utilities.

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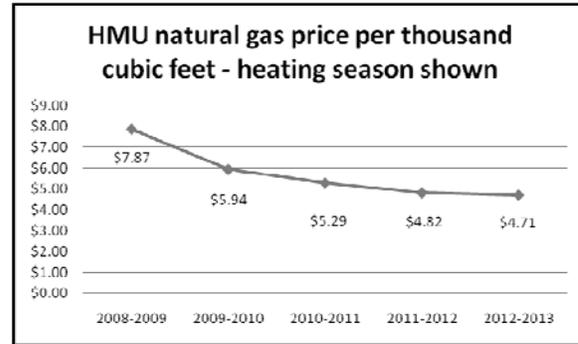


## Natural gas prices down but heating costs expected to go up.

We've seen a downward trend in the cost of natural gas since 2008-2009. We monitor futures pricing and when we believe prices are at a level most beneficial to our customers, we place our order.

While the cost for natural gas is lower this year, customers will probably see an increase in heating costs compared to the winter of 2011-2012.

It's hard to remember what January was like in November but record warm temperatures kept down use. Above average temperatures meant consumption was about 15% less compared to 2011-2012



Last winter gas cost \$4.82 per thousand cubic feet (MCF) or almost 11% less than the year before. This winter, HMU has a contract at \$4.71 or about 2% less than last year. The cumulative decrease over four years means a price drop of around 40%.

Your total heating cost also depends on how long and cold

winter is as well as individual energy efficiency. A long cold winter will drive up bills while another mild winter will keep costs down.

Practicing common sense energy efficiency and installing high efficient furnaces help save money. HMU offers rebates for insulation, energy efficient furnaces and programmable thermostats.

## Bits and pieces

- The fiber to the home project in the west part of Harlan continues but it won't be long until all customer's are converted. We expect to have the work done by the middle of December.
- HCHS winter sports start soon. Watch coverage of select boys and girls basketball as well as wrestling on HCTV Channel 23.
- Holiday concerts are coming too! You can watch concert replays from Harlan Community as well as Shelby County Catholic School on HCTV Ch23.
- HMU gift certificates are great gifts for that hard to buy for person or to donate to charity. Certificates are available in any amount and can be put toward electric, gas water or telecom service.
- Group tours of the new HMU office are still available. Call today to schedule your group.
- Change your furnace filter and schedule a furnace tune up. A properly running furnace is safer and more fuel efficient. Rebates for fuel efficient furnaces and programmable thermostats are available from HMU.
- Cut your winter lighting cost by installing energy efficient lighting like CFLs, the latest's generation LED lights or T/5 or T/8 florescent bulbs. Rebates for energy efficient lighting are available from HMU.
- Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at HMU!



# HARLAN MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

## LED street lights— *Darrel Wenzel*

### 2012 in review

Watch highlights of 2012 Shelby County Fair, concerts, HCSD sports, plays and fine arts events and more on HCTV channel 23.

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

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As taxpayers and utility ratepayers, we normally do not put much thought into the amount of electrical energy it takes to light our streets. I venture to guess that most citizens would not know how much of their tax dollars, or in the case of Harlan, their electric utility dollars, are used to provide the convenience and security of street lighting.

We have all heard about the energy efficiency gains and cost savings that consumers can get by using Compact Florescent Lights (CFLs) and more recently with Light Emitting Diode (LED) light bulbs. LEDs are even more efficient than CFLs and do not have any of the CFLs mercury concerns.

LED Street lights have been around for quite some time, however the high cost of an LED has prohibited widespread in-

stallation. They are finally reaching mass production levels to make them affordable. Multiple cities in the United States and Canada have already converted all of their street lights to LEDs and the demonstrated savings are proving LEDs to be a viable option.

On average, each street light is on approximately 4,000 hours each year. The typical High Pressure Sodium (HPS) street light will last approximately 24,000 hours, which equates to a life span of approximately 6 years. LED street lights will last approximately 250,000 hours, which equates to a lifespan of approximately 62.5 years (theoretical as studies cannot confirm this length of time). A longer life span means your utility doesn't spend the time or money replacing fixtures as frequently.

HMU recently ran a trial using seven LED street lights. We metered seven HPS street lights in front of the new HMU Operation Center on Southwest Ave. and then replaced them with seven LED street lights for the same amount of time.

The kWh used by the LEDs was 54% less than the HPS street lights.

HMU has 883 HPS street lights in the City of Harlan. If all 883 HPS street lights were replaced with an LED street light it would save 803,140 kWh on an annual basis; the equivalent kWh usage of 95 homes for an entire year. HMU, would see a direct savings of \$82,523.00 in energy costs each year.

HMU will be pursuing a plan that includes implementing LED streetlights in our future.

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

The HMU office will be closed at 11:30 AM Monday, December 24th, all day on the 25th, 11:30 AM on December 31st and all day on January 1, 2013  
Emergency calls taken at 755-5182



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## Check your accounts online!

You can now check your HMU electric, gas and water accounts on-line to:

- Review usage.
- View on-line bills
- Make a payment.
- Check payment history.
- Set up options for Auto Pay.

IT'S SAFE: the site uses the latest encryption technology.

IT'S QUICK AND CONVENIENT: Checking your account and paying on-line takes less time than calling or stopping by our office. Check your bill and make a payment when YOU want to.

It takes about five minutes to set up an account. Have your recent bill showing your account name and number handy, log on to [www.HMU-Harlan.com](http://www.HMU-Harlan.com) and click on the "Check my Account online" link.

After that, you can check on your account or make payments anytime from anywhere!

This is a free service from HMU.

## Avoid utility scams

Several different utility scams surfaced nationwide earlier this year and with the return of cold weather, the prospect for further scams looms large.

The scams use telephone, electronic and in-person methods to obtain money and/or personal information from utility customers. Alliant Energy reported customers in Marshalltown and Perry lost several hundred dollars each when a caller advised them they owed back utility payments. The customers did not owe money, but responded to the threat of disconnec-

tion by falling victim to the offer of being able to pay instantly through buying a "pre-paid credit card."

Another scam reported nationwide last spring involved callers who claimed the federal government was providing credits or applying payments to utility bills. Customers provided personal information, such as bank account numbers and Social Security numbers in order to take advantage of the bogus offer.

Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, in conjunction with the Iowa As-

sociation of Municipal Utilities, Alliant Energy, Black Hills Energy, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, the Iowa Utility Association and MidAmerican Energy, is offering advice to utility customers to stop the scams, including hanging up on anyone who calls unannounced demanding payment or personal information; never allowing anyone into your home for an unannounced visit; and to never provide personal information to an unsolicited caller or unannounced visitor.

Any suspicions

should be reported to local law enforcement or the State Attorney General's Office at 888-777-4590 or by contacting the state Attorney General's office on the web at [www.IowaAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.IowaAttorneyGeneral.gov).

Notices from HMU regarding billing issues are always handled via regular mail. While we are always happy to help with billing questions when you call us, we never call you first if your account has fallen behind. We always use postal mail for billing notices.