



**AUSTIN
UTILITIES**
Connections for Better Living™

Austin Utilities
Board of Commissioners

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**Austin Utilities
Office
will be Closed**

**Mon. Jan. 18th, 2021
for
Martin Luther
King Jr. Day
&
Mon. Feb. 15th
for
President's Day**

Connections

January 2021
Customer Newsletter

YEAR IN REVIEW

The COVID19 Pandemic brought many challenges to our customers and staff in 2020. Those challenges included an office closing followed by limited office hours, which we continue to operate under. To limit the spread of this disease, we also limited some of the non-essential services we offer to customers.



Recommended limits on group meeting participants introduced us to new terms like ZOOM and Teams, but we managed to continue with essential business and make progress in 2020.

One of the most important projects completed for our customers was the launch of our on-line application process. This process allows customers to start service with us safely and securely without a visit to our office, which was a requirement in the past. We held our first virtual open house in October and engaged the community in some fun activities we plan to continue like our White Truck Treasure Hunt and our Website Truck Challenge. And finally, we launched a Customer Advisory Panel consisting of 12 customers who provide us feedback on customer perspectives and needs.

On the operation side of the business, although we deferred some planned work, we were able to complete all our scheduled infrastructure maintenance and upgrade projects. One of our top priorities is continuing to provide safe and reliable service to our customers.

2020 certainly gave us some challenges, but we continue to make progress and plans for 2021 that include continuing to improve ways customers can communicate with us.

2021 Utility Rates

The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners approved the 2021 Austin Utilities rate adjustments at the December board meeting. For 2021, customers can anticipate an overall savings on their utility bill. Although there will be a 1.9% increase in the water utility, it will be offset by a 1.95% decrease in electric costs and should result in a net savings to customers. This is third year in a row Austin Utilities has reported no increases in natural gas rates. Electric costs have decreased two of the last three years. A cost of service study performed in 2020 showed a need to implement a small increase in water rates.

Did you know that 9 out of 10 homes in the U.S. are under-insulated?

To Rule Your Attic!, first go into your attic and measure your current insulation levels. If you find low insulation levels or other issues that need to be addressed, you'll want to get advice on how to properly seal and insulate your attic for comfort and savings. Consider a House Call Energy Audit to identify your insulation needs and qualify for special rebates.

Improving your insulation will save energy and money. Air that leaks through your home's envelope – the outer walls, windows, doors, and other openings – wastes a lot of energy and increases your utility costs. A well-sealed envelope, coupled with the right amount of insulation, can make a real difference on your utility bills. EPA estimates that homeowners can save an average of 11% on total energy costs by air sealing their homes and adding insulation.

Sealing leaks and adding insulation can improve the overall comfort of your home and help to fix many of these common problems:

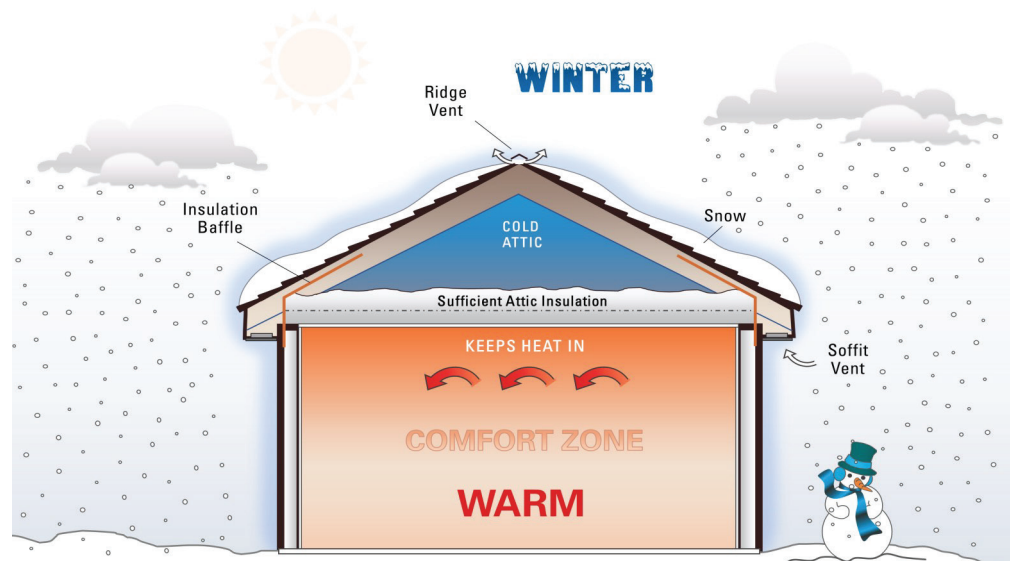
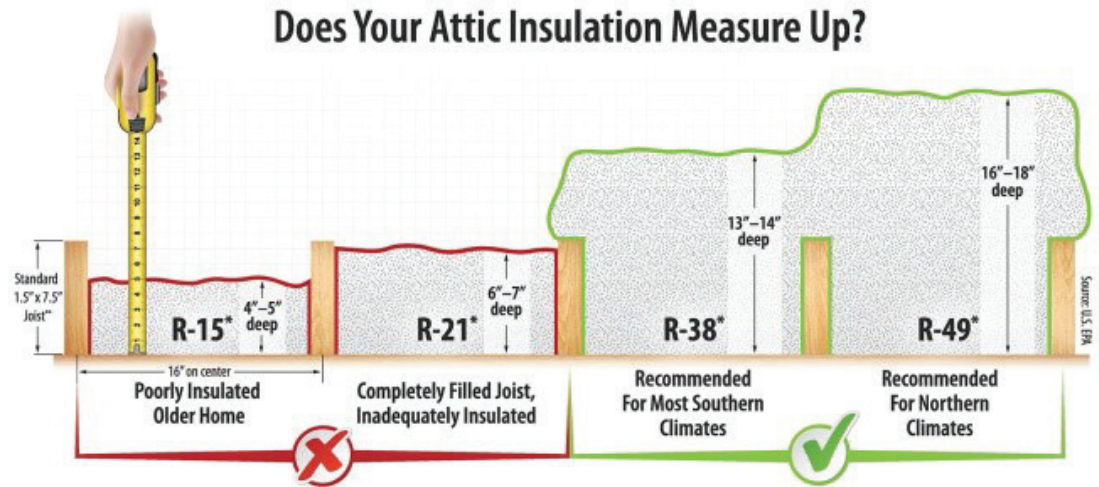
- Reduced noise from outside
- Less pollen, dust and insects (or pests) entering your home
- Better humidity control
- Lower chance for ice dams on the roof/eaves in snowy climates

Sealing air leaks around your home and adding insulation are two of the most cost-effective ways to improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home. By tackling both projects, you can maximize your comfort and save on your annual energy bills.

To find more information and energy saving opportunities, visit www.energystar.gov.

A House Call audit includes an in-depth review of your energy use, an on-site visit including a blower door test, and a written report listing energy saving recommendations. A standard audit is available for a co-pay of \$50 (\$300 value). Customers who receive an audit are qualified for special rebates when they use a Qualified Contractor.

Does Your Attic Insulation Measure Up?



PROPERLY INSTALLED INSULATION MAKES IT LESS EXPENSIVE TO KEEP YOUR HOME IN THE COMFORT ZONE

I'm falling behind with my bill, what can I do?

The COVID19 Pandemic has caused hardships at home for many of our customers. Some have never been in this situation before and don't know where to turn for help. The best thing customers with past due balances can do is call our office and speak to one of our Customer Service Representatives. They are specialists in connecting customers with available resources and working with customers to create a plan to get their utility bill back on track.

Help at Austin Utilities

Customer Payment Arrangements – we will work with you on a plan to get your bill current. Making small regular payments will help keep your past due balance from continuing to grow.

House Call Energy Audits - Audits are available for a co-pay of \$50 (\$300 value). They can be key to understanding unexplained increases in utility bills and should be part of an overall plan to decrease usage.

Budget Billing Program - Once your account is current, budget billing allows you to make the same payment regardless of your usage for a smooth constant bill.

Help outside of Austin Utilities

SEMCAC - this Agency administers federally funded Energy Assistance program. This program is available to income qualified customers based on the most current 3-months. Applications are available now by contacting them at (800) 944-3281.

Salvation Army / HeatShare Program - HeatShare is a program administered by the Salvation Army and is available to customers who may not qualify for federal Energy Assistance. It provides funds for heating bills and heating-related repairs.

We encourage all customers who are past due on their utility bill to work with us on a plan that uses the resources available to help you get your bill current. Each customer situation is unique and the more we know the more we can help you. Please call today at 507-433-8886.

Employee Spotlight

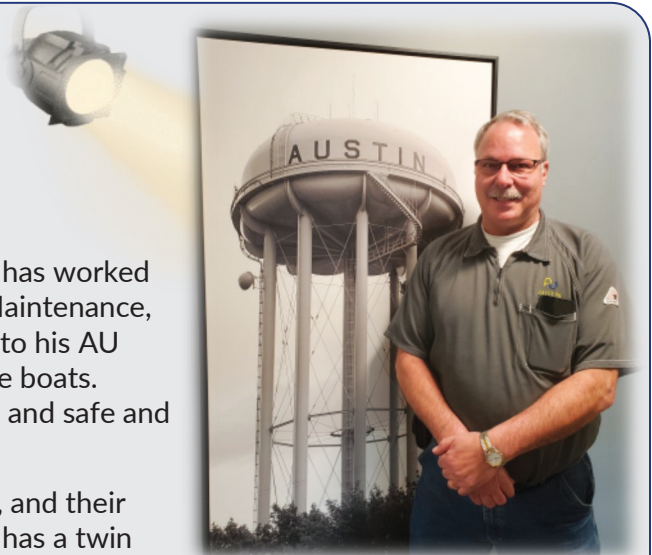
Larry Sunderman **Water Technician**

Larry Sunderman began his career at Austin Utilities in 1997. He has worked as a Power Plant Fireman, Helper, Turbine Operator, Dispatch, Maintenance, Light Equipment Operator and now as a Water Technician. Prior to his AU career he worked for U.S. Steel's Great Lakes fleet on the iron ore boats. Larry says "I take pride in what I do, keeping Austin's water clean and safe and keeping our customers happy."

Larry has three adult children and he lives with his partner, Janet, and their two dogs. He is the seventh child in a family of nine children and has a twin brother.

Retirement is only a few months away for Larry where he plans to continue doing the things he loves like volunteering in the community, smoking turkeys, and inventing things. He won't share the details on his latest inventions as he plans to turn his creations into a new business venture next year.

We wish Larry a happy upcoming retirement and thank him for nearly 24 years of service to AU and the Austin community.





Red Cross Blood Drive
 Tuesday, Jan. 19th 2021
 Austin Utilities - 1908 14th St NE
 9:00 am - 3:00 pm



Schedule Online

redcrossblood.org

Call Us

1-800-REDCROSS

Use Mobile App



Service Promise

We Promise:

- To post your payments accurately
- To notify you if we are unable to keep a scheduled appointment
- To turn on an existing service within 3 business days.
- To respond to your billing concerns by the end of the next business day (5 business days if a site visit is required)

We are committed to meeting these promises. If we fail to meet our commitment to you, we will credit your account \$10.

The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners Monthly Meeting was held on November 17th, 2020.

Agenda items included:

- 2021 Budget & rate adjustments
- City of Austin's Right of Way Ordinance
- COVID19

Meeting minutes are available at www.austinutilities.com



AUSTIN UTILITIES
 Connections for Better Living®
www.austinutilities.com

**BE SAFE, STAY WARM
 KEEP GAS METERS CLEAR**

Maintain a PATH TO METER

SHOVEL OR PLOW carefully near meters

REMOVE SNOW & ICE with hand, brush or broom

DO NOT USE:

- sharp objects
- salt or ice melting chemicals
- hot water

HeatShare™

Please help those less fortunate with winter heating bills and heating related repairs by making a donation to HeatShare.

For more information on how to make monthly donations via your utility bill contact Austin Utilities.

507.433.8886

HeatShare is administered by the Salvation Army.

Even if the lobby is closed you can still reach us at:

Austin Utilities
 1908 14th St NE Austin, MN 55912 Office: 507-433-8886
 Email: talk2au@austinutilities.com Website: www.austinutilities.com