



**AUSTIN
UTILITIES**
Connections for Better Living™

**Austin Utilities
Board of Commissioners**

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Rain Barrel Sale
Online Only
\$79+tax
Supply Limited
austinutilities.com



Drive Thru
Pick up
May 13th
3-6 pm

Connections

April 2021
Customer Newsletter

LINeworkERS' APPRECIATION DAY IS APRIL 18TH

We invite you to join us in celebrating Lineworkers' Appreciation Day on April 18th. It's hard to imagine a day without electricity. This national celebration honors the local people who keep all of our power up and running day and night. If the power is on where you are reading this newsletter, you have a lineman to thank.



MEET THE ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

Director of Electric Operations - Tom Tylutki
Electric Operations Supervisor - Bill Bumgarner

Lead Line Workers - Pat Donovan, Mark Gerstner, Steve Tieg

Journey Line Workers - Pat Andera, Gilbert Ferguson, Jeff Martinson,
Dillon Sprague, Tyler Underdahl

Line Workers - Trevor Herfindahl, Colin Roberts

Substation/Relay Technician - Kurt Regenscheid

System Electronic Technician - Doug Rysavy

Paint the Town Pink

Austin Utilities Employees raised \$3,092 for Paint the Town Pink in February. A raffle of donated items from employees raised over 2k. Direct employee donations accounted for the rest. Community Engagement Committee members pictured left to right: Jeff Martinson, Mark Nibaur, Dar Duholm, & Keven Maxa.





2020 was a milestone year for Austin Utilities. No recordable injuries throughout the entire company of nearly 75 employees. 2020 Board of Commissioners President, Tom Baudler expressed his pride in the accomplishment. "Having zero reportable OSHA incidents company-wide for the year is a great achievement that I think I have seen only once in the last 10 years. It is a reflection of the emphasis placed on safety at AU. We have a safety committee that meets regularly and the minutes are included in every board meeting. We offer extensive training for our employees on safety matters and do regular site safety audits. Management deserves credit for the education and training required, and the workers who are on the front lines get the credit for implementing the safety protocols to ensure everyone gets home safe, every day."



NOTICE

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

1. Austin Utilities does not maintain the customer's buried piping.
2. If the customer's buried piping is not maintained, it may be subject to the potential hazards of corrosion and leakage.
3. Buried gas piping should be:
 - (a) periodically inspected for leaks.
 - (b) periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic.
 - (c) repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered.
4. When excavating near buried gas piping, the piping should be located in advance, and the excavation done by hand.
5. Austin Utilities and plumbing and heating contractors, can assist in locating, inspecting, and repairing the customer's buried piping.

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



Please help our crews by slowing down and steering clear of our vehicles and workers when we are doing our jobs. We want to keep you and our fellow co-workers safe.

UPCOMING STREET PROJECTS

8th Street NW (8th Ave to 13th Ave NW)
9th Street NW (8th Ave to 10th Ave NW)

1st Avenue SE (S Main St to 2nd St SE)
1st Street SE (Oakland Ave E to 1st Ave SE)

19th Street NW (Oakland Ave W Service Drive to 4th Ave NW)
1st Avenue NW (18th St to 19th St NW)

1st Avenue NE (Oakland Place NE to 19th St NE)
16th Street NE (Oakland Ave E to 3rd Ave NE)

The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners
 Monthly Meeting was held on February 16th, 2021.
 Agenda items included:

- Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy for staff
- Distributed Generation rate tariffs
- COVID-19 update on past due customer accounts and disconnections.

Meeting minutes are available at www.austinutilities.com

Sustainability at Austin Utilities

On April 22nd, we celebrate Earth Day. Twenty-six percent of the energy delivered to our customers in 2020 was from renewable energy, and by 2030, 80% of the energy we deliver will be carbon free. We have offered Conserve and Save rebates since 2000, and we are installing electric vehicle chargers in our community, but did you know your utility contributes to sustainability and carbon reduction in other ways.

In 2020 we held our first annual rain barrel sale event.

Sixty rain barrels were distributed. Rain barrels reduce water used by **providing free water for gardening** collected and stored from your homes rain gutter system. **Austin Utilities offers a \$10 rebate on the purchase of rain barrels.**



Partners in Planting

is our tree rebate program that encourages proper tree planting.

Trees remove carbon dioxide from the air we breath.

Austin Utilities partners with a local non-profit, Spruce Up Austin, on tree planting and education efforts.

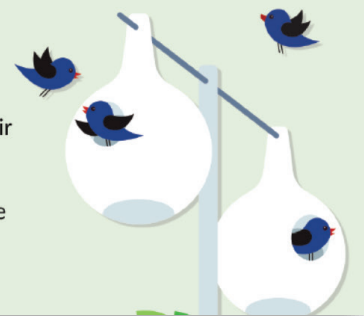


Planted by our staff in the NW corner of our property is a **BUTTERFLY GARDEN** to support the decline in the **Monarch Butterfly.**

Austin Utilities supplies butterfly garden seeds to customers interested in starting their own butterfly garden.

PURPLE MARTINS

are seeing a slow decline in population in part due to their dependence on humans for their habitat. The SW area of our property provides the perfect habitat for purple martins so we adopted some houses and are enjoying the bird activity.



Employee Spotlight

Jeff Majerus Gas & Water Construction Supervisor

Jeff Majerus left his heavy equipment operator position with the Mower County highway department to join Austin Utilities in 2000. He started as a laborer, became a heavy equipment operator, took a lead welder position, transferred to the Engineering department, and is now the Gas & Water Construction Supervisor. Jeff says, "I like working with all of my Gas & Water crew members. We face many challenges during construction season but they are hard workers and work long hours. It is very rewarding to see all that we accomplish together".

Jeff has been married to his wife, Holly, for more than 30 years. Together they have 3 adult children. Mike works in IT for Austin Public Schools, Emily is a Physician Assistant, and Amanda is a Certified Veterinary Technician. Being outside is part of nearly all of Jeff's hobbies, whether it be landscape projects, dirt bikes, welding junk garden 'art', or working on his old Chevy trucks. When he is inside you will often find him weight lifting.

Jeff's only future plans are to continue to work hard, but make sure to find time to play even harder!



Winter Storm Uri Upsets the Natural Gas Market

Customers can expect to see an increase in their gas bill from the historic high gas prices that resulted from Winter Storm Uri, a major winter storm that had widespread impacts across the country from February 13 to 17. By the time you receive this newsletter, our board of commissioners will have made a decision on how to pass those costs along to customers in a fair and equitable way. Multiple factors led to these unprecedented increases.

- The large region impacted by Winter Storm Uri across the United States, Northern Mexico, and parts of Canada.
- Increases in natural gas demand for both heating and generation of electricity due to severe cold weather.
- Forced shutdowns in natural gas production supply in areas not typically accustomed to severe cold weather.
- Unprecedented natural gas price increases created by the increase in demand coupled with a decrease in supply.

Natural gas, which was selling for around \$3 per MMBtu where it is traded on the NYMEX (New York Mercantile Exchange) skyrocketed to over \$188 and \$231 per MMBtu, at Austin Utilities natural gas purchasing points. Gas systems had no choice but to purchase gas at the inflated prices or pay even steeper penalties to ensure that their customers could continue to heat their homes. Austin Utilities was lucky to have a few tools in their arsenal to avoid the price spikes caused by events like this.

- Through our Natural Gas Hedge program, 65-75% of our anticipated usage was pre-purchased at an average cost in February of \$3.21.
- We ran our Propane Air Plant daily to displace natural gas load and avoid purchasing high-priced gas.
- Gas interruptible commercial customers were contacted to switch to an alternate fuel.
- For the first time ever, a Natural Gas Peak Alert was announced on Social Media asking customers to conserve natural gas. Within 6 hours post reached 8,002 with 21 shares and ultimately reached 16,910.

Because of the planning and response from Austin Utilities staff, customers impact from these unprecedented prices will be minimal compared to others across the nation.

How Natural Gas Gets to Your Home

Most of our customers use natural gas for heating their homes and water, but how is natural gas delivered to your home?

