



Contact: Melissa Swenson, Austin Utilities
507.437.0849
MelissaS@AustinUtilities.com

Celebrate Your Public Utility at Austin Utilities Virtual Open House #CommunityPowered

Celebrate with us!

Public Power and Public Natural Gas Week

AUSTIN, MN September 30, 2020 –In October we celebrate Public Power and Public Natural Gas week October 4-10 and this year Austin Utilities (AU) will be celebrating virtually. “We didn’t want to cancel our annual tradition of celebrating public utility awareness with our customers, so we found an alternate way that is safe for our customers and staff,” says Melissa Swenson, Customer Service Supervisor.

Traditionally the event has included opening the utility building to the public for tours, a utility expo and winter readiness event. This year, a week of virtual activities, which include prizes, has been planned during the annual campaign to raise awareness of Austin’s public utility. Austin Utilities is proud to be a public, community-owned, not-for-profit electric, natural gas, and water utility. Says Swenson, “We have so much to share with our customers about the benefits of having a local public utility, ways to get ready for the winter heating season, and fun activities customers can participate in from the comfort of their home.”

Activities can be followed at www.austinutilities.com and our Facebook and Instagram page.

Activities

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we are moving our activities online for the safety of our customers and staff. We hope customers will have fun engaging in the virtual activities we are having for Public Power and Public Natural Gas Week. You must be a customer of Austin Utilities to earn prizes.

White Truck Treasure Hunt –

We’re hiding a model sized replica of one of service trucks somewhere in the community of Austin. Find it using our daily clues and win a new EnergyStar dehumidifier. Clues will be posted daily at 9 a.m. on our Facebook and website beginning on Monday October 5th.

Facebook Winter Readiness Like and Share

Each day during Public Power and Public Natural Gas Week we’ll post a tip on our Facebook page. Like and share it to be entered into a drawing for a bill credit of \$20. One winner each day October 5-9, Monday through Friday.

White Truck Website Challenge

Let us know where you find 10 utility truck icons on our website to be eligible for one of ten AU Blanket Warmth Kits filled with energy saving items.

Virtual Tour – Come inside virtually and see what we do every day to provide safe and reliable services to our customers. Each video will represent a different service we provide, and a virtual

map taking you through our building is the next best thing to being there. Relax and enjoy the tour from the safety of your computer or smartphone.

Kid's Experiment Activity

We will post instructions for a couple fun energy-related experiments you and your kids can complete at your home. Send us a photo of your kiddos during or after the experiment to Talk2AU@AustinUtilities.com and we will mail them a thank you activity package.

ALL CUSTOMERS - Stop in the office during the month of October and receive a free LED 3-way bulb. LED bulbs last longer and save energy, which will save you money! Remember to follow mask guidelines and social distancing when coming to our office.

This is the fourth year Austin Utilities has hosted the Winter Readiness event which earned runner up in the 2018 Marketing and Sales award category from the American Public Gas Association. The open house date was selected because it falls during both Public Power and Public Natural Gas week. These events celebrate the benefits of being served by a municipal utility. Austin Utilities' first organized board of commission meeting was May 1903, but we have been serving Austin as far back as 1888. Austin Utilities is one of the largest combined municipal utilities in the State of Minnesota with 74 full-time and 3 part-time staff.

Your public utility is good for the community for many reasons including:

- **Local Control:** Having a public utility gives a community local control over how homes and businesses are served. Decisions are made through an elected board and citizen participation instead of being made in a distant city by people who do not understand local issues and who are primarily focused on profits instead of service.
- **Competitive Costs:** In order to offer fair and competitive rates, public utilities operate as a not-for-profit entity and do not face pressure to pay dividends to stockholders.
- **Economic Benefits:** As a public utility, we play a valuable role in helping communities broaden their tax base, and in turn improve the local economy and increase jobs. Public utilities ensure that local dollars stay at home.
- **Customer Service:** As a not-for-profit entity, we focus on service, rather than profits. Public utilities are an integral part of a community. We maintain a close relationship with our customers, and as a result, we are successful in meeting our customers' needs.

###

Austin Utilities is a municipal utility serving approximately 12,300 electric customers, 10,300 natural gas customers, and 9,000 water customers. Their mission is to offer utility products and services in a safe, reliable and responsible manner in order to enhance the quality of life in our community. Austin Utilities' Board of Commissioners are elected by the consumer-owners of Austin to represent their best interest. For more information on Austin Utilities visit their website at www.austinutilities.com.