

***Bill trouble? Don't wait! Call us***

Bills can pile up just like snow. But the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule is designed to protect people who may have trouble paying their utility bills in winter. The Cold Weather Rule applies from October 15 to April 15. Under the rule, your utility cannot disconnect your residential electric service during the winter if the customer meets all of the following requirements:

- utility disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source;
- the customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility or is receiving any form of public assistance;
- the household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median income level, as documented; and
- the customer enters into a payment schedule and is reasonably current with payments under the schedule.

Local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. Call Lakes and Pines at 320-679-1800.

If you are going to have trouble paying utility bills, contact us at 651-674-7100 to arrange a payment schedule. We'll try to help.

***HeatShare offers help to needy***

For more than a quarter century, HeatShare has provided emergency assistance with heating and utility bills on a year-round basis. HeatShare is a voluntary nongovernmental program of The Salvation Army.

When you give to HeatShare, you are helping warm the lives of the elderly, disabled and others who have nowhere else to turn. HeatShare is a last resort for many who have no other resources available to see them through the winter.



Financial support is provided by donations from utility customers, like you, who voluntarily contribute through their monthly utility bills or by one-time donations sent to The Salvation Army. Your donations go directly for assistance in our community. Administrative costs of the program are covered through utility corporate gifts and by The Salvation Army.

Since 1982, HeatShare has provided more than \$32 million of assistance. Annually, more than 4,000 households across the state receive an average of \$370 to keep their homes warm.

You can make an online donation to HeatShare (search for HeatShare) or call 1-800-842-7279 for more information.

**The Connector**

North Branch Municipal Water & Light

***Our business philosophy is based on well-being of our community***

The trend in the electric utility industry these days is consolidation. Utility mergers are widespread. As these companies get bigger, they tend to get farther and farther away from their customers.



Being a locally-owned and operated organization, North Branch Municipal Water & Light policymakers and staff not only have a career interest in our community's success, we have a personal stake in the city in which we have chosen to raise families and build life-long relationships.

Because of this, the utility's interest in the well-being of our community and devotion toward maintaining a high quality of life is more than corporate slogan—it's the foundation of our business philosophy.



## ***Water & Light provides steady supply of reliable, clean water***

Water treatment has made U.S. tap water one of the safest and healthiest drinking water supplies in the world. Federal and state governments set maximum concentration levels for many water pollutants and regulate drinking water quality in municipal water systems.

In addition, municipal water systems provide reliable supply and pressure for fire protection. This enhances safety and saves you insurance money.

North Branch Municipal Water & Light meets or exceeds all quality standards and properly maintains our water infrastructure, to ensure a reliable supply of clean water.

The cost of ensuring an adequate supply and meeting treatment requirements is expensive. As is normally done to finance costly and long-lasting utility improvements, the utility in recent years borrowed money to upgrade infrastructure. These improvements were necessary to meet regulatory requirements and serve growth. We are responsible to raise and maintain necessary funds to repay the revenue bonds.

North Branch now has the necessary infrastructure to properly serve you, our customers, and to serve a growing city for the foreseeable future.

## ***Municipal Water & Light: A brief history***

North Branch Municipal Water & Light first supplied power to its customers in 1941. The local power plant was built because citizens at that time were not happy with the rates and service provided by others. The city council at the time was presented with a petition signed by 264 voters and residents of the city. Then came a referendum to create North Branch Municipal Water & Light, which passed by a vote of 334-48.

Shortly after it went into operation, the council acted to form the Water & Light Commission. Commissions were routinely formed as a stable body to concentrate on utility matters and to keep politics out of the business, as much as possible.

As the economies of electric power generation changed, the Water & Light Commission worked with other communities and in 1977 joined the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA). North Branch is a SMMPA member and together the agency members serve nearly 100,000 residential customers and over 12,300 commercial and industrial customers.

The municipal plant and utility offices are located at 6388 Maple Street. Our crews maintain and operate the local water and electric systems. The local electric generating plant is maintained and available for use in emergency or as a hedge against high prices in the wholesale market.



## ***'Be Bright' this fall with reduced pricing on energy efficient bulbs***

Be Bright this fall! Through December 31, while supplies last, our residential electric customers are eligible for reduced pricing on ENERGY STAR® qualified LED light bulbs at participating local and area retailers, who offer discounted LED bulbs for as little as \$0.99 each.

ENERGY STAR-labeled LEDs use 80 percent less energy and last up to 25 times longer than incandescent light bulbs—but less watts doesn't mean less light! LEDs produce bright light for less cost because they use less electricity and last longer than incandescent and compact fluorescent bulbs—saving time and money on replacements.

By replacing the five most-used bulbs in your home with energy-efficient LEDs, you can save about \$40 in energy costs during the first year alone. LEDs also produce less heat than incandescents, improving safety.

While financial savings are a big draw, LEDs also offer environmental benefits to help make our community a little greener.

Remember, supplies are limited, so get your discounted LEDs before they sell out! For more information on our energy efficiency programs, stop by or visit us online at either [www.saveenergyinnorthbranch.com](http://www.saveenergyinnorthbranch.com) or [www.npuc.com](http://www.npuc.com)