

Farmers' Almanac Winter Outlook 2017

Shows freezing cold and average snowfall for the Midwest.

For more information visit their website at www.farmersalmanac.com

WINTER WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

from NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
www.crh.noaa.gov/images/gid/WCM/awareness/wintertips

When a winter storm strikes, the best thing to do is take shelter inside of your home or another building and avoid travel. Unfortunately, there are times when this is not always possible. Below are safety tips to follow if you are inside, outside, or stranded in your vehicle during a winter storm.

Remember to avoid overexertion, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car, or walking in deep snow. The strain from the cold and the hard labor may cause a heart attack. In addition, perspiration could lead to a chill and hypothermia. It is a good idea to take CPR training, so you can respond quickly to potential winter weather emergencies.

If indoors...

Stay inside!

When using an alternate heat source, such as a fireplace, wood stove, or space heater, make sure to use safeguards and properly ventilate. Have a fire extinguisher available.

If no heat is available:

- Close off rooms that are not needed.
- Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors or around windows.
- Cover the windows at night.
- Be sure to eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration, and subsequent chill.

If caught outdoors...

Find Shelter!

- Try to stay dry.
- Cover all exposed body parts.

If no shelter is available...

- Build a lean-to, windbreak, or snow cave for protection from the wind.
- Build a fire for heat and to attract attention. Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.
- Melt snow for drinking water.

If caught inside a vehicle... Stay inside your vehicle – and Don't Panic!

- Attempting to walk for help in a winter storm can be a deadly decision.
- You could become quickly disorientated in wind-driven snow and cold.
- Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat, but make sure to open a window a bit for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.
- Occasionally, vigorously move your arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

Be visible to rescuers...

- Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
- Tie a colored cloth to your antenna or door.
- After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.



JANUARY 2017

The VPU office will be closed on the following dates:

January 2, 2017
January 16, 2017
February 20, 2017



The VPU Customer Newsletter is published quarterly by the City of Virginia, Minnesota Department of Public Utilities.

DPU – QUICK NOTES

KNOW THE SMELL OF NATURAL GAS—BE SAFE!

If there is a faint smell of natural gas, call VPU at 218-748-7540.

If in doubt, leave the building immediately & call 9-1-1.

STREET LIGHT OUT?

If you notice a street light that is burnt out or flickering, please call VPU at 748-7540 so that we may get it fixed and keep our streets bright!

Before You Dig,

Contact Gopher State One Call

Dial 1 8-1-1 or 800-252-1166 or www.gopherstateonecall.org

CHECK YOUR WALL PATCHES

If you have steam heat in your home, or an abandoned steam line to your home....

Periodically check the wall patch where the steam enters your building for leaks.

If you have a vacant property please check property often, as damage can occur quickly...

Call 748-7540 with questions

An Informational Newsletter for Customers of the Department of Public Utilities, Virginia, Minnesota



Rates, Conservation, and Keeping the Lights On

At its December 27th, 2016 meeting the Virginia Public Utilities Commission approved the 2017 budget. That budget included a \$0.002/kwh increase in the residential electric base rate which is roughly a 2% increase and which amounts to \$1.40 per month for the average residential customer (700 kwh). Also included was a \$0.42 increase in the water rate which amounts to \$2.10 per month for the average residential customer (5 units – 750 gallons/unit). The Utility has not had an increase in its base electric rate since 2010 and no water rate increase since 2012. Steam prices and Natural Gas prices are not expected to change for next year.

Your Utility, like all other utilities across the state, is mandated to spend 1½% of its electric revenues on conservation efforts. Our electric revenues are roughly \$14 million and so 1 ½ % of that is about \$200,000. A minimum of 1% must be spent on customer's conservation efforts – “behind the meter”, and the remaining ½ % can be from Utility efforts at delivering the power more efficiently – which means better transformers, updated conduit, etc. This cost represents \$0.002 of the roughly \$0.10 you pay for each kwh. About 2/3rds of our electric revenue comes from commercial customers who represent only 20% of our customers. Having significantly higher usage levels, these customers also have the largest ability to conserve and, consequently, we focus about half of our conservation dollars on commercial and industrial conservation efforts. We also are mandated to spend a minimum of 10% of those dollars on low income customers. Working with AEOA we spend \$30,000 (which is 15% of the total) to meet that requirement. We have rebate programs for residential customers which are meant to incentivize the purchase of more efficient equipment and although the energy savings per customer rebate is small, because many people access these rebates, the savings add up.

One week before Thanksgiving the region's first big snowstorm hit. The temperatures were such that ice buildup on electric wires along with high winds were a big concern. We came through that storm without one single outage. But just when we were congratulating ourselves, at mid-afternoon on Thanksgiving day, (when just about everyone's turkey was in the oven) a squirrel reached from one line to the next and shorted out one of our five city feeders. That significant power drop rippled across our system causing another feeder's safety cut-outs to open as a precaution, so half the town was without power. Again, on Christmas Day a similar storm event occurred and again we experienced no major outages. We're proud of the strength of our electric distribution system. It has been well maintained. We have had minimal outages and those we have had have been relatively short.