

NEWS

Vol. 15 No. 1 January-February 2002

Please give to Heat Aid

Last winter, 1,855 households received nearly \$502,000 from the Heat Aid Fund to help with utility bills. The Fund was totally depleted after the colder than normal temperatures and high gas prices.

Since it was established by M.U.D. in 1983, more than 16,000 older and physically-challenged customers have received assistance. M.U.D. contracts with the Salvation Army to administer the Fund.

To make a tax-deductible pledge, call 554.6666 or complete and mail the enclosed card. No postage is needed.

Summer employment

We hire college students for the summer and accept applications through March 31. Last summer the rate was \$9.01 per hour.

Applicants must be 18 years of age before June 1 and have completed one year of college or trade school. Vacation is not granted, except to attend military reserve training.

Individuals selected must take a medically administered and evaluated drug screen as a condition of employment. To apply, call 554.7735.

Customer Service
554.6666

e-mail:
customer_service@mudnebr.com

Carbon Monoxide: 911
Gas or water emergency
554.7777

Board approves 2002 budget

The M.U.D. Board of Directors approved a \$285.4 million budget for 2002, following a public hearing December 28.

The budget does not include a gas or water rate increase. However, it does include a \$1 monthly natural gas service charge increase for customer service improvements effective January 2.

The service charge for residential gas customers increased from \$6 to \$7 a month, while the service charge for commercial and large volume gas customers increased from \$11 to \$12 a month. The last time there was a revenue-increasing change was in 1992.

The service charge increase will go for replacement of our customer service information system which was installed in 1968. The cost to replace the system for 2002 and 2003 is estimated at \$7.4 million.

The new system will improve productivity and efficiency with enhancements such as real-time updates of customer records, one bill for multiple accounts, and make it easier to eventually provide customer access to view accounts and pay bills via the Internet.

Even with the \$1 increase in the monthly service charge, we anticipate the average residential gas customer will use 1,089 therms of natural gas in 2002 at a cost of \$668 compared to \$785 for 1,023 therms of gas in 2001—a decrease of \$117 or 15 percent.

The 2002 budget is 9.4 percent lower than the 2001 estimated budget of \$314.9 million. The main item bringing the budget down is a \$26.7 million decrease in the price of gas from suppliers. We expect to spend 20 percent less for gas on the resale market in 2002. The price of gas from suppliers is passed directly to the customer.

We also expect to put less money in the construction fund to support financing for the \$295-million Platte West water treatment facility at 216 & Q Sts. The annual cost of water for the average residential customer, who uses 110,000 gallons of water per year, remains at \$162.09.

The Platte West facility would add 100 million gallons a day to M.U.D.'s water treatment capacity, which is 234 million gallons a day. The plant is scheduled to go online in 2007, if the District receives the permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2002.

A customer-owned utility, M.U.D. serves more than 175,000 water and 186,000 natural gas customers in the metro Omaha area.



1723 Harney St • Omaha NE 68102
www.mudomaha.com

Customer-Owned: Value for Your Dollar

Beware of impostors, people asking for money

We receive periodic reports of imposters claiming to be M.U.D. employees.

Most M.U.D. employees wear uniforms, and all carry photo I.D. cards. If someone comes to your door claiming to be with the gas or water company, don't let them in until you see their M.U.D. photo I.D. If they don't have one, call the police.

- Our employees do not collect money from customers at their homes or businesses.
- We do not ask customers to pay in cash in advance to restore service or test meters.
- We do not call customers to ask for credit card information.

Questions? Call **554.6666**.

Financial counseling for shut-off notices

A United Way of the Midlands representative will be in the lobby of our downtown office, 1723 Harney St., January 22 through March 29 to provide financial counseling to customers facing utility shut-offs. Hours are 8 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., weekdays.

Last year United Way staff provided referrals to 1,329 people, compared to 273 in 2000. The program, sponsored by M.U.D., is in its 17th year.

Safety tips from firefighters

Electric space heaters, wood fireplaces and wood stoves are major factors in residential fires, according to the Omaha Fire Department.

Electric heaters:

- Do not overload the circuit. Only use extension cords with the necessary rating to carry the amp load.
- Don't use electric heaters in areas where they may come in contact with water, such as the bathroom.

- Give space heaters at least three feet between the heater and combustibles even with cut-off switches or heating element guards.

Wood fireplaces and stoves:

- Wood stoves should have a 36-inch clearance from combustible surfaces plus proper floor support and protection.
- Do not use flammable liquid to start or accelerate any fire.
- Never burn charcoal indoors.

Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm.

Check batteries every month.

Carbon monoxide

Your first line of defense to prevent carbon monoxide is an annual inspection of your heating system.

- If anyone is experiencing symptoms (*headache, dizziness, vomiting, nausea, weakness, tightness of chest*) of carbon monoxide or is overcome by CO, **call 911 immediately**. Do not panic. Get everyone out of the building.
- Open doors and windows to let in fresh air.
- Turn the thermostat and water heater to the lowest setting.
- Turn off all unvented appliances (*range, auxiliary heater*).
- Check flues for obstructions. Check for soot around the water heater and furnace.
- Check for a vehicle or small engine operating in an attached garage or basement.

If you are unable to determine the cause, call a licensed heating contractor or our emergency number, **554.7777**.

Wurtz named general manager

M.U.D. Directors named **Thomas A. Wurtz** general manager December 1. He succeeds **Gerald A. Radek**, who retired with 36 years of service to customer-owners. Wurtz has 21 years of service with the District.

2002 chairperson



Thomas F. Dowd

The M.U.D. Board of Directors elected **Thomas F. Dowd** chairperson for 2002. First elected to the board in 1975, Dowd has 25 years of service to customer-owners. He is an attorney and senior partner with Dowd & Dowd.

Directors chose **Timothy W. Cavanaugh** vice-chairperson. He was appointed to the board in 1999 to fill the vacancy left by the death of his father, Bill Cavanaugh.

A 20-year member of the Omaha Police Department, Cavanaugh serves as Lieutenant Commander of Internal Affairs.

Other directors are: **Mary Kay Begley, Mark Doyle, David Friend, Jack Frost** and **John S. McCollister**.

Board meetings

9 A.M.

February 6, March 6, April 3,
May 1, June 5, July 3

1723 Harney St., Omaha, NE
Call 449.8153 or
see agenda on our website
www.mudomaha.com

Hydrant care

Because you and your family's safety is a top priority, make sure firefighters can quickly locate and use water hydrants in an emergency. Clear the snow from around hydrants during winter months.

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