

DPU Customer Newsletter



An informational newsletter for Customers of the Department of Public Utilities, Virginia, Minnesota

April 2006

Equal Payment Plan information and form inside.

The DPU Customer Newsletter is published quarterly by the City of Virginia, Minnesota, Department of Public Utilities, Terry Leoni, General Manager, 618 Second Street South, P. O. Box 1048 Virginia MN. 55792.

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This is a quarterly publication of the DPU for the benefit of Virginia customers. It is not intended to serve as official notice or supplement the official record of the City or the Department of Public Utilities. Suggestions or comments should be directed to Sue Lalli - phone 218-748-2113.

Meter readings can be submitted by mail, phone, or Email by sending the name, address, account number, along with the meter readings to billing@vpuc.com.

The Department of Public Utilities reminds customers to **Call Before You Dig**. Be sure to contact Gopher State One Call at www.gopherstateonecall.com or call 800-252-1166.

Virginia City Council minutes can be viewed on the City's website - www.virginiamn.us.

UTILITY RECEIVES FUNDING

The Virginia Utility was successful in securing just over \$3.1 million from the 2006 taconite production tax funding. This funding, administered by Iron Range Resources, is for repairs and upgrades to the Virginia steam system. The success in securing this funding is due to the hard work of Representative Tom Rukavina, Senator David Tomassoni, and the entire Iron Range legislative delegation. Please be sure the next time you see Tom, David, or any of the other Iron Range legislators, you let them know how grateful we are for their continued support of the Utility.

Funding was also secured for the Hibbing / Virginia joint biomass project in the amount of \$6.5 million from the State of Minnesota. This funding was achieved through the efforts and tireless perseverance of the Iron Range legislative delegation.



RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF VIRGINIA

The week of April 17-21, 2006 is "Severe Weather Awareness Week" in Minnesota.

As a participant, the City of Virginia will be testing its Civil Defense sirens on Thursday, April 20, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. for a Mock Tornado Drill.

Additionally, the City of Virginia will continue conducting the monthly testing of its Civil Defense sirens at 1:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month in compliance with the **City's Emergency Operations Plan**. Please note that when you hear the sirens on these test days, these are only tests to ensure that our sirens are working properly.

It is a good idea to use these test drills as the time to teach or practice your family's emergency plan. For more information about how to create an emergency plan for your family, visit the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's website at www.ready.gov.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either Public Safety Director Waldron at (218) 748-7510 or City Operations Director John Tourville at (218) 748-7500.

Information is also available by visiting the City of Virginia's website at www.virginiamn.us.

Third Party Notification Available for Customers

The Virginia Utility offers a service to customers and property owners that may assist in being sure utility bills are paid. A "Third Party" can be notified if your bills are running late - it may help you!

If you have been served a notice of proposed disconnection by the Virginia Utility, you may want to alert a third party (friend, relative, church group, or community agency) that a disconnection notice has been issued to you. The third party will not be responsible for paying your bill but does have the right to contact the Utility and provide information or work out a payment agreement for you. Any payment agreement must be signed by the customer, but the terms of the agreement can be set up for you by your designated third party.

If you want a third party to be notified of the potential disconnect, please pick up a third party form from our business office - both you and your third party must sign the form before returning it to our office. A copy of the third party notification form is also available at the Utility's website - www.vpuc.com.

It's time again to sign up for the Virginia Utilities' Equal Payment Plan. A program designed to help customers even out their monthly utility payments throughout the year. If you are interested in signing up for the Equal Payment Plan, complete & return the form on the following page.

PLEASE NOTE: *If you are currently signed up for the Equal Payment Plan for the year June 2005 – May 2006, you will be automatically signed up for the coming year. Your new payment amount will be calculated and sent to you.*

Virginia Utilities Equal Payment Plan 2006-2007

The Virginia Department of Public Utilities offers a program allowing Equal Payments each month to help customers even out their monthly utility payments. Between April 1 and April 25, 2006 you can sign up for our Equal Payment Plan for the coming 12 months – June 2006 through May 2007.

The Equal Payment Plan will average your bills based on prior usage for the previous twelve-month period - April 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006.

Who can sign up:

- Residential property owners with service established for at least twelve (12) months prior
- Residential property owners with account current - all bills paid in full prior to application

How it works:

- Complete the attached application and return it to the Utility business office
- Sign up by April 25, 2006 - the next sign up period will be April 1- 24, 2007
- Your Equal Payment amount may be recalculated during the Plan year as a result of higher or lower billings during the Plan year – if there are drastic changes in consumption or overall rate changes. You will receive notification if your payment amount changes after you have signed up for this Plan
- The first Equal Payment amount will be due on June 20, 2006.
- The last payment of the Plan Year will be due on May 20, 2007 and will be for any remaining balance due.

Your bill will show:

- Your exact meter readings
- The exact charges for your utilities each month
- The amount normally due
- The *Equal Payment* amount will be shown on your statement as the *"Please Pay"* amount

How to stop:

- You may cancel at any time – simply notify the Utility in writing.

Should you not pay your monthly Equal Payment amount by the regular due date, you will be removed from participation in this program.

If you have any questions about this Program
please contact our Public/ Customer Relations Supervisor at 218-748-2113
or call our business office at 218-748-7540

**Equal Payment Plan information is also available at our web site -
www.vpuc.com**

If you are interested in signing up for the Equal Payment Plan for 2006 - 2007, complete & return by April 25, 2006 to the Virginia Department of Public Utilities at the address shown below

Virginia Department of Public Utilities

618 2nd Street South P.O. Box 1048 Virginia, MN 55792
Phone 218 - 748 - 7540 fax 218 - 748 - 7544

Equal Payment Plan 2006 - 2007

- I am interested in receiving information on the Equal Payment Plan for my account(s) listed below.
- Before signing up, I would like you to calculate the monthly Equal Payment amount for each of the accounts I have listed below.
- I understand that I will receive a calculated payment form to complete, sign, and return to the Utility by May 20, 2006 in order to participate in this Plan for the year June 2006 through May 2007.

Customer Name (please print)

Daytime contact phone number

Mailing Address

City, State & Zip Code

First Service Address

Account # (on your bill):

Second Service Address

Account # (on your bill):

Third Service Address

Account # (on your bill):

Fourth Service Address

Account # (on your bill):

If needed, please list additional service addresses along with account numbers here:

Know the Smell of Natural Gas - Be Safe!

The smell of natural gas comes from a harmless chemical added purposely by utility companies to the natural gas so that even the smallest amount of escaping gas can be detected. Everybody should be familiar with this built-in safety signal. Used properly, natural gas is a safe, efficient and reliable fuel.

If there is a faint smell of natural gas:

- Call the Virginia Utilities Department at 218-748-7540
- Phone answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If the odor is strong:

- Leave the building immediately!
- Do not use your telephone or cell phone, turn on a light switch, light a match, or do anything that might create a spark or flame.
- Go to a neighbor's telephone & call the Virginia Public Utilities IMMEDIATELY!

Utility Phone answered 24 hours a day 365 days year 218 - 748 - 7540

Do not reenter the building until it has been declared safe to do so.

If in doubt, leave the building immediately & call the Virginia Utilities at 218-748-7540

Sales tax question!

Many customers have asked about sales taxes charged on their utility bills each month, primarily with regard to heat usage. Residential utility accounts are not charged sales tax on the primary heat source during the heating season. This means that the utility bills a residential customer receives that are due December 20 through May 20 of the year do not contain sales tax on the commodity used as their primary heat source.

If you've changed your main source of heat and want to ensure the Utility has the appropriate source identified, please complete the form below and send it in with your next payment. Your account will be checked to ensure your primary heat source is correctly identified on your account. Please be sure to list the name of the person completing the form.

Customer Name: _____

Customer Account No: _____

Service Address: _____

Primary Heat Source: steam electricity natural gas other

Name of person
Completing form: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Date: _____

Return form to: Virginia Department of Public Utilities, P. O. Box 1048, Virginia MN 55792
Our business office can be contacted at 218 - 748 - 7540 Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Construction Season Begins

Please watch for utility workers as you drive throughout Virginia over the next several months. With the warm weather comes repairs and upgrades to many of the utility lines located under the City's streets. In order to perform needed repairs and installations, Utility workers may have to barricade areas in the streets and alleyways.

Construction continues at the Virginia Power Plant where the installation of a new boiler and fuel handling and fuel storage structures is underway. The major portion of the construction is expected to be finished by late October 2006 with commissioning and start-up planned for November and December of 2006. Please watch for construction vehicles around the Power Plant and accept our apologies for any inconvenience this construction may cause you.