



CONNECTIONS

Spring 2008

published for the customers of Greenville Utilities



Greenville Utilities

"Connections" is our customer newsletter, which we publish periodically to keep you informed about issues, activities and services at GUC.

If you have suggestions for topics or questions you'd like to see answered, please call our Public Information Office at 551-1522 or write to Connections, P.O. Box 1847, Greenville, NC 27835. www.guc.com

We look forward to hearing from you!



United Way Committee members Marie Cristiano, Freddie Martin, George Darden, Jean Forrest, and J.T. Smith. Not pictured is Karen Anderson-Boseman.

For Your Convenience

We offer several ways to make paying your bill easier:

- By EZ Pay, our automatic bank draft program
- Online at www.guc.com
- By mail to: P.O. Box 1847, Greenville, NC 27835
- In person at our Main Office or GUC Express
- By credit card by calling: 1-800-722-8203

For more information, please call 551-3312.

GUC Receives Statewide United Way Awards

Greenville Utilities has been a long-time supporter of the United Way of Pitt County, and in February we received statewide recognition for doing it with excellence. GUC was the recipient of the Spirit of North Carolina Award for Campaign Excellence in two categories, Employee Spirit and Corporate Spirit.

The Employee Spirit Award recognizes the generous support of employees and the Corporate Spirit Award highlights the organization's year-round commitment to the United Way.

The Spirit Committee judged 76 outstanding submissions from top companies, organizations, governmental entities, healthcare and educational institutions, as well as businesses, both large and small. Organizations and companies were judged on a variety of criteria including leadership giving, volunteerism, employee participation and giving levels, year-round education, corporate support, incentive programs, and campaign rallies just to name a few.

Customers Urged To Use Water Wisely



Although we had some welcome rainfall recently, Pitt County continues to be dryer than normal and the drought is still going strong. The situation has improved, but all signs indicate that we're still in this for the long haul.

GUC's Stage 1 Water Conservation Alert that was declared in December is still in effect and will continue until weather conditions are more favorable. We would need near average rainfall (between 3-5 inches per month) over the next several months in order to maintain an adequate water supply. We continue to

encourage customers to voluntarily conserve water by following these simple tips:

- Use the shower rather than the bathtub for bathing and limit your shower to no more than five minutes. You can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.

- Turn off the water when brushing your teeth, shaving or preparing food and save four gallons a minute. That is 200 gallons a week for a family of four.
- Use a broom to clean sidewalks and driveways and save up to 80 gallons of water every time.
- If you wash dishes by hand, avoid running the water continuously; fill one sink with wash water and one with rinse water. That will save 200 gallons a week for a family of four.
- Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full and you could save 1,000 gallons a month.
- Operate dishwashers after the peak demand hours of 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Check all washing machine hose connections for leaks. Fixing a leak can save 500 gallons each month.
- Inspect and repair all faulty and defective parts of faucets and toilets. Fixing a leak can save 500 gallons each month.
- Install flow-restrictors or aerators on all faucets.
- Install water saving devices in toilets such as early closing flappers.

For more water-saving tips online, visit www.guc.com or SaveWaterNC.org.

Help Prevent Natural Gas Pipeline Emergencies

Though natural gas pipeline incidents are uncommon, you should know their signs:

- **LOOK.** Blowing dirt, bubbling creeks or ponds, dry spots in moist areas or dead plants surrounded by live, green plants may indicate a natural gas leak.
- **LISTEN.** Near a gas appliance or line, there may be a hissing sound when natural gas is leaking.
- **SMELL.** Stay alert for the distinctive, rotten-egg-like smell of natural gas. You should take action anytime you detect even a small amount of this odor in the air.

If you suspect a natural gas leak, take action!

- **LEAVE.** If you ever detect a natural gas leak, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. Don't try to find or stop the leak.
- **DO NOT TOUCH** anything electrical before you leave or use a telephone, even a cell phone. Do not smoke, turn appliances or lights on or off, or operate any vehicle or equipment that could create a spark.
- **CALL.** Once you are out of the suspected area, immediately call our 24-hour Emergency Hotline at 551-1567 or 752-5627. If the smell of gas is particularly strong, you may also call 911.



Meter Technician II Leon Kornegay acquires meter readings with his on-board computer.

Automated Meter Reading

The days of Meter Readers walking their routes from house to house will soon be over. By 2011, all GUC meters will be equipped with Automated Meter Reading (AMR) technology. Since 2004, we have been phasing in AMR, starting first with electric and gas meters. This year, in April, GUC will begin the last phase of the project by replacing all 30,000+ water meters with AMR devices. Replacing all 30,000 water meters is expected to take approximately three years.

AMR is a proven technology that allows for consistent and accurate collection of meter readings using wireless communication. With AMR, meter data is transmitted through a radio transmitter. GUC vehicles equipped with on-board computers will automatically collect accurate meter readings simply by driving past the metered property. Meter Readers will no longer need physical access to the customer's home or business.

The focus of AMR is customer service and the full implementation of the technology offers many benefits. Customers with hard-to-read meters will no longer have to make special arrangements to have their meters read. "Accessibility can be an issue, especially with electric and gas meters which are often located in backyards," said Allen Harris, GUC Meter Superintendent. "That's why we replaced those types of meters first. Once the water meter conversion is complete, customers won't see Meter Technicians physically reading meters

anymore. Instead, they'll see the GUC truck ride by without stopping. That's how AMR works. All meters will be read automatically."

AMR also allows GUC to meet the needs of our growing customer base, currently increasing at a rate of 4% a year, without having to bring on additional Meter Technicians and vehicles. In addition, AMR has the ability to detect meter tampering as well as decrease personal injuries.

AMR will build on GUC's impressive record of accuracy. Our Meter Technicians have always done a fantastic job. So far, this fiscal year, their accuracy rate is 99.9976%. Last year, they collected 1,401,235 readings with an accuracy rate of 99.9984%. AMR technology will allow us to continue our history of remarkably accurate meter readings more efficiently and eliminate the risk, however small, of human error.

GUC has contracted with a private company to perform the water meter change-outs. The contractors, who will have GUC photo identification, will inform customers when their water meter is being replaced. Customers are not required to be home during the change-out. They can anticipate that their water service will be disconnected for approximately 30 minutes while the work is completed. Contact GUC at 752-7166 with any questions.



From left to right are Presbyterian Women Co-Vice-Chair Jennifer Little, GUC Credit Officer Scott Mullis, GUC General Manager/CEO Ron Elks and Presbyterian Women Chair Pam Finch. Not pictured is Presbyterian Women Co-Vice-Chair Ginger Minges.

First Presbyterian Women Raise Over \$11,000 for Neighbor To Neighbor

The Presbyterian Women of First Presbyterian Church continue to support GUC's Neighbor to Neighbor program. They raised over \$11,000 through their annual taste testing luncheon recently. This is the sixth year they've raised funds specifically for the Neighbor to Neighbor program and they have contributed more than \$36,000 during that time.

Neighbor to Neighbor was established in 2001 to assist our residential customers who need temporary financial aid to help pay their heating bills. The program is supported by voluntary donations from our customers and up to \$20,000 annually in matching funds from GUC.

Neighbor to Neighbor is a partnership between GUC and the Pitt County Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS screens applicants, determines eligibility and distributes the funds (up to \$200/year per household) during the heating season, December – March. Funds are used to pay for all types of heating fuels (kerosene, oil, natural gas, electric heat, etc.). One hundred percent of contributions are used to assist families; there are no overhead costs.

"GUC's Neighbor to Neighbor program is a valuable resource in our efforts to better serve the citizens of Greenville and Pitt County," said Niagara Parker, Supervisor of Work First Employment Services and Crisis Programs, Pitt County DSS. "We are often able to use Neighbor to Neighbor funds to assist households who would not be served by the various state and federal programs we administer. Many of these households consist of disabled and elderly individuals."

Since the program was started six years ago, over \$167,000 has been provided in heating assistance for over 1,100 families. "We are a part of this community and pride ourselves on being a good neighbor," said Ron Elks, GUC General Manager/CEO. "We feel this program provides a means to meet a real need."

Help Pitt County residents in need of a helping hand by donating to the Neighbor To Neighbor program. For more information contact us at 752-7166 or visit us at www.guc.com.

Save Paper With eBill

Since 2005, GUC customers have been able to pay their bill at www.guc.com, as well as access their usage, billing and payment histories online. Through our website, you can also start the process of applying for new services and change or disconnect services. Electronic Bill Notification (eBill) is the newest addition to GUC's online services. Starting in April, with eBill, you have the option of receiving an email letting you know that your GUC bill is ready. The email can be instead of, or in addition to, the bill you receive in the mail. When accessing your account online, you may choose one of three ways to receive your GUC bill:

- Electronic notification only
- Electronic notification and a paper bill in the mail
- Paper bill only (the default option)

If you select eBill, you'll get an email that links to the payment section of our website. This service offers you a convenient, easy, flexible way to receive and pay your bill — and it saves paper too! If you have any questions, please call us at 752-7166.

Look Up, Look Out!

The safety of those working near electric lines is important to everyone at GUC. And in North Carolina, there is a law — the High Voltage Safety Act — to help keep you safe. This law applies to anyone planning to:

- Work within 10 feet of an overhead high voltage power line.
- Use ladders or operate/install equipment that could approach within 10 feet of a high voltage line during installation or maintenance.

The person performing the work is responsible for contacting North Carolina One-Call 811 (or 1-800-632-4949) and making sure all safety precautions have been taken at least two working days before work begins. Greenville Utilities will assist you to identify hazards and implement necessary safety precautions. You could be subject to charges for protective actions taken on your behalf by GUC.

Look up ... look out, and practice the 10-ft rule. Remember, a simple call can keep you safe when you're working near overhead power lines. NC One-Call: dial 811.



Call 811 Before You Dig

It's a fact. Excavation work, including digging (even in the yard) and plowing, is the most common cause of natural gas emergencies. Before excavation of any kind takes place, North Carolina State law requires you to call NC One-Call at 1-800-632-4949, or you may call the new federally-mandated national "Call Before You Dig" number - 811. Call either number at least two working days in advance so all utility lines can be professionally marked prior to digging.

For more information on natural gas safety, please contact GUC at 551-1587 or visit us at www.guc.com.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

Taking Care of Your Greenville Utilities Bill Is Quick and Easy at www.guc.com

At www.guc.com, you have three convenient online payment options.

Take the EZ way and sign up for **EZ Pay!** You authorize GUC to draft the amount of your bill from your bank account each month and it is paid automatically – on time. You even get to choose the payment date.

Click-To-Pay allows you to make a one-time payment using your bank account. This can be repeated each month.

You can also pay online with your **credit card** (fee applies).

Go to www.guc.com and click on My Account to get started. It's fast, secure and you'll never have to write another check to GUC!



PO Box 1847, Greenville, NC 27835-1847 • 752-7166 • www.guc.com



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