



# UTILITY GRAM

"Providing and Protecting Kenosha's Greatest Natural Resource ... Water"

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## MAJOR SNOWSTORM HITS KENOSHA

On the morning when the ground hog was supposed to make his way out of his burrow and check for signs of an early spring, we awoke to a winter wonderland covered with more snow than most of us have seen in a lifetime of snowstorms. This seems to be an indication that it will be a few more weeks until we begin to see the telltale signs of spring?

One day prior to the storm, KWU directors met with the KWU General Manager to make preparations for the impending snow emergency. At that time, most were hopefully optimistic that the storm would pass to our south and total snow accumulations would be limited to just a few inches. Since the Utility is a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week operation, plans had to be made to transport plant operators to and from the plants in the event that they were unable to drive themselves. At the Wastewater Treatment Plant, a chemist would also be required to come in and run daily samples. It was decided that the Water Distribution and Sewer Collection Division would come to work the day following the storm to get a jump on snow removal and also repair any water main breaks that had occurred. All other Utility employees were given the option to use a day of **vacation, take the day off without pay or make up the time. As it turns out, most of us couldn't** have made it to work even if we had wanted, as it took the better part of a day just to dig ourselves out of our driveways. In the photograph below taken the morning after the storm, you can see snow covering over half of the doors to the main entrance of the Water Centre.

At the Wastewater Treatment Plant, the plant operator discovered that he was unable to gain access to much of the plant due to excessive amounts of drifting snow. He quickly called for reinforcements and another plant operator, who lives just a few blocks away from the plant, agreed to come in and lend a helping hand. Unable to drive to the plant, he opted to walk and in some cases crawl his way to the plant. A plant operator at the Water Production Plant was unable to get out of his own driveway, so he hopped a ride on a snowplow to get to the Water Production Plant and assume duties as the plant operator. Unfortunately, the plow could only make it as far as the Southport Lighthouse, and the operator had to make it the rest of the way on foot. However, the plow driver did agree to wait patiently while the off-going plant operator made his way from the plant to the awaiting snowplow.

The day was filled with heroics as ordinary people did extraordinary things to help the Utility and the City dig out from the storm. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Water Distribution and Sewer Collection Division, the rest of us were able to come back to work the next day, park in our parking spots and make our way into our buildings without too much difficulty. Our thanks to go out to all who assisted!

As a follow-up to the snowstorm heroics, in the aftermath of the storm the Meter Division was unable to read many customer accounts. In order to catch up with the readings, so that customers would be billed for actual meter readings instead of averaged readings, a read-a-thon of sorts was held on Saturday, February 19. several people from several divisions all joined forces to read the meters, while some came in to enter data. Well done team!



*Now how am I going to pay my water bill?*





**A small pathway was carved into a large snowdrift in front of the Water Center, so that employees participating in cleanup operations in the aftermath of the winter storm could gain access to the building.**



**An KWU equipment operator operates a backhoe during cleanup operations after a severe winter storm left behind nearly 24 inches of new snow in its wake.**

## Mission Control to the Rescue

At the end of 2010, the Utility purchased four M-80 Remote Transmitting Units (RTUs) from Mission Control. These units are capable of performing the monitoring functions of most Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems at a fraction of the cost.

The Utility currently utilizes SCADA systems to monitor and control operations at both plants as well as the water distribution system. These SCADA systems allow plant operators to monitor the performance of plant equipment and other equipment located throughout the water distribution system and make necessary adjustments from remote locations. The units being installed at the lift stations have limited capabilities when it comes to operating equipment (turning equipment on and off); however they have robust capabilities when it comes to monitoring the performance of equipment at the lift stations. The units when installed will track wet well levels at the stations as well as the status of pumps and generators. This real-time information can be viewed from the Internet on a specially designed website. Being able to view this information, especially during extreme wet-weather events, is an invaluable tool for plant operators and managers alike.

Prior to purchasing the units, Mission Control allowed the Utility to install a demonstration unit at the Industrial Park lift station. This unit has been in operation for several months now and as a result, the Utility has learned a lot about how the station operates in both dry-weather and wet-weather events. The demonstration unit worked so well that the Utility decided to purchase three additional units. **The units will be installed at the Shoney's, Big Buck and 15th & 15th lift stations.** Additionally, the Utility purchased four M-800 RTUs, a scaled-down version of the M-80, which can be installed inside a sanitary sewer manhole to monitor the depth of flow inside the sewer.

These monitoring units are capable of alerting Utility operators and managers whenever the flow level is nearing surcharge and when it has actually reached the surcharge level. These units are being installed inside certain manholes that have had a history of surcharging during extreme wet-weather events. This is one among many actions that the Utility is taking to safeguard properties from damage that could occur during extreme weather events.

## Keeping Pace with Technology

Technology is constantly changing and due to the loss of **technical support for the Utility's old bill receipting system** (both software and hardware), the Utility was forced to upgrade the equipment. For the past year, the Business Services Division has been working with Johnson Bank, RPSolutions (software provider) and NCR (hardware provider) to change the way the Utility processes customer bill payments and makes deposits to the bank. A similar receipting machine (NCR7780) was used in the past to process bill payments; however the new receipting machine (ITRAN 3000) has much more capability than the old machine.

Both the 7780 and the ITRAN machines capture pertinent **information needed to process a customer's payment as the bill stubs and checks pass through the scanner.** Both systems have image capture capability. The 7780 captures only the front images of the bill stubs and checks, while the ITRAN captures both the front and back images of these documents. Both systems pass pertinent information to the **Utility's server that is necessary to update the payment to the customer's account in the water file.**

So what is different about the ITRAN receipting machine? The 7780 measures over 7.5 feet in length, is 32 inches tall  
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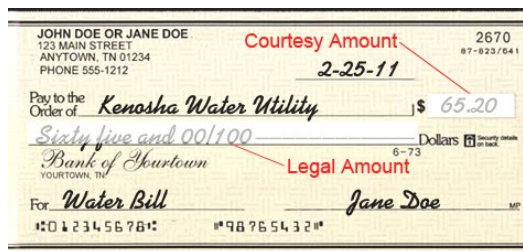
and over 2.5 feet deep. The ITRAN scanner is a compact tabletop device just under 5 feet in length and weighs less than 60 pounds. Images of both the bill stubs and checks are archived and can be retrieved to look up information should a customer have a question about their payment. A major difference between the two systems is that the check images are converted to an Image Cash Letter (ICL) file and are electronically transferred to Johnson Bank over a secure website on the same day that payments are received. This means that deposits are processed much quicker. With the old system, a courier from Johnson Bank would come to the Water Centre daily to pick up the deposit. Now a police officer from the Kenosha Police Department comes twice a week just to pick up the cash deposits.

Since the check images are being electronically transferred, the EXPERTRPS software needs to be more finicky and precise. For example, the software has to compare the courtesy amount with the legal amount on the checks. If it does not find a match, the clerk is required to key in the correct amount. Should there be a discrepancy between the two amounts, the bank will always consider the legal amount (spelled out amount) to be the correct amount. Additionally, the software creates a database to record customer information. Should a check get scanned that **doesn't have an accompanying bill stub, the clerk must key in the pertinent information that is needed to process the payment.** The next time a check from the same customer is scanned, the software automatically remembers the **customer's account information, and all the clerk needs to do is verify the information.**

Does the new system save time? As it turns out, the time spent processing bill payments is about the same; however the Utility receives its money quicker, less money is spent on annual maintenance agreements and the system saves the Utility and Johnson Bank a little bit of time and effort.

The electronic sending of the ICL file officially went online in January 2011; although the system was installed in May of **2010. Since the Utility was Johnson Bank's first customer** to implement the X9.37 file format for electronically transferring check images, a large investment of time and money had to be made in order to complete this effort. Months and months were spent sending files and testing them for accuracy and image quality. So far, not one single quality complaint has been received from Johnson Bank, and they are extremely excited to offer this same service to other customers. Next month, the Utility will be doing demonstrations to other companies in the area who might be interested in our process.

We are extremely grateful to all those from the Utility, Johnson Bank, RPSolutions and IT for all their help in making this transition to the new process!



**What amount will be accepted by the bank?**