

## 2020 CU HOLIDAYS

Our offices will be closed for the following holidays. Our call Center is open 24/7.

- Columbus Day - October 12
- Veterans Day - November 11
- Thanksgiving - November 26 & 27
- Christmas - December 24 & 25
- New Year's - January 1, 2021

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### IN HOME ENERGY EVALUATION

Would you like to have an energy evaluation done free of charge to you and help save money on your electric bill? Call Cleveland Utilities or visit the [EnergyRight.com](http://EnergyRight.com) website and sign up. Our Home Energy Advisor will visit your home to conduct a personalized assesment of your home's energy use. This is available to homeowners who have a CU electric account. Energy evaluations help customers save money by identifying areas where energy loss may occur. Call us at 423-472-4521 and ask to speak to a Customer Relations Representative.

#### CLEVELAND UTILITIES' CUSTOMER CONNECTIONS

Owned and published by Cleveland Utilities, a public utility serving over 33,000 customers.

Tim O. Henderson, President/CEO  
Maribel Ware, Newsletter Editor

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# CUSTOMER CONNECTIONS

Official Newsletter for Cleveland Utilities' Customers

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Tim O. Henderson

In the last customer newsletter article, we discussed the news of the day and the COVID-19 Pandemic was declared and in the early stages. Now, we are entering the fall season and the pandemic still lingers. I don't think any of us ever envisioned this year to unfold the way it has, but here we are. Masks, hand sanitizer, social distancing, and even our lobby closure are all part of our new normal. I am hopeful as I'm sure you are, this will soon pass.

Cleveland Utilities has a long history of disaster planning, but the complexity and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 have made this situation more challenging than the typical disasters we are accustomed to facing here at CU; however, we have adapted and made temporary changes with the health and well-being of our customers, employees and community as our top priority.

Let me take a moment to let you know where we are with our lobby closure for walk-in services. The current layout of this area presents particular challenges with the social distancing recommendations by health officials to limit potential virus exposure. Therefore we are looking at modifications as more of a long-term solution.

The future changes will provide a safer environment and added peace of mind for you, our customers. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you we are well-prepared to service your utility needs through our online services and our Call Center. Additionally, payments can be made online, by telephone, at one of our self-service kiosks, through the drive-thru or mobile app. We know this may not be your preferred choice of conducting business, but let me encourage you to give it a try. You may just find yourself asking, "Why was I not doing this sooner?"

There is no doubt 2020 has offered a considerable amount of change which has required adaptation for all of us. Although the pandemic has led to temporary alterations in how we currently conduct business, rest assured we remain committed to effectively serving our community with reliable utility services. Stay well and we look forward to resuming our normal operations as soon as possible. Give us a call anytime.

Blessings to you all.

*Tim*

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# CU CALL CENTER STILL GOING STRONG



Dustin Carter



Godwin Ikpe



Left to Right, Randy Moore, Jill Bishop, April Swilling, Tasha Beaty, Diane Duggan, Todd Gober



Rebekah Robinson



Javon Sharp

It has been three years since our Call Center first opened in the Fall of 2017, and it has made a positive impact in the way we interact with our customers over the phone to answer any inquiries. You can call us 24/7/365 with questions about your bill, service issues, water leaks, setting up or disconnecting service, and to make payments. The call center representatives have been trained to manage each call and customer concerns in a shorter amount of time than previously. This is a diverse group and are the face of CU via the phone and email interaction. They average between 400-500 calls daily; this takes into account all hours, night and weekend shifts. The Call Center staff are well versed and knowledgeable in all areas of electric, water, wastewater operations, customer service, and billing.

When CU began exploring the idea of opening an internal call center, a lot of thought went into the process as well as research from other industries and their experience in creating strategies and metrics for their own call centers. The focus has always been to provide the best level of service possible, to offer a positive customer experience, and a satisfactory outcome at the end of each call. Whether you call us in the middle of the night about power or water outages or inquiries about your bill, we want our customers to receive a consistent and satisfactory atmosphere with every staff they interact with over the phone. "Our representatives are well trained in the service we provide and the tools we have in place to provide this high quality of service. Our customers appreciate that our representatives are local and familiar with the area. I appreciate the vision our leadership team had four years ago. They understood the positive impact the Call Center would have in our company and community," said John Miles, Supervisor of Customer Service.

Additionally, we never want our customers to ever feel they are being hurried off the phone or followed up with to get their issues resolved. The goal is to be customer focused and to answer any questions in a timely and accurate fashion. "The call center has been a very successful addition to our organization. The extended hours of operation have allowed us to assist our customers at their convenience. We are manned to promptly answer an influx of calls during a large outage and to assure customers that our personnel are working on the situation," said Diane Duggan, Call Center Representative. "I think first and foremost the success of our Call Center has been driven by the employees who work in and support it. Their tireless hours do not go unnoticed, and their drive to continually improve is seen each and every day; even in natural disasters that we take head-on to assist the customer through every possible method we have available. This attention to detail has helped the Call Center stand out even in the midst of COVID-19," said Marshall Stinnett, VP/Chief Financial Officer.

# SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE IN SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

The United Way Day of Action took place July 17, and it looked a bit different than previous years due to COVID-19. There were limited team sizes with safety measures put in place. The United Way also encouraged the community to get involved by being a Virtual Volunteer and make a difference in someone's life. Some ideas on how someone can help others and improve their community are picking up litter in a neighborhood, helping an elderly person or busy parent with grocery shopping, sending a letter or card to a senior citizen at a local nursing home, and reading to a child. CU prides itself in giving back to our community, and this year wasn't any different. We had six employees who participated in this event. They worked at North Lee School doing landscaping work and pressure washing. We want to say thank you to Matt Barnes, John Corum, Kevin Hamby, Tim Henderson, Jimmy Isom, and Woody Miller for their servant spirit and making a difference in our community.

