

# In the Loop

September 2016



**DULUTH ENERGY**  
SYSTEMS

## A Note from the General Manager

Maybe it is because I grew up in Minnesota. Maybe it is because I had great parents. Maybe it has something to do with spending three decades in the United States Navy. Whatever the reason, it is ingrained in me to offer an automatic “thank you” whether I am checking out from the grocery store or the gas station, or anyplace else where I have offered my hard-earned money as a customer. I have to admit, it drives me a little nuts when I am dismissed from the cash register without so much as a simple “thanks” or even a “see you next time.”

Just the other day, I experienced one of those wrong-way thank yous, before returning to the plant and reviewing a list of all of our Duluth Energy Systems customers. It dawned on me that we really have not done our best when it comes to saying thank you to our customers. I would like to use this month’s newsletter to do just that.

The district heating system in Duluth was built and put into service way back in 1932. Some of the buildings connected to the current Duluth Energy Systems steam system have been customers ever since that first day, during the Herbert Hoover administration, when steam first started to hiss and gurgle under the streets of Duluth. Historic landmarks such as the Alworth and Lonsdale buildings, the Hotel Duluth (now known as Greysolon Plaza), City Hall (old and new) and the Depot were original steam system customers and remain customers today. Thank you!

As downtown Duluth has evolved, new buildings and businesses such as the Radisson Hotel, St. Luke’s Building A, the Sheraton Hotel, AMSOIL Arena, all of Canal Park, maurice’s Corporate Headquarters, the DTA Transit Center, and many more have connected to the system. Thanks to all of you too!

Thank you to the tiny storefronts, the small apartment buildings, the big hotels, the huge hospital campuses, and the gigantic convention center.

Steam, chilled water, and hot water systems like those operated by Duluth Energy Systems work in cities and on campuses where the demand for energy is concentrated into a relatively small geographic area. In these places, the cost of infrastructure can be minimized and shared by many users. Each of you, as a Duluth Energy Systems customer, creates a benefit for your building, business, and fellow customers by sharing costs, which reduces the energy rates for all of the system’s customers. By design, Duluth Energy Systems does not turn a profit. The costs to operate this city-owned system are equitably passed through to our customers. The greater the number of customers and the greater their associated energy demand, the lower the rates become for all customers. This is precisely why each and every customer is so important.

A sincere thank you to each and every Duluth Energy Systems customer.



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Jim Green, General Manager  
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## Here to Serve You - Getting to Know Ann Rankila

Ann Rankila joined the Duluth Energy Systems team in February 2015 as the Office Manager. Ann was hired to oversee all local administrative and accounting work in support of Duluth Energy Systems, its operations and customers. Ann oversees the flow of information through the office and is essential to keeping everyone on top of billing, accounts, and the day-to-day office activities related to running a city-owned utility. She is usually the first person people meet coming in our door or getting in touch with our team. Duluth Energy Systems is lucky to have such a people person on this front line, showing incredible appreciation and care for her fellow coworkers and the talents they bring to their work to support our customers.

Ann's versatility and can-do attitude likely comes from her very interesting background, working for incredibly

diverse sectors, including churches and the US Department of Defense. This is probably why she is equally capable of keeping office functions very organized and always taking time out to help the people in our work.

When asked what she is looking forward to in this work, Ann says, "I look forward to being a part of rebuilding this legacy system into a modern system with hot water distribution, local biomass integration, and reducing the usage of water, chemicals, and fossil fuels. We all can play a part in helping this system better serve this vibrant community."

In addition to her work with Duluth Energy Systems, Ann and her husband built their new home. When not working on their home or spending time with family, they enjoy traveling, camping, skiing, hiking, Bulldog hockey, and other sports. Ann has clearly brought a special set of skills and commitment to this work and helps keep everyone working toward a better future for this system.



Ann Rankila  
Office Manager

## Preparing for the Heating Season

Right now, before the temperatures start to drop too far, is the perfect time to take a look at your building and your heating system. Save yourself some money, conserve energy, and make sure there are no surprises on that first chilly day by doing the following:

- Examine the building near windows, doors, and other areas that could have gaps letting heat escape from your building. Up to 20% of heat loss in a building occurs due to gaps around windows and doors.
- Check to make sure steam and hot water pipes and valves are properly insulated. Missing or damaged insulation turns a pipe into a radiator, wasting as much as 10% of the energy they are intending to contain.
- Grab a flashlight and look around for evidence of steam or hot water leaks from pipe joint or valves.
- Locate your building's steam system safety relief valve and determine where its vent piping discharges steam (usually outside the back or through the roof of the building). There should be no steam discharge from the vent pipe.
- Check your buildings steam traps for proper operation. Steam traps separate and remove condensate from your steam system. Inoperative steam traps can waste a tremendous amount of energy and can result in the occurrence of dangerous "water hammer" in steam systems.

Not sure what a steam trap or a safety relief valve looks like looks like, much less whether or not its operating correctly? Call us and we will be happy to come out, at no cost, and show you what to look for. Call 218.723.3601 and ask for Jason or Dan.

Next month we will offer a few efficiency tips for the winter heating season.



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