



Why does the University shut down the central Uptown power plant every year after Commencement?

- The annual plant shutdown typically lasts 2 weeks. During that time, virtually the entire Uptown campus served by the Central Plant has no hot water, heat and limited cooling. The Downtown Campus, Alumni Quad, and certain Uptown buildings served by local systems (SEFCU, Boor, UPD, Liberty, and Freedom) are not impacted.
- The shutdown is primarily necessary to address the pressurized high temperature hot water loop, which provides Uptown campus heating and is the source for hot water as well. Sudden leaks or failures in valves can pose a real danger as well as flooding of mechanical spaces and cavitation/damage to system components.
- Certain components of the system, such as shut-off valves, select pumps, and peripheral equipment like expansion tanks can only be serviced while the system is depressurized, drained, and rendered inoperable. Through the year, these components are inspected and, if need of repair or replacement, they are targeted for action during this shut down period.
- Starting-up the system again requires the addition and rebalancing of corrosion inhibitors, taking time to get to operational conditions.
- Cooling is limited during this period as the University operates absorption chillers, which rely on the high temp hot water to operate. The University also operates high efficiency electrical chillers, and runs these, but directs the limited cooling to high occupancy areas and other places that have no ability to open windows (like University Hall).
- The timing for shut down is geared towards the time of year with the least impact to the University community. As a baseline, it must happen during a 'shoulder season', when there is only limited need for heating or cooling; and that would mean either May/June or September/October. Given the academic calendar, the only option is May/June, which is when there are the fewest activities on campus. The two weeks after Commencement has been this ideal period. It occurs after students have moved out, but prior to Summer Sessions and Orientation. Moreover, if something more involved is found in need of repair or replacement, there is time into the summer to address this critical work.