

Meter Reading Update

Summary and FAQ

Augusta Utilities is always improving to make its systems better for customers, while providing high-quality water and supporting the future needs of the system. In recent years, Augusta Utilities has automated several areas of its operations to support more efficient customer service. One area of improved efficiency is the meter reading and billing process. Currently, customers experience significant lag between meter reading and billing, resulting in confusion and often delays in discovering leaks.

Augusta Utilities will be reducing the number of days between the date a customer's water meter is read and when the customer is billed for that water. The customer will receive a bill more quickly, and together we will be able to better respond to billing problem indicators, such as leaks. In addition, the delay reduction will help customers better understand the cost of water use, which supports Augusta Utilities' goal of water conservation.

Over a 10-month period, the time between meter reading and billing will gradually reduce to about 14 days. To bring all customers into this new cycle and reduce the impact that a one-time adjustment would have, your monthly bill due dates will be adjusted. From July 2013 to April 2014, please note that your bill due date will shift approximately two days each month from the previous month's due date. During this 10-month period, your billing cycle will be shortened.

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THE CHANGE?

Over the recent years, Augusta has invested in automation to allow us to become more efficient in serving our customers. This includes automation in our meter reading and billing process.

Our goal is to shorten the time between the water use and the billing date to about 14 days. With a tiered or conservation water rate structure, we feel it is important for us to minimize the delay between the water use and the billing. This will allow customers to respond quicker to the impact of summer water use and therefore will potentially save our customers money and promote water conservation.

HOW WILL MY WATER BILL CHANGE?

To minimize the impact to any one monthly bill, we have decided to spread this change over a 10 month period, starting with the month of July 2013. For that duration, we will shift each month's billing and due date by approximately 2 business days.

IS THIS A RATE INCREASE?

No.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I PAY MY BILLS THROUGH AUTOMATED CLEARING HOUSE (ACH) PAYMENTS?

The funds will be taken out of the account approximately 2-3 business days earlier each month for a ten month period. It is important that you have adequate funds to cover this change.

WILL THERE BE A TIME DURING THIS PERIOD WHERE I HAVE TWO BILLS DUE IN ONE CALENDAR MONTH?

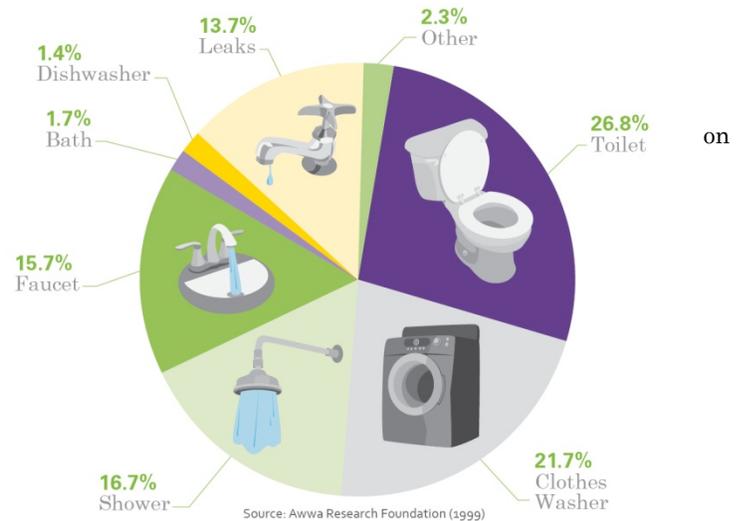
The difference between the billing due dates will be 27-28 days. Since we are shifting the bills for a 10 month period, it is anticipated that you will have a month where a water bill may be due at the beginning of a month and also at the end of that same calendar month.

Water Conservation: *Tips for saving Water, Energy and Money*

Excerpts republished from Conserve Water Georgia. These and more tips may be found by visiting: www.conservewatergeorgia.net or www.epa.gov/watersense

Inside your home

1. **FIX THAT LEAK:** Correct a leaky faucet or toilet and save money: A leaky faucet can result in more than 3,000 gallons of water lost a year while a leaky toilet can result in over 200 gallons a day or 73,050 gallons of water a year. To find out if you have a leaky toilet, place a drop of food coloring in the tank. If the color shows in the bowl without you flushing, you have a leak. Search online on how to repair a leaky sink or toilet or go to a hardware store to learn more.
2. **GIVE YOUR SHOWER POWER:** Taking a bath requires about 70 gallons of water. If you choose to take a bath, place a stopper in the drain immediately and adjust the temperature as you fill the tub. Another option is to take a 5-minute shower which only uses 10 to 25 gallons of water. You can purchase a water saving showerhead to reduce the flow.
3. **TURN IT OFF:** We've all heard it, but turning the water off while brushing your teeth can save up to 8 gallons a day or 2,880 gallons a year.
4. **MAKE IT A FULL LOAD:** The average washing machine uses about 41 gallons of water per load. High efficiency machines use around 28 gallons per load. To save water, wash only full loads of laundry or use the appropriate load size selection your machine. Washing only full loads reduces the number of loads you wash per week.
5. **DON'T FLUSH MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN:** If you own a toilet made before 1993, you are flushing too much money down the drain by using over 3.5 gallons per flush. New high-efficiency models use less than 1.3 gallons per flush. Installing one new toilet could save a family of four more than \$90 per year on their water bill. This is over \$2,000 for the lifetime of the toilet.



Outside your home

1. **WATER EFFICIENTLY:** Look at the plant to see if it shows signs of moisture stress. Use a drip irrigation or micro spray to save about 30% to 50% of the water and water at night or in early morning to avoid losing water to evaporation.
2. **PUT THE RIGHT PLANTS IN THE RIGHT PLACES:** Read the plant tag and ensure it is appropriate for the location you want to plant it. Consider your slope and drainage patterns.
3. **ADD ORGANIC MATTER TO SOIL:** Compost or mulch improves the ability of the soil to hold water and nutrients.
4. **HARVEST WATER FOR IRRIGATION:** Whether from an air-conditioner, dehumidifier, or rainfall, collect water in rain barrels or cisterns to use for irrigation.

Due to recent droughts, the state and Augusta impose watering restrictions. See "Augusta Water Conservation Plan"

Tips for Understanding how to read your Water Meter

LEAK INDICATOR:

Turning when you aren't using water? You probably have a water leak.

Check your bathrooms.

1. Without flushing, listen for water running in the toilet bowl.
2. Put food dye in the toilet tank; leave it for 15 minutes.
3. Check the toilet bowl for any food coloring.
4. If you hear water running or see food coloring in the bowl, you have a toilet leak.

Purchase and install a new flapper, and run the dye test again. If the toilet still leaks, replace the flush valve. If your water meter indicates a leak and none of your toilets are leaking, you may need to call a plumber or a leak detection service.

Gallons Register:

Augusta Utilities reads the gallons register and compares it to the last month's reading to determine water used. Gallons are rounded down, dropping the last three digits. In this example, the meter indicates two thousand gallons have been used.



Brenda Johnson

General Meter Reading FAQs

HOW TO APPLY FOR NEW SERVICE?

New accounts are processed in person. Our hours of operation are 8:30 A.M.- 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. Applicants will need a state-issued picture ID, a legal document showing their social security number, and paper work indicating property ownership or lease agreement/notarized letter from the property owner. We have two branch locations:

2760 Peach Orchard Road, Augusta, GA 30906

530 Greene Street, Augusta, GA 30901

Customer Service can be reached by calling
(706) 821-1851.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO OPEN A NEW ACCOUNT?

Augusta Utilities applies a non-refundable fee of \$25.00 to establish a new account or to transfer to another account. This charge is assessed to the first bill.

IS THERE A MINIMUM BILL?

Yes, Augusta Utilities charges a minimum water and sewer fee even if there is no consumption. The monthly fee applies to consumption from 0 to 3,000 gallons (for residential customers). Please see our water rates.

HOW IS THE SEWER CHARGE CALCULATED?

For residential accounts only, your maximum monthly sewer bill is recalculated each April based on the average of your December, January and February water consumption. The actual sewer bill will be based on the lesser of actual water consumption or the winter average. If there is no prior history then you will be billed for the actual water consumption but no higher than the charge for 7,000 gallons.

IS THERE A LATE FEE?

Yes, if payment is not received by the due date a 10% penalty is applied to your account.

HOW SOON CAN I GET MY WATER TURNED ON?

It depends on whether the customer wants to be present when the service is turned on and the circumstances of the disconnection. The customer will need to visit the office to initiate the process.

HOW CAN I PAY MY BILL?

We offer automatic monthly bank draft, electronic check payment by phone, and electronic check and credit card payments online at www.augustaga.gov. The bank draft and check by phone are offered free of charge. Online payments are assessed a convenience fee of \$4.25 which is passed directly through to the servicer.

WHY AM I ASKED FOR THE LAST FOUR NUMBERS OF MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER WHEN I CALL IN?

This is to prevent any fraudulent activity or identity theft on an account. Augusta Utilities has adopted the federally required Identity Theft Prevention Program also referred to as the Red Flag Rules that went into effect May 2009.

WHAT NUMBER WOULD I CALL IF NEITHER I NOR MY NEIGHBORS HAVE ANY WATER?

This could be the result of a water main break. The number to call is (706) 842-3060.

CAN I TURN OFF THE WATER AT THE STREET FOR REPAIRS OR WHILE THE PREMISE IS VACANT?

No. According to ordinance, only Augusta employees are allowed to operate the shut-off valve. You will need to call us or install a shut-off valve between the meter and your premise. You will still receive a bill monthly until you call in and have the account closed.

CAN I GET AN ADJUSTMENT TO MY ACCOUNT IF I HAVE A LEAK?

Yes. Augusta Utilities will adjust up to two of the highest bills based on our policy for leaks. The customer will need to provide documentation showing the repair was made.

WHAT NUMBER DO I CALL IF I HAVE A WATER OR SANITARY SEWER EMERGENCY?

Please call (706) 842-3060. Our Dispatcher is here to answer calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

WHO DO I CALL ABOUT DIRTY WATER?

Please call (706) 842-4237 to report dirty water. Dirty water is typically caused by a contractor turning valves and redirecting the water to construct a tap or cut a line.

WHO DO I CALL ABOUT PURCHASING A WATER OR SEWER TAP?

Please call (706) 842-3060 and someone will transfer you to the appropriate person. You can view current tap fees at our water rates page.

IF A CUSTOMER COMES IN WITH A TWO-PARTY LEASE AND ONE PARTY HAS A DELINQUENT BILL, WOULD THAT PREVENT ME FROM GETTING SERVICE?

Yes, and services cannot be turned on until all outstanding bills for either party are paid. If the owing party has been removed from the lease, it does not guarantee services will be established.

WHEN AM I SCHEDULED FOR DISCONNECTION?

If the account is more than one bill delinquent, disconnection will occur after the penalty date.

CAN I GET A PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT TO AVOID DISCONNECTION?

No. Augusta Utilities does not offer payment arrangements. The customer will need to pay the past due balance to avoid disconnection.

DOES AUGUSTA UTILITIES HANDLE STORM DRAIN COMPLAINTS?

No. Storm drain complaints can be directed to the Augusta 311 Department at (706) 821-2300.