



**City of West Sacramento
Water Metering Program
April, 2007**

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[Why Water Meters?](#)

Assembly Bill 514 (AB 514), passed in 2003, requires any urban water supplier that receives water from the Central Valley Project, such as the City of West Sacramento, to install water meters on all service connections (homes and businesses) prior to January 1, 2013. The bill also states that the City must begin charging customers for water based on the actual volume used by March 1, 2013.

All water providers in California are required to install meters and bill customers on a metered rate due to this 2003 legislation and other laws passed in recent years.

Water Meter Implementation Program

Installing water meters, setting a fair metered rate and switching all of the City's residents to metered billing is a large undertaking. The City has identified three goals to help guide the meter implementation plan:

- **Plan for the orderly and cost effective installation of water meters**
- **Develop metered water rates and a transition strategy to metered billing**
- **Develop and implement a public outreach and education program to inform residents about metering requirements and offer information and assistance during the transition period**

The City Council adopted the program in March, 2007. The approved program report is available for viewing on this website

The City plans to work with its customers, City Council members and other city staff to address water meter implementation costs, installation planning and conservation education throughout the entire meter implementation program.

Benefits of Water Meters

Water meters are valuable information resources for the City and its customers. Meters can be used to:

- **Budget water use. Customers can track how much water is used on a monthly basis. Using the monthly metered bill, customers can track how many gallons of water are used each month. This information can help families make educated decisions about water usage.**
- **Save water, save money. Reducing water usage can lead to cost-savings on metered bills, as customers will be charged for the**

amount of water used each month. Some water-saving activities are provided on the “Water Conservation” page – are you saving as much water as you can?

- Plan ahead. **Water meters enable the City to monitor water use and compare it with historical data to determine future needs and demands, which is important for long-term planning purposes.**

Program Costs

While AB 514 mandates water meters, it does not include funding to implement the program. In 2005, the City estimated the cost of the metering program at \$5 million. It is now part of the city’s overall 15-year, \$100 million capital improvement program (CIP).

Current water rates already include costs to cover the metering program, so substantial rate increases are not expected beyond those already approved to support the metering program. More specific information can be found under the section “Rates and Comparative Billing” below.

Next Steps

The City of West Sacramento has six years to complete all residential water meter installations and begin charging customers a metered rate. The City is dedicated to providing a smooth transition for customers and plans to share project status updates as the program progresses. Be on the look-out for customer notifications regarding meter installation locations and timelines, metered rate developments and water conservation information.

Status Update

Implementation Plan Status

The City has finalized plans for the meter installation schedule. Installation will be completed in three phases:

1. All new construction (since 1992)

These homes already have meters in existing boxes, but crews will need to equip each meter with new radio-read technology to ease meter-reading activities. The new equipment will be installed inside existing meter boxes.

2. Homes in need of main replacements

Prior to the meter mandate, the City identified various water mains throughout the city that need to be replaced. As part of the main replacement project, crews will now install meters at homes along the project route. This will reduce construction time in front of these houses and consolidate projects. Water meters are installed along the service lateral, usually near the sidewalk, and will be located in a meter box that will be flush with the ground surface

3. Meter retrofits (meter installation)

All other homes that require full meter retrofits will begin in 2007 and are expected to be complete by 2012. Even though 2012 is ahead of the deadline in the law, the extra time will allow the City to provide water usage information to each customer prior to the switch to metered billing.

Notification

City officials are committed to making the meter installation and rate transition as smooth as possible for its customers. As such, the City plans to communicate with residents as progress is made. Customers will be notified prior to any work on their property via mail and/or a door hanger. Other project information will be shared in the city's newsletter, *City Lights*, and through the City's website.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- **None scheduled at this time**

Rates and Comparative Billing

Program Costs

While AB 514 mandates water meters, it does not include funding to implement the program. A program of this size is estimated at \$5 million and is part of the city's overall 15-year, \$100 million capital improvement program (CIP).

Developers have paid for meters installed for all homes built since 1992. Retrofit costs are being incorporated like other upgrades to the water system. No customer will be required to bear the direct cost of metering at their property since costs have already been built into current financial plans and approved water rates.

About Rates

City staff has completed a rate study, reviewing all costs and implications, in an effort to set a fair and equitable rate. The City must create a rate structure that balances the costs to provide safe, reliable water to its customers, while remaining cost-effective. The City cannot make a profit on water rates.

Additional information about metered rates and rate adoption will be provided in the near future (target date is June, 2007).

Comparative Billing

Comparative billing allows customers to see how their flat rate measures up to the planned metered rate. Once a water meter is installed, it will be read monthly and the reading will be converted into the planned metered

rate and provided to customers for comparative purposes with your current utility bill.

This comparative data enables customers to determine what changes to their monthly bill can be expected once metered rates are in effect.

The City plans to provide at least 12-months of comparative billing data to each customer prior to switching them to a metered rate. During the comparative billing period, customers are only responsible for paying the flat rate – not the metered rate.

Voluntary Transition

Many customers will find that they will have lower overall annual water costs under the metered water rates. The City plans to allow customers to voluntarily switch to metered billing after meters are installed on their individual service. As the City begins to read water meters it will be able to report average usage characteristics. Customers using less than the average amount annually would benefit from the metered rates.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

How will water meters affect my utility bill?

All customers will be charged for the amount of water that they use. If you use a low amount of water, your bill will be less than those who use more water. The more water you use, the higher your bill will be.

The City is working to ensure that rates are reasonable. A water conservation program is available that can help you reduce water use and consequently, lower your water bill.

Do I already have a meter?

All homes built after 1992 have a meter installed on the property. Most homes built prior to 1992 will need to have a meter installed.

When will I begin to be billed on a metered rate?

All existing customers must be metered by March 1, 2013. New construction after July 1, 2007 will be metered once a metered rate is adopted, with the intent that they never need to be switched from a flat rate to a metered rate.

Can you tell me how much my metered bill will be?

A metered rate has not yet been adopted. Once metered rates are adopted and each customer's data is analyzed, the City will be able to provide you with a "comparative" bill.

The City plans to provide each customer at least 12-months of water use data before anyone is required to switch to metered rates. This data will help customers assess their monthly water usage and help plan for the

future. Water usage may be about twice as much in the summer months than in the winter, so summer bills will likely be higher than those in the winter.

Will my landscaping or property be impacted by construction?

It is possible that landscaping will be affected during construction; however, all landscaping will be returned to its original condition. City crews will photograph landscaping prior to beginning any work to ensure a successful job on your property.

What happens if the meter breaks? Am I responsible?

The City is responsible for service laterals up to the water meter and the meter box. Customers are responsible for the plumbing downstream of the water meter. A broken water meter is generally the responsibility of the City, as it is part of the city's water system.

How will my meter be tracked? Will someone read my meter? When will meters be read?

The City will use radio-read technology which allows all meters in the city to be read within a day or two. Data is electronically recorded and logged. While city staff will manage the meter reading, radio-read capabilities avoid human error.

What should I do if I think the consumption recorded on my bill is inaccurate?

Please call the City at (916) 617-4575 and request a meter reader come out to check your meter function.

I have a pool. Will this cost me more money?

You will be billed for the amount of water that you use. With proper maintenance, pools should not have to be drained and refilled. To reduce the amount of water you'll need to add to your pool, use a pool cover to prevent evaporation, check for (and fix) leaks and manually clean pool filters.

Water Conservation

Using water efficiently

Water is a vital resource and it is important to use it efficiently.

Additionally, conserving water is an important element of the city's meter implementation program, as customers will be billed on the amount of water used.

The City of West Sacramento is proud to offer programs to help you conserve water and is a member of the Regional Water Authority (RWA), a group dedicated to local water conservation. Some of the resources the city has to share with customers:

- Educational materials and events

- **Water-saving devices**
- **Water-saving tips**
- **Water Wise House Call program**
- **Irrigation guidelines**
- **Xeriscape (water efficient landscaping) plant lists**
- **Appliance rebates**
- **Technical assistance**

Contact the City's conservation coordinator at 916-617-4872 or log onto www.rwah2o.org for more information.

Quick Tips

- **Check indoor water-using appliances for leaks.**
- **Replace toilets and showerheads with low-flow versions.**
- **Make sure your clothes washer is Energy Star™ rated.**
- **Select plants and landscaping that are appropriate for local climate conditions.**
- **Turn off sprinklers and automatic irrigation systems when it is raining.**

Contact us

The City is committed to making the meter implementation program as easy as possible for its residents. Please feel free to contact the City with any questions or concerns.

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**Other Local and Regional Water-Related Resources
Regional Water Authority
H2ouse.org**