

Customer Service Onnections

A publication of Saint Paul Regional Water Services

WINTER 2013

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Cloudy water: a winter phenomenon

Economic success depends on reliable water supply

To Serve You Better

Board of Water Commissioners

(As of Jan. 1, 2013)

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Customer Service
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Changes to water charges take effect

Water service base fee and water usage determine cost

The Board of Water Commissioners and the Saint Paul city council have approved changes to the way water bills are determined.

Water charges are now made up of water use plus a service base fee. The base fee replaces the minimum charge of six units. This base fee is intended to cover costs unrelated to the volume of water needed to meet customer demand, such as general administration, billing, accounting, customer service, etc.

Most residential customers will pay \$3/month or \$9/quarter for the water service base fee

Water use is the amount of water used per billing period, as measured in units. One unit is 748 gallons. Charges for each unit of water have been reduced for 2013, from \$2.52 a unit to \$2.39 per unit in the summer, and from \$2.42 a unit to \$2.29 per unit in the winter.*

The combination of the water service

base fee and the water usage charge result in increased water charges of \$6.41 per quarter/\$24.56 per year for a typical family of four using 22 units of water a quarter.

Property owners in Saint Paul are charged a Right-of-Way fee as well. This amount is based on meter size and remains unchanged from last year.

Water charges do not include sewer charges, which are established separately by each community that we serve.

A public hearing on the water service base fee, water usage charges, and the 2013 proposed budget was held by the Board on Sept. 11 and the city council on Nov. 7. The city council passed the budget, including the fees and water use rates, on Dec. 12. The new changes took effect on Jan. 1, 2013. They are reflected in the enclosed bill.

*The water service base fee and water usage charges apply to the cities of Saint Paul, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood and West Saint Paul. All other customers pay 20 percent more.

Water meter replacement project wraps up

Nearly all properties in our service area now have new water meters and metering systems. The water meter replacement project is largely complete.

Replacing every single water meter in every home and business in our coverage area was a huge undertaking, requiring extensive coordination and communication with our customers.

"We truly appreciate the cooperation

of our customers over the course of this project," said Steve Schneider, general manager. "Without your assistance, this project could not have been completed in such a timely and efficient manner."

Schneider continued, "We are very pleased with the work of our contractor, Northern Water Works Supply, for their commitment to excellence on this project, and dedication to making it a success."

Meters continued on page 2

To Serve You Better

To talk to a Customer Service Representative call Customer Service at (651) 266-6350 and press "0" between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Bills may be paid in the following ways:

Credit Card

We accept *Visa, MasterCard, Discover,* and *American Express* credit/debit cards. To make a credit card payment, or to get information on your account status 24/7, call (651) 266-6350 or go online to: https://billpay.saintpaulwater.com. Or pay in person at McCarrons Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1900 Rice St., Maplewood

Money Order or Check

In person, by return mail with your bill stub, or in one of our drop boxes:

For next-day processing, at McCarrons Center. The drop box is located in the visitor parking area; available 24 hours a day.

For 48-hour processing, located at Saint Paul City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd., West. Doors are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and visitors must pass through security.

Cash

In person only, at McCarrons Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Direct Payment Plan

Have your payment deducted electronically from your checking or savings account. You'll still receive a statement; it will indicate which date the payment will be deducted from your account.

Safe, reliable water central to economic success

- Tap water is critical to the dayto-day operations of existing businesses and to the viability of new commercial enterprises or residential developments.
- From foods and beverages to toothpastes and perfumes, water is the primary ingredient in hundreds of thousands of everyday products.
- Businesses must take into consideration the availability and quality of water when determining where to locate their offices or manufacturing facilities.

Source: American Water Works Association

Meter replacement nearly complete

Meters continued from page 1

Meter replacements began in the fall of 2010, and will be completed by the end of the first quarter of this year.

Less than 1 percent of the system's meters still require replacement. Those miscellaneous installations require home plumbing repairs or were delayed for other reasons.

The vast majority of the meters have been installed and are now being read by drive-by metering technology. The increased efficiency of using this technology has reduced meter-reading labor considerably.

In the past, bills might have been

estimated due to access issues. Now bills will be based on actual meter readings. In the unlikely event that we are unable to obtain a reading or an error code is sent, we will need to access the metering system and repair or replace it. Should this be required, we will notify you by mail. Your cooperation in ensuring the accuracy of your bill is sincerely appreciated.

If you ever have questions about your new metering system or how to read it, please call customer service at 651-266-6350.

Winter cold contributes to appearance of cloudy water

In the winter months, many people notice a milky or cloudy appearance to their tap water. This is caused by air bubbles trapped in the water. It is harmless and will disappear on its own if left out for a few minutes.

This phenomenon occurs more often in the winter due to the colder temperatures. Cold water can trap and hold larger amounts of dissolved oxygen than warm water. Most of our water comes from the Mississippi River, which then travels through a chain of lakes before arriving at our plant. This surface water is much colder in the winter months. Not only is the water cold coming into our treatment plant, but the pipes that deliver the water to your home from the plant are cold as well.

In addition, water in the pipe is under pressure. That pressure makes it impossible for the air in

the water to get out while it is still in the pipes. Once it comes out of your faucet, it is no longer pressurized and the air begins to escape, like opening a pop can. The warmer room temperature also contributes to the release of air bubbles, as warmer water cannot hold as much air. As the air escapes and the bubbles rise to the surface, it looks cloudy. Sometimes there are enough bubbles that it looks like there is debris or small particles swirling around your glass. As the air dissipates, the water clears from the bottom of the glass to the top. Bubbles may attach to the sides of the glass as the water clears.

Trapping air is a natural phenomenon associated with cold water, and it does not affect water quality. If you have questions or concerns, you can always call our office at 651-266-6350.

Check your account anytime at billpay.saintpaulwater.com.