

Water meter replacement

The City has almost completed a multi-year project replacing water meters in homes and businesses across Red Deer to upgrade outdated or unreliable equipment, and install newer, more accurate technology.

Why is The City replacing my water meter?

- Because The City and its customers rely on the reliability and accuracy of readings, we are moving to one of the latest industry standard technologies, Automatic Meter Reading (AMR).
- Some meters in the city are aging. Most have a lifespan of 20 to 30 years, after which time they require replacement.
- Our previous metering equipment is no longer supported by the metering industry.

Billing

Will I see any changes on my bill?

The look of your monthly utility bill will remain the same. For those households with water consumption estimates, bills may be adjusted once the new AMR meter is installed where actual usage can be determined. If actual consumption is higher than the monthly average estimated, the customer may owe a balance. If estimates are higher than actual reads, the customer may be issued a credit to their account.

Automatic Meter Reading (AMR)

How are the new meters read?

As one of the latest industry standard technologies, Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) uses wireless technology similar to a cordless phone to deliver data from a water meter inside your home to meter reading staff collecting the data driving by. This technology is more cost-efficient over the long term and eliminates the need for meter reading staff to enter your property.

The new meters measure consumption in the same way current meters do, but new meters are equipped with a battery and communication chip. When meter reading staff drive by to collect a read, the handheld device “asks” the meter to send a quick, low-level radio frequency signal with water consumption information.

Are the new meters safe?

The new meters use wireless technology to communicate with data readers in much the same way household devices such as cordless phones, cell phones, baby monitors, garage door remotes and wireless Internet routers work. Radio stations and these devices transmit signals through radio frequency, which is all around us. A quick signal is triggered when a handheld meter reading device activates the transmission of the signal. The amount of radio frequency transmitted by water meters is less than the signals transmitted by other day-to-day devices.

Health Canada says exposure to this kind of wireless technology does not pose any public health risk. Read more here: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/radiation/cons/radiofreq/index-eng.php>

What about fire risk?

You may have heard in the news about meters in Saskatchewan starting some minor fires. These SaskPower meters are a different kind of technology – **electric** meters, not water meters – and are made by a different manufacturer than the meters being installed by The City. These electric meters are connected to household power sources and installed on the home's exterior, where rain water and contaminants were determined to contribute to the failures. Our meters use a small battery and are not connected to a household power source.

In Ontario, no fires have been reported, but they're removing about 5,400 meters as a precaution because of the Saskatchewan issue. Again, these are electric meters. There are no known cases of a water meter failing in this manner.

What about privacy?

The privacy of customers is a priority for The City of Red Deer. When the data is sent from the meter to the meter reader, there is no personal profile information connected to that data. The information goes to a handheld device, which is then relayed to Enmax and to The City. Our City's Information Technology Services department ensures there are security protocols in place to protect transmission of the data. The information is shared with no one else.

Installation work

Who will be conducting the work?

One of the City's Water Distribution Operators will install the new AMR water meter.

What happens during replacement?

The Operator will visit you at the time of your scheduled appointment. The staff member will be uniformed and carrying identification. Someone aged 18 or over will need to be at home/place of business to provide access. The inside meter will be replaced with new equipment in under an hour, and in some cases within 30 minutes.

Can I make my own appointment?

Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Utility Billing Service Center or Environmental Services. Appointments are generally booked in 1 hour increments starting at 8 am with the last appointment at 3 pm during weekdays. After hours appointments are also available.

What will this cost?

No charge is made to customers for water meter replacement; it is included in the utility service provided to customers.

What happens to the old meter?

Old meters will be recycled appropriately.

Utility Deferral Program

What is the Utility Deferral Program?

The Utility Deferral Program is a program for Utility customers who have not yet upgraded their water meters to the new AMR technology and still have manual meters.

What will this cost?

Properties on the Water Meter Deferral Program must cover the incremental costs associated with the manual readings and maintaining the outdated meters. The fees are:

- Monthly \$25 manual account adjustment fee for the administration required to manually update the meter read during the billing process.
- Annually, a \$65 service call fee for City staff to visit the property, attain a manual meter reading and to confirm the reliability of the manual read water meter.
- An \$80 no access fee charged to the account and the possibility of disrupted water service if you do not allow City staff access to the meter for a service call.

Does The City need to estimate my consumption?

As the City is no longer receiving monthly meter reading from manual meters, the monthly water meter usage on the deferral program is estimated at the higher of the historical water use or 17 m3. After a manual reading by the City of Red Deer Staff, the water billing will be adjusted to actual usage. Account holders may see a significant increase in the bill at this time.

What can I do to catch sudden spikes or drops in water use?

Residents on the Deferral Program are recommended to check their water meter each month and contact the City if you see a sudden spike or drop in use. Changes in usage could indicate a problem with your meter or a possible leak in your home. In the case of leaks, the account holder is responsible for paying for the water usage.

How do I get of the Utility Deferral Program

Properties can be removed from the Deferral Program at any time by exchanging the old meter for the AMR style. To arrange for an AMR meter exchange please call Utility Billing at 403-342-8203.

Further questions?

Please contact:

Utility Billing Service Centre

The City of Red Deer
403-342-8203

Environmental Services

The City of Red Deer
403-342-8750