

New meter reading routes may impact some customer bill dates

In our continuing effort to be as efficient as possible, the City of San Diego Water Department is updating our meter-reading routes. The routes, which have not been updated in more than a decade, need to change to reflect the growth in San Diego.

While this upgrade will not affect the majority of our customers, some customers will be moved to a new billing cycle. A change in cycle means that customer will receive a new account number and a new billing date. If you are impacted in this way, you will receive a direct letter from the Water Department with your new account number and a further explanation of the changes.

The changes will become effective with the October, 2005 bill.

For most customers impacted by the billing changes, the billing date change will be less than three days. So, if your account has moved to a new cycle, your first bill after the change may come on a slightly different day of the month than it used to arrive. The amount owed could possibly be slightly larger or smaller, reflecting the fewer or additional billing days. Subsequent bills will then be mailed on the new billing date.

Each day Water Department meter readers read routes containing about 500 meters. With this upgrade to the routes, our meter readers will be able to accomplish this daily task more efficiently, including saving a lot of driving which means saving on gasoline costs.

If you pay by check, Automatic Deduction or through the City's Electronic Bill Payment Program, don't worry. Any changes to your account will be automatic and you do not have to do anything.

If you are notified that you are getting a new account number and you make electronic payments through a third party, such as a bank, credit union, bookkeeper, or home software such as Quicken, you will need to change the account number from the old one to the new one.

If you need more information, please contact a Customer Service Representative at 619-515-3500. ●

Workshop participants endorse variety of ways to increase recycled water use

The Water Department is researching ways to expand the use of recycled water produced by the City's two water reclamation plants. As part of this process, the Department embarked on the Water Reuse Study 2005, a comprehensive, science-based review of several options to utilize more of this locally produced water supply. A valuable part of this effort was the recent gathering of input from the public through two American Assembly-style workshops.

The first workshop was held in October 2004, with the second in July 2005. The American Assembly format utilizes selected representatives from various community and interest groups who talk about a public policy subject and adopt a group statement at the end of their workshop. The Assembly statements from both



workshops are available in the Public Involvement section of the Study's website, located within the Water Department's website at www.sandiego.gov/water.

In their statement adopted at the second workshop's conclusion, participants gave strong support for a water reuse strategy called reservoir augmentation, that would use "advanced treated" or "purified" recycled water to supplement imported and runoff water supplies currently held in open reservoirs. Water in these reservoirs

ultimately becomes the City's drinking water after undergoing treatment at a drinking water filtration plant.

The participants emphasized in their discussions that public education about the current technology available to produce "advanced treated" or "purified" recycled water would be important for public acceptance and that they had benefited from this sort of information during their workshop participation.

REUSE continued on back

Changes in billing, collection fees proposed

The City of San Diego Water Department is proposing increases in its billing and collection fees so that it can recover the costs of doing work related to a wide range of responsibilities.

The vast majority of Water Department customers would not be impacted by these fee changes as they are mostly related to development fees for new water services and meters. However, customers who do not pay their bills on time could see an increase in shut off and restoration charges.

If approved, the fee for shutting off service because of nonpayment will go from \$24 to \$30. The fee for restoring water after a payment is made would increase from \$16 to \$25. The fee for removing a meter because it has been illegally tampered with would increase

from \$31 to \$45. The meter reinstallation fee will increase from \$31 dollars to \$38. If implemented, these fee increases would more accurately reflect the full labor and material costs expended when accomplishing these tasks. The service fees were last increased in June 2000. If accepted by the Mayor and City Council, the new fees would be effective January 1, 2006.

"Our customers are very diligent in the payment of bills and the Water Department strives to minimize the need to shut off or remove meters for nonpayment," said Alex Ruiz, Deputy Director of the Customer Support Division. "Last year, out of nearly 267,000 accounts, only 14,402 accounts were assessed a shut-off fee. Also, only 11,516 accounts were assessed a restoration fee and less than 100 accounts were assessed meter removal and reinstallation fees.

"Of the more than 3 million bills issued annually by the Water Department, 78 percent are paid within 25 days of the bill date and 99 percent are paid before any shut-off action is taken and fees incurred. We recognize that imposing fees on accounts where there is some difficulty in paying regular monthly charges may seem counterproductive to the customers impacted. However, it is the Department's policy to recover the costs associated with collection efforts from those who incur the service, rather than having the cost borne by all customers in general."

If you would like to comment on these fee changes, a public hearing on this matter is currently scheduled before the Natural Resources and Culture Committee of the City Council at 9 a.m. October 26, 2005, at 202 C Street, 12th Floor. ●

REUSE continued

Prior to the workshop, attendees reviewed the Water Reuse Study's "Interim Report," which contained research information compiled over the past months about several water reuse options. Six water reuse strategies and their estimated costs were included in the report. Two strategies proposed using recycled water only for irrigation and industrial purposes, utilizing a separate pipeline delivery system, which is color-coded purple for industry standardization and public notification. Both retail and wholesale distribution of the City's recycled water would occur. The other strategies proposed were various combinations of irrigation and industrial uses, creating wetlands, and using recycled water in varying amounts to supplement specific drinking water supply reservoirs in the City's system.

The 35 workshop participants represented various community and planning groups, as well as professional, industrial and environmental organizations from throughout the city. Nearly all had attended the first workshop. The workshop attendees were selected by the Mayor, City Council, and organizations with an interest in how water supplies affect the environment, business, and community at large.

The next steps for the Water Reuse Study 2005 will be presentations to the Public Utilities Advisory Commission and the Natural Resources and Culture Committee of the City Council. The Study team will be ready to present the final report on the Water Reuse Study 2005 to the City Council this fall. No specific water reuse option will be recommended to the Council when the Study is presented. ●

New web pages highlight Dept.'s Operations Division

An excellent way to stay up-to-date with what's going on at the City of San Diego Water Department is to check out our web pages at: www.sandiego.gov/water.

Among the newest pages now on-line are those about the Water Operations Division. These new pages have information on everything from what to do if you find a water main break (including a very informative video) to the Department's efforts in keeping the watersheds clean and safe.

From the front page of the Department's web pages you can also go and look at the latest Department press releases and bill inserts, find out what's new at the City Lakes, access the Landscape Watering Calculator, look at water rates and get hundreds of other pieces of information.

One new way the Department is utilizing the pages is by having more Customer Satisfaction Survey forms available to the public. This way we can get instant feedback about the job we are doing. As long as you're in San Diego, you might as well go surf (our pages)! ●

IMPORTANT WATER DEPARTMENT NUMBERS



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

To report a water line break or a sewer overflow.....	515-3525
To ask a question about your water or sewer bill.....	515-3500
To find out where you can pay your bill.....	515-3500
For Water Conservation Program information.....	515-3500
To establish or cancel water or sewer services	515-3500
To ask about San Diego's drinking water	668-3232
For Lakes Recreation Program information.....	465-3474
To schedule a presentation through the Speaker's Bureau	533-6638
To ask the location of a City water or sewer line.....	527-7482
Capital Improvements Projects Hotline	533-4679
San Diego City Lakes Hotline	465-3474
To report water theft from the Water Department	533-4146

(All phone numbers are 619 area code)