

Splash

Metro Water
Newsletter
Winter 2013-14

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PREPARE your HOME for colder temperatures

Metro Water encourages our customers to be prepared for colder temperatures. Yes, we live in a temperate climate but the great freeze of February 2011 reminded us the importance of being prepared even when we believe Arctic temperatures would never happen in Tucson.

Protect your pipes. Take a quick survey for any water pipes exposed to the elements – typically, they would include the main water pipe entering the house (where the shut-off valve is), irrigation lines, backflow preventers, and, if applicable, swamp cooler lines and swimming pool lines. Any water line that is normally exposed to the elements, where water does not constantly move, is a potential candidate for freezing. There are a variety of ways to protect exposed lines with pipe insulation. Pipe insulation is a low cost solution to protect pipes from freezing and can be purchased at local hardware stores.

Know where your water shut-off valve is. If you need to turn off water to your house, please turn it off at the water shut-off valve at the house, NOT at the water meter. Most shut-off valves for water will be located on the front or rear of the house. It is usually attached to a pipe that rises from the ground and enters the house through an exterior wall. If you know where the water meter is for your house, either on the front of the street or in the back in an alley, then usually the main water valve will be on the same side of the house but nearer the house structure. It is important to know where your water shut-off valve is in case you need to quickly turn off the water to the whole house.

Know the location of your water meter. The meter to your house is located near the street curb in front of your house or in the alley behind the house. It is a rectangular box in the ground with a metal cover. The meter tells Metro Water District how much water flows through it, which means how much water you use. The meter is owned by Metro Water District. You are responsible for the pipes and water from the meter to your house and throughout your property. If you need the water turned off to your whole property, please call Metro Water District at 575-8100 and we will turn off the water at the meter. ■

Metro Water Retirements

Several key staff are retiring from Metro Water this year. Christopher W. Hill, Deputy Manager, retired in October 2013; Michael Land, Chief Financial Officer, will retire in January 2014; and Mark R. Stratton, General Manager, is set to retire in March 2014. Together they share a total of over 60 years of water management experience and expertise with the District. Each of these people contributed valuable strengths to help make the District's first 21 years a great success. They will be missed. ■



Why is My Water Cloudy?

The Metro Water has received many inquiries recently regarding tap water that appears cloudy or milky white in appearance. This occurrence is due to tiny air bubbles that are trapped in the water that is under pressure and contained in a pipeline until the water is released at the tap. This air comes naturally from groundwater which is pumped from wells directly into the distribution system. When groundwater is pumped into a storage tank the air has an opportunity to rise to the surface within the storage tank and escape from the water before being introduced into the distribution system. Air may also enter the water distribution system when a fire hydrant is opened or if a water line break occurs.



Many inquiries regarding cloudy water are received during seasonal weather patterns when temperatures are transitioning from hot to cool or cool to hot. The reason for this phenomenon is unclear but has occurred for many years in the Metro Water service area. Another reason for an increase in air in the water distribution system may be from newer wells that are being drilled much deeper than older wells due to the declining water table. The groundwater at these depths is under higher pressure which makes it harder for the air to naturally escape.

If you have cloudy water, capture this water in a container and allow a few minutes for the tiny air bubbles to rise to the surface and escape from the water. These air bubbles are harmless and not a health concern and will not damage your plumbing or appliances. Please notify Metro Water regarding severe instances of cloudy water. ■

Winter Irrigation Tips

With cooler weather, remember to change your watering practices. Most landscapes will do fine with less water during the cooler winter months. Too often plants receive more water than needed. The winter season is a great time to see how little water your plants really need. This also means changing your irrigation timer to water less.

Consider low maintenance and low water use plants for your yard. Once established, they should be able to sustain themselves with what nature provides except during exceptionally hot periods. This also means you can enjoy your yard more and spend less time working in it. Check out Metro Water's website for plant ideas, or better yet, come visit our demonstration garden.

More irrigation tips at www.metrowater.com ■

Rate Hearing Update

At the October 28, 2013 hearing, the Metro Water Board of Directors approved a \$2.00 increase to the Water Availability Rate for the Metro Main/Hub rate schedule but no change was made to the Water Consumption Charges. Also, the Board agreed to a 10 cent increase to the Water Resources Utilization Fee for all service areas. The Board acted after hearing public comments, receiving feedback from the Finance Oversight Committee, and discussing the District's finances since this summer. The new rates became effective November 1st.

The Board of Directors based its decision on the need for the District to remain proactive regarding generating revenue and monitoring expenses. A primary challenge facing the District is the need to address current and projected increases to its expenditures, including Central Arizona Project rates being higher than anticipated, Tucson Electric Power Company's rate increase, and the impact of the Affordable Care Act. In addition, the District, as well as other water providers, must deal with the uncertainty regarding metered water sales, which has been on a decline over the last few years. Staff is projecting a 2.1% annual decrease in water consumption, which will need to be monitored and reviewed annually. The increase to the Water Availability Rate will cover more of the fixed costs. These fixed costs must be paid whether any water is sold or not; therefore, it is important to have the Water Availability Rate capture more of those costs rather than rely on fluctuating revenues from the Water Consumption Charges, or rate per thousand gallons.

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GET INVOLVED!

The Board of Directors is currently seeking applicants for vacancies on the Finance Oversight Committee. Please contact Warren Tenney for more information at 520-575-8100 or wtenney@metrowater.com



WQARF Advisory Board Seeks New Members

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) for the Shannon Road/El Camino del Cerro Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund (WQARF) site is seeking interested citizens to join in the discussion of the groundwater investigation and cleanup work at this site. This WQARF site includes Metro Water's South Shannon well treatment system which is funded by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

The CAB's main function is to advise the public and ADEQ of issues and concerns related to WQARF site cleanup. CABs are composed of volunteer residents, water providers, and other interested parties who represent a diversified cross-section of the community in and around the site. Metro Water is a CAB member and encourages its customers to participate.

Designated by the State, a WQARF (or State superfund) site is an area eligible for State funds or oversight for environmental cleanup. No one is drinking contaminated water within this WQARF site. All known affected wells in the area are out of production with the exception of Metro Water's South Shannon Well which has a treatment system to remove any contaminants.

If you are interested in being a member of the CAB, or for information about attending a CAB meeting, please call Delfina Olivarez, ADEQ Community Involvement Coordinator, at dco@azdeq.gov or call her at (602) 771-4710 or 800-234-5677, ext. 771-4710. All applications received will be reviewed and voted on by the CAB. You can also find out more information about the WQARF Program, including CAB meeting agendas and minutes, on ADEQ's website, www.azdeq.gov/environ/waste/spstucsites.html#shannon. ■

Rate Hearing (continued from page 2)

At the hearing, 11 residents attended with about half of them making public statements or asking questions. We thought it would be useful to share some of those questions and answers.

A couple of residents asked about the sewer fees on their water bills and their impression that the Metro Water bill has increased higher than what the District has said. The District only sets the water rates. The District does collect the sewer fee for Pima County but Pima County sets that rate. The sewer fee has increased significantly over the last few years and many customers now pay more for their sewer than their water. The sewer fee is calculated based on the water consumption of the December, January, and February, since it is assumed those are the three lowest water use months. If a resident can show that their lowest consumption occurs in a different consecutive three months, they can ask Pima County to adjust their sewer fee calculation by filing an appeal with Pima County. Call 520-724-6609 or visit dot.pima.gov/wwm/apps/sewerbillingappeal/.

Another customer said the District reported in the newsletter that water consumption was declining; however, the reports from the September Board meeting stated that water usage had increased. The General Manager responded that August consumption had a sizeable increase but that September had decreased compared to the previous year. The District looks at the long-term trend, rather than just one month, because that gives a better picture of what is happening. Based on the last fiscal year period, the District saw a 2.1% decline, which was a larger decline than the previous twelve month period.

Another question was why has the District expanded its service area and have the customers in the Northwest had to pay for it. The District acquired the Hub Water Company in 1999 and the Thim Utilities in the southwest area of Tucson in 2009. Both acquisitions were decided after an analysis was done that showed those service areas could support themselves and would have no impact to existing customers.

A customer complimented Metro Water for having a very informative website (www.metrowater.com). The customer viewed some of the financial information online and wondered why projections for salary costs were higher than the actual expenses. The Chief Financial Officer explained that salaries related to the bond funded capital improvement projects were no longer being reimbursed through those projects since the projects have been completed. In the last two years, the District has seen a decrease from 52 full time employees to 46. However, State retirement contributions and insurance costs are expected to continue to increase.

A question was asked about when the RTA fee would retire since Metro has completed those RTA related waterline relocation projects, which is separate from the above noted capital projects. The Chief Financial Officer responded that the RTA Fee pays the debt service on the \$6.6 million bond the District had to take out to pay for relocating those water lines. There are nine more years on the life of that bond. ■



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Office Hours:
 Monday - Thursday
 7:30 - 5:30
 Friday 7:30 - Noon
metrowater.com



The Metro Water office
 will be closed the following
 Winter holidays:

Christmas Day
 Wednesday, December 25

New Year's Day
 Wednesday, January 1

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
 Day
 Monday, January 20

Presidents Day
 Monday, February 17

ENTRANCE RELOCATION

Our office entrance at 6265 N. La Canada Drive is being relocated due to County road improvements. Look for the blue "BUSINESS ACCESS" sign and please use caution in construction areas.



Board of Directors:

Judy Scrivener, Chair
 Dan M. Offret, Vice Chair
 Richard Byrd, Member
 Jim Doyle, Member
 Bryan Foulk, Member

Board Meetings:

Monday, December 9
 Monday, January 13
 Monday, February 10
 Monday, March 10
 Monday, April 14

Board meetings typically start at 6:00 pm and are held at 6265 N. La Cañada Drive. Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month. If the second Monday is a holiday, the meeting is moved to the following Wednesday.

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