

Utility Customer Toolkit Messages and Q&A

KEY MESSAGES

1. Advanced metering technology is an example of the City of Watonga's commitment to maintaining a high quality of life for our citizens through cost-effective, innovative programs.
2. The innovative system replaces monthly manual meter reads with a wireless system that collects multiple remote meter reads per day, allowing for better leak detection, increased billing accuracy, and improved customer service.
3. Our communities' drinking water will remain safe throughout the project.
4. Advanced metering supports the City's commitment to preserving and protecting our environment in a number of ways, including: reducing carbon emissions by taking meter reading vehicles off of the road; enhancing our ability to quickly detect and stop leaks; and providing customers with daily information on water and electricity use so that they can improve their efforts to conserve.
5. Advanced metering will help keep the City of Watonga workers safe by reducing job-related injuries like shoulder, ankle, wrist and back injuries as well as spider bites and bee stings.
6. Advanced metering will enhance privacy by removing the need for monthly visits by meter readers. Further, as has always been the case, the City of Watonga will continue protecting the privacy of utility customer information according to all state and federal laws.
7. Advanced metering will enable us to do everything we can do today, just more efficiently and effectively by relying on advanced radio technology.
8. Advanced metering will enable our customer service to better serve you and answer your questions regarding water usage and billing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Can you explain the installation process?**
 - a. The project includes replacing about approx. 3,000 residential and commercial water and electric meters with new, technologically advanced meters and registers that can communicate usage data via wireless technology directly to the City of Watonga.
 - b. All electric and water meters in the City of Watonga's utility service area will be read using the advanced metering system.
 - c. During the first phase of the project, crews with UTS physically conducted a visual inspection of a sample of nonresidential meters throughout Watonga to help determine specifications for the new system. Customers experienced no interruptions to their water service during the inspection.
 - d. Installation of each new meter and communication module should take no more than 30 minutes in most cases, with your service being unavailable for about 15 minutes of that time.

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- e. The City of Watonga and our contractors and consultants are committed to minimizing impacts from this important project and will, therefore, prepare and work according to reliable, updated schedules and ensure that interruptions in water service are kept to no more than 15 minutes in most cases.
 - f. To ensure that the installation is complete, workers will briefly test the new meters.
 - g. While most work will occur within public rights-of-way and easements, the City will restore to original condition any private property impacted by the installation.
 - h. Before temporarily interrupting individual services, crews will make every effort to ensure that doing so will not impose an undue hardship on the customer. Such efforts will include observing the water meter to see if water is being used and knocking on doors to contact those who may be inside.
 - i. Before leaving the site, door hangers will be left at all entrances to the property informing the residents of the status of the visit – installation complete, installation pending water was being used, unable to access water meter, other.
- 2. Do I need to do anything to prepare for the installation?**
- a. To help keep everyone safe, dogs and any other domestic pets will need to be kept out of yards during installation.
 - b. Always keep meter box lids unobstructed.
- 3. How will I be informed when the installation is taking place at my home or business?**
- a. Since it will take up to six months to complete the project, a letter will be sent to customers between one and two weeks prior to installation in their area.
- 4. Who is doing the work?**
- a. The project is being managed for the City by Utility Technology Services (UTS), which will ultimately be responsible for the day-to-day execution of the project, including recommending equipment and materials, selecting vendors and contractors, overseeing installation, and ensuring the highest level of customer satisfaction.
 - b. UTS managed the first phase of the project, which included evaluating and recommending equipment and systems as well as developing performance measures for the project's implementation phase.
 - c. Contractors working on the project will carry proper identification and have successfully completed a background check.
 - d. Contractors will not need to enter residential property, nor will they be asking for any form of payment from customers.
- 5. How does the system work?**
- a. The system works via wireless signals sent from a radio unit inside the meter box that is connected to the water meter. For electric meters the radio unit is integrated within the

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electric meter. The meter radio unit sends readings to regional collectors. The collectors then transfers the information via communication backhaul to your hosted database which stores the information and the utility can access via internet connection.

- b. Regional collectors will be located on existing water tanks, radio and cell phone towers located throughout the City of Watonga.
- c. Each radio unit will send a 111-millisecond usage report from the meter to Watonga City Hall four times a day.

6. How does this system benefit customers?

- a. Currently, every month, the city has to manually visit approx. 3,000 homes and businesses to read meters. The advanced metering system will take vehicles off the road, significantly reducing the city's carbon footprint.
- b. Thanks to its advanced technology and backup systems in the field, the new system will provide accurate, timely water use data regardless of weather conditions or power outages.

7. How much does this cost?

- a. The total budget for the project is \$783,858.75, which is being funded through the City of Watonga.
- b. Through operational savings and increased revenue, the project is estimated to have a benefit of \$4.7 million over the 20-year project life.

8. What happens with the current meters and equipment?

- a. The existing water meters being replaced during the project will be recycled or offered to other governments for reuse. The existing electric meters will be disposed of properly.
- b. As is currently the case, water meters, and radio units will remain the property of the City of Watonga and the City of Watonga will continue to perform the required maintenance on these units

9. Will wireless technology affect my health or privacy?

- a. The new meters will not negatively affect health or privacy. In fact, overall health will be improved and privacy enhanced by replacing vehicles and manual visits to your home with environmentally clean radio communication. The wireless portions of the system will be operated according to Federal Communications Commission rules, and will not interfere with other radio frequencies in the area. The transmitters use one-quarter of the power of a cellphone. The amount of exposure to radio waves decreases with the square of the distance from the source. Exposure to radio waves from smart meters is absolutely tiny compared to cellphones. In addition, transmission time for the units we are installing totals 15 seconds per day.

10. Where can I get more information?

- a. Call the City of Watonga Light & Water Department anytime at (580) 623-7353 with questions or feedback.

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