

## **Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ**

### *Why is the City upgrading my water meter?*

The City approved the replacement of manual-read water meters with advanced, hourly-read meters in October 2018 following years of consideration, analysis, and planning. The new meters will more accurately capture actual water usage, so some customers may see a difference in consumption and their subsequent bill amount, due to the improved performance of the new meter. The City selected the Sensus FlexNet System, which will automate the City's current manual meter reading process. Installation is expected to be completed by the end of August 2019. City water utility customers will have real-time information on their water consumption and the City will be able to improve service and operational efficiency.

### *How does the new system work?*

The Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system is made up of several "smart" components that communicate using wireless and radio frequency technology. Inside the meter box, a small radio is connected to the water meter that records and transmits a reading on hourly intervals to a base station. These data transmissions last only several milliseconds and have a smaller data size than a text from a cell phone. A base station will be mounted on top of the City's main water tank. The collector stores all the reads and sends daily batch uploads to the head-end software at City Hall.

### *What is the technology that reads my meter and sends it to the City? Is it safe?*

The new meters use wireless radio frequencies, similar to wireless Internet and cable TV, to send and receive information from the City Utility Department. The meters and communication system is regulated to meet all federal communications, safety standards and codes. There is no personal identifying information captured by the smart point or transmitted by the meter.

### *Do I have to pay for my new meter?*

No, the City is covering the costs of the meters and their installation. The City has prepared for the cost of this project as part of its annual capital improvement planning process.

### *Have the new meters been tested for accuracy?*

Yes, the all new meters have been tested and guaranteed accurate by the manufacturer, Sensus, in compliance with American Water Works Association (AWWA) accuracy standards. Additionally, the design of the installation process includes a pilot phase, which allows a sub-set of the meters to be installed and the billing software to be integrated, so the entire process, from the meter to the bill, will be tested and verified for accuracy prior to City-wide installation.

*Will my water bill increase?*

Your new meter measures the amount of water used during the billing period by measuring how much water passes through the meter, which is the same measurement process as your old water meter. New meters may register lower flows that your older meter might not have been able to capture, which means that although your bill may increase, your meter is now accurately recording your water consumption.

*Could I have a leak that is causing extra water usage?*

If you have an unexplained spike in your water usage or show continuous water flow, it may be an indication of a leak. Customer Service will be able to identify a leak based on your consumption profile and leak alarms from the smart meter that will immediately notify Customer Service and you if a leak is identified.

*Who can I talk to about my water bill?*

If you have questions regarding your water bill, please contact Customer Service at 910-892-2948.

## **About the Installation Project**

*Who is doing the work?*

The project is being managed for the City by MeterSYS, a Raleigh-based advanced metering consulting firm, specializing in AMI evaluation, implementation, and optimization. MeterSYS is responsible for the day-to-day management of the installation and will handle vendor coordination on behalf of the City. Ferguson Waterworks, Inc. is the distributor the City selected through a competitive bid process. Ferguson Waterworks will have a project manager onsite and will be responsible for providing and installing the meters.

Installers working on the project will carry proper identification and have successfully completed a background check. The installers will not need to enter residential property, nor will they be asking for any form of payment from customers.

*How long will I be without water during installation?*

While replacement times will vary, replacing a meter should take no longer than 10 minutes for residential meters, during which the water will be shut-off for a portion of that time. The installation crew will make every effort to keep the interruption to your service to a minimum. Commercial and industrial customers will be contacted in advance to schedule installation so as to minimize the disruption to their business.

*Who do I contact with questions or problems relating to my meter replacement?*

The installation team at Ferguson Waterworks has a toll-free customer contact line that is staffed 24/7. Please call them at 1-800-819-2853 with questions or concerns regarding your meter replacement or to schedule the replacement of your meter.

## **About Radio Frequencies**

*What is Radio Frequency (RF)?*

Electromagnetic fields, radio waves, microwaves and wireless signals are collectively referred to as Radio Frequency (RF) energy. RF energy is all around us. It's used in various electronics and appliances, including radio and television broadcasting, cellular telephones, satellite communications, microwave ovens, and radars to name a few.

*Is there a health hazard associated with radio frequency?*

According to several reputable organizations, including the World Health Organization and Utilities Telecom Council, there is no demonstrated cause and effect relationship between low levels of RF exposure and adverse human health effects.

*How is RF regulated? Are there any safety limits on human exposure to wireless and RF fields?*

Since 1996, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has required all wireless communications devices sold in the United States meet minimum guidelines for safe human exposure to radio frequency energy. The limits established in the guidelines are designed to protect the public health with a very large margin of safety. In addition, federal health and safety agencies including the EPA, FDA, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) consistently monitor and regulate RF safety. When an advanced meter is transmitting, the exposure to radio frequency energy is more than 16 times lower than the exposure limit set by the FCC.