

Meter Replacement FAQ

1. Why is my water meter being replaced?

Water meters and their registers often lose accuracy as they age. Therefore, they must be replaced every 20 to 25 years. In addition, the new system will include new water meter technology that will save labor time, ensure accuracy, and minimize the need for utility employees to go on the private property of residents.

2. How does the new radio read device work?

The meters transmit a radio signal containing a meter number and a meter reading that can be picked up by a radio receiver in our company vehicle. The meter reading from that transmission is used to generate a water bill.

The transmission lasts for 7 milliseconds (0.007 of one second) and occurs once every 14 seconds, using less than 100 milliwatts of power. This regular transmission allows SWD to capture readings as it drives by and on-demand should a special reading be required at any time.

In other words, the meters transmit about 45 seconds a day from a single "D" cell battery that the manufacturer states will last 20 years.

3. Where is my water meter located?

Most water meters are located in front of your house between your property line with you neighbors house, or in back of your property in the alley on the property line.

4. What does my meter look like?

Your current water meter is a device with a round face attached on each side to your water pipes. The face has dials and the numbers on the bottom read like a car odometer.

Your new meter will look much the same.

5. What exactly will be installed at my property?

Your existing water meter will be replaced with a new water meter that contains a radio transmission device. It transmits the reading and a unique ID from the meter to a receiver that the meter reading staff uses.

6. Does my meter have to be exchanged?

Yes. The new meter is required for future billing.

7. What if I don't want my meter changed?

This is not an option; all meters will be changed.

8. How much will the new meter cost me?

There is no charge to individual customers for the meter replacement. The new meters are an investment in our infrastructure that will improve billing efficiency and customer service.

9. Do installers need to come inside my house?

No, the water meter is located outside the home.

10. What will they do?

Installers will remove the old meter, install the new meter and clean up the area, if needed. Installers will provide you with an emergency phone number in the event you have questions or concerns after the installation.

11. Do I have to be present for the installation?

No.

12. Who will install the new system?

A member of the Susanville Water Department

All SWD installers have completed training and background checks and will have photo identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

If you have any questions about the person at your door, please call 530-257-1041 to verify the identity.

13. When will the new water meter be installed?

Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Installations will be completed in phases and by reading zones starting in 2010 and ending in 2014.

14. When will this work be performed?

The project began in 2010 and continues through the summer of 2014. In most cases, the transition will be completely transparent and will not affect residents. The majority of the work will be performed during normal working hours of 7:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

15. How long does it take to install the service?

A typical residential installation will take less than 30 minutes, depending on how easily we can access your water meter.

For large commercial meters, significantly more time may be needed.

16. How do I know who is authorized to do the work?

They will be driving marked vehicles, wearing photo identification, and wearing uniforms.

17. Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?

The installer will turn off the water on either side of your old meter during the installation. A typical installation should take 30 minutes and the water will be turned back on when completed. In some cases, other repairs may be necessary, resulting in a longer interruption of service.

Once water service is restored, the installer will attempt to purge any air trapped in the service line. If some air is left in the line, you may notice a sputtering sound the first time you operate a fixture. This should only last a few seconds and will not cause any harm. The first few gallons of water may be discolored.

You can remove any additional air trapped in your line by running cold water for a few minutes. Typically, the faucet on your laundry room tub can be opened to flush out trapped air.

18. What if the valves won't work or a valve is broken during installation?

If the water needs to be turned off at the corporation stop in the street because of a broken valve, the replacement will take much longer. If the valve is broken by our installer, it will be replaced.

19. May I make repairs while the water is off?

No.

20. What if there is a leak at the meter or any other problem after the meter is replaced?

Should any problems arise, call SWD at 530-257-1041

21. Is there any special care or maintenance that I need to do to my new meter?

No, your meter does not require any maintenance by the homeowner.

22. How will this affect my service?

There will be interruption of service for a few minutes during the change.

23. When was the last utility-wide meter replacement project?

Most meters were replaced only when they failed.

24. Will I pay more for water because of the change?

Your water rate will not change at the time the new meter is installed. Any future water rate increases/decreases will be the result of budgeting decisions.

25. Does this mean my bill will be increasing?

Not necessarily. In some cases, your bill may increase, but only if your current meter is under-registering usage. Presently the majority of residents are paying for the water they actually use, while a few residents are only paying for a portion of the water. This condition is not fair to all customers. The new system will ensure fairness and equality for all the residents and businesses from this point forward.

26. Will the appearance of my monthly bill change?

No.

27. What will be the timeframe for future bills?

Bills will continue to be generated monthly.

28. How accurate are the readings from the radio transmitter?

Meter readings obtained over radio frequency transmissions are 100 percent accurate.

29. How often will you read my meter?

Your meter will be read at the same interval as it is now. Your meter will continue to be read monthly.

30. What if I disagree with the reading?

You can request a reading of your meter at any time to compare to the bill.

31. Do the new meters have any other benefits for me?

Yes! We'll eliminate the need for manually reading meters. Accuracy will improve.

In addition to speed and reliability, a leak can be identified much earlier in a customer's service line

Entering your private property to obtain meter readings at your residence will not be required.

32. How is this project being funded?

Through current rates set aside in the Capital Improvement Fund.

33. How secure is the data/information that will be transmitted?

Because of the specialized equipment and alternating frequencies being used, the information would be extremely difficult for unauthorized acquisition or hacking.

The transmission itself contains only the numbers associated with your current meter reading and number identifying your meter to compare with our records to ensure a match.

To protect your privacy, no personal data is transmitted.

33. Will I be able to read my own meter?

Yes, the new meters will have a display so meters can be read manually.

34. What if we have a leak after the meter is installed?

The installers will make every effort to dispatch service personnel as quickly as possible to determine the cause of the leak and to take appropriate action. If there are any concerns or emergencies regarding the meter call SWD at 530-257-1041.

35. How do I know that you have my reading and not someone else's?

Each radio frequency device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique identification number is compared to your account record to ensure that there is a match.

36. Is there a hazard from the radio transmitter in my home?

Itron, the manufacturer, states the radio devices comply with FCC Part 15.247 regulations.

[More information from Itron.](#)

37. Is there anything hazardous inside the equipment?

No, only ordinary electronics and batteries are inside the equipment.

38. Will the radio interfere with my television, cordless phone, or pacemaker?

No, you will not see interference with your television reception, phone or pacemaker.

Of the 105 million Itron radio's in operation for the past 35 years, no interference with any other RF devices has ever been documented.

39. Does this system use a land phone line to monitor and transmit the reading?

No, this equipment uses a radio transmitter to send the information to an employee walking or driving by with a receiver.

40. Is this system monitoring how many people are in my house?

No, this equipment does not monitor how many people are in the house or any personal activity. It is only capable of collecting the reading from the water meter and transmitting it to the receiver.

41. Why did you choose the new radio read meters?

The new meters will eliminate estimated meter readings caused by lack of access to the meter box on. SWD goal is to base customer's water bills on actual water use, not estimated use.

The new, drive-by system is more efficient, saving labor costs in both meter reading and billing. Meter readers no longer need to walk door-to-door for each meter.

With actual meter readings, bills no longer have to be adjusted as they are with estimated readings.

42. How do the radio-read meters transmit?

As the name implies, radio-read meters transmit data using the same airwaves as your AM or FM radio, only on a different frequency.

The radio-read meters operate within the 902-928 MHz frequency band.

This spectrum is governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) CFR Part 15, with which the meters are in full compliance.

[Find out more about the FCC and radio frequency](#)

43. How many Itron radio are in operation?

There are over 105 million Itron radio-read meters operating across the country. They have been in use for more than 35 years.

44. What about other types of meter reading devices that can transmit data over radio frequency waves?

Counting gas, electricity and water meter reading devices across the country, the number of 900 MHz radio devices deployed in residences total more than 105 million.

45. Are there any health hazards associated with this kind of technology?

According to the Federal Communications Commission and the World Health Organization, radio frequency signals produced by radio read meters or other such wireless networks have shown no occurrences of adverse long- or short-term health effects.

The WHO's conclusion is that: "Considering the very low exposure levels and research results collected to date, there is no convincing scientific evidence that the weak RF signals from base stations and wireless networks cause adverse health effects."

[WHO report on Electromagnetic fields and public health](#)

46. Where can I find out more information on Itron Radios?

To find out more about the Itron Radios being installed, please visit www.itron.com

47. Where can I find more information on radio frequency?

Federal Communications Commission

[Radio Frequency Safety](#)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

[OSHA Report](#)

World Health Organization

[WHO Electromagnetic Field Information](#)