



## New Water Meter Project

### WATER METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

As a part of the Water District's commitment to maintain a high quality of life for our citizens through cost-effective, innovative systems, we have partnered with Ferguson Waterworks and Mueller Systems in order to upgrade our water system with the Mi.Net Mueller Infrastructure Network advanced two-way network. The Water District will be installing new water meters gradually throughout November 2018 to January 2019.



The new water meters use the Mi.Net System, which will automate the Water District's meter reading-to-billing process by linking its meters, distribution sites and control devices in a single data network.

The Fixed Based radio technology is designed to automate the collection of meter readings, provide customers with a better understanding of their water bills and help identify leaks that are responsible for property damage and the loss of water.

### How Does It Work?

A radio read meter uses relatively low radio signals, similar to the technology used by cable TV and wireless internet, to transmit water readings to the Water District. The primary difference between the new meter and an older meter is that the new meter can automatically and remotely transmit a customer's water usage to the Water District using a radio signal.



## Is it Safe?

Yes. Your new meters use wireless radio frequencies—just like wireless Internet and cable TV—to send and receive information from the Water District. The meters and communication system meet all federal safety standards and codes. More information on radio frequency safety can be found in our MiNet RF Safety Data sheet.

## What Are the Benefits of This New Radio Read Meter Technology?

- More consistent and accurate consumption readings
- Easily monitor water consumption
- Daily and monthly usage charts
- Compare current usage to previous periods
- 24-hour leak detection
- High and low consumption e-mail or text alerts
- Ability to set budget and conservation goals



## Why Install this Radio Read Meter Technology Now?

The Water District is installing this new infrastructure because the old meters are wearing out; many of them have been in use for over 20 years. As meters age, their accuracy begins to decline.

After installations are complete throughout the Water District, customers will have access to the [Mi.Data](#) web portal which allows customers to easily monitor their water consumption, compare current usage to previous periods, set alerts and set budget and conservation goals.

Customers will have more control over their bills, and the Water District will be able to improve customer service and operate your utilities at a greater level of efficiency.



## **Installation and What to Expect Next:**

Typically, installation will take place Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Meter installers will have **Ferguson Waterworks contractor logos** on their trucks, and will wear brightly colored safety vests. All Ferguson installers have completed training and background checks and will have photo identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

**You CANNOT make an appointment for installation.** However, you do NOT need to be home during the installation, as long as we have safe and clear access to your meter – please remove any physical obstructions that may prevent a meter installation

**In most cases, the replacement will take less than 30 minutes**

You will experience a brief interruption in water services while your new meter is being installed. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Why is my water meter being replaced?** Water meters and their registers often lose accuracy as they age. Therefore, they must be replaced every 15 to 20 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.

**Does my meter have to be exchanged?** Yes. The new meter is required for future billing.

**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.

**What is a radio read meter?** A radio read meter is a system that uses wireless and fiber optic technology to send your meter readings to the Water District. All water meters are scheduled to be replaced with state-of-the-art meters by the end of January 2019.

**Why change the meters now?** The decision to implement the new system was driven by its ability to help the Water District automate the collection of meter readings, provide customers with a better understanding of their water bills, and identify leaks that are responsible for losing treated water. Customers will have more control over their bills, and the Water District will be able to improve service and operate your utilities at a greater level of efficiency.

**What are the benefits of the new meters and technology for the residents?** This technology offers more consistent and accurate readings and 24-hour leak detection. After installations are complete throughout the Water District, customers will have access to the Mi. Data web portal which allows customers to easily monitor their water consumption, compare current usage to previous periods, set e-mail and text alerts and set budget and conservation goals.

**What makes radio read meters different from the meters we have?** A radio read meter measures how much water is used every hour instead of on a monthly basis. The readings allow the Water District to manage overall system use and detect any problems, such as water leaks, very quickly.

**What is the technology that reads my meter and sends it to the Water District? Is it safe?** Your new meters use wireless radio frequencies—just like wireless Internet and cable TV—to send and receive information from the Water District. The meters and communication system meet all federal safety standards and codes.

**Is my personal water use information confidential?** Yes. First, the only information communicated is your meter number and your water usage (the same information that was displayed on the old conventional meters at your premises). Second, your utility usage information will be safely transmitted over secure networks to and from the Water District. As is true now, your utility usage information will be protected and secure. The Water District must also comply with federal laws regarding the privacy, protection and disclosure of personal information.

**When will my new water meter be installed?** Installations will be completed gradually based on billing zones throughout November 2018 and January 2019.

**Can I get an exact date for my meter installation?** No. For the system to work properly, each neighborhood's meters and wireless communication system must be completely installed before moving on to the next, influencing when other neighborhoods are scheduled. Severe weather may also impact the installation timeline.

**Do I have to be present for the installation?** No. Installers will attempt to make contact with the home owner prior to starting the work. If the home owner is not home the installer will complete the work and leave a door tag letting the customer know the work has been completed and if there are any questions to call the 800#.

**Who will install the new system?** Laguna Madre Water District has contracted with Ferguson Waterworks to install the new meters. The firm was selected via competitive bidding. All Ferguson installers have completed training and background checks and will have photo identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

**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.

**What do I have to do to be ready for my new meter installations?** Please make sure there is free and safe access to your existing meter, and that no obstructions are in the way.

**Where is my water meter located?** Most water meters are located in front of the resident's home or in the rear of the property, in a black plastic water meter box. Some meter boxes will be changed during this project, as needed.

**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.

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 kitchen faucet can be opened to flush out trapped air.

**Will I pay more for water because of the change?** New water and sewer rates were adopted on September 26, 2018 and were reflected on your November 2018 bill. A 2018 rate study concluded that the District needed rate increases over the next five years to cover the cost of service and support the capital plan, particularly the recovery of wastewater costs and related capital projects. Your water rate will not change at the time the new meter is installed.

**Will my bill go up even if I'm using the same amount of water as before?** Not necessarily. In some cases, your bill may increase, but only if your current meter is under-registering usage. Whenever a new meter is installed, either with a radio read water meter or a manual read water meter, there is a chance that your bill may increase. Many of the water meters in Laguna Madre Water District's service area are more than 15 years old, and at the end of their functional life. As meters age, their accuracy begins to decline. The new meter will accurately reflect your consumption. All metering being installed are compliant with the 2014 No Lead Law, as well as individually tested to ensure American Water Works Association standards.

**When will I receive my bill?** You will continue to receive your bill on the same schedule.

**Didn't see an answer to your question?**

Please contact the Laguna Madre Water District Customer Service Department at (956) 943-2626.