

City of Suisun's Water Meter Upgrade Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I need a new water meter?

- The city will be initiating a proactive meter replacement program, to replace meters that have reached the end of their useful life.

What is AMI?

- AMI stands for Advanced Metering Infrastructure. AMI consists of a low-powered communication device that is added to your new water meter. The communication device will collect your meter reading every 15 minutes. The device transmits water every 24 hours (once per day) via a secure radio transmission.

How is this AMI meter different from other meters?

- The communication device is battery powered and is off most of the time. It only turns on for a fraction of a second per day (totaling approximately 2 ½ minutes per year) to securely transmit your water usage data. The AMI meters do not communicate with other meters, or with appliances in the home, and cannot turn on or turn off your water service.

How will my water meter be replaced?

- The current water meters will be replaced with new AMI meters in the existing meter boxes. The installation crew will assess the need for any repairs to the meter or surrounding infrastructure. The City and / or the City's contractor may need to clear the area surrounding the meter box in order to allow access. Please trim plants and bushes and clear any obstructions from around the meter box prior to your meter install.

What is the power source for the AMI meter and how often does it transmit my meter reading?

- The AMI communication device is powered by special batteries, similar in technology to those used in pacemakers. The communication device is off most of the time. It only turns on for a fraction of a second per day (totaling approximately 2 ½ minutes per year) to securely transmit your water usage data.

With this new technology will the City be able to shut off my water meter remotely for any reason, including a water leak or for non-payment?

- No. The new AMI technology will not have remote shut-off capabilities.

How does the City ensure the new meters are accurate?

- The meters use electronic registers that are guaranteed by the manufacturer to be accurate. The meter technology has been rigorously tested by manufacturers and implemented in many

large water utilities throughout the country. All meters are tested by the manufacturer prior to leaving the factory.

Why is my water bill higher than normal?

- The new water meters will have a higher level of accuracy compared to the old meters that have reached the end of their useful life. Customers may see an increase in their water bill based on the new meter's higher level of accuracy.
- However, an unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use. Other common causes of high water bills include:
 - A leaking toilet or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed.
 - A dripping faucet or shower.
 - Filling or topping off a swimming pool or spa.
 - Irrigation system issues.
 - Guests or kids home for summer vacations or school holidays.
 - Water-cooled air conditioners.
 - A broken water pipe or appliance / fixture leak.
 - Water softener problems where the unit cycles continuously.

Is AMI secure?

- The City is, and always has been, committed to safeguarding customer privacy. Communications from the customer's meter to the City's data portal is transmitted over a RF channel, using technology that meets or exceeds current industry standards.

The meters do not transmit customer account numbers, names or other personal identifying information.

How do I know that the billing data being sent is actually my data and does not belong to someone else?

- Each communication device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. Before the data received is used for billing, the unique identification number which is associated with your water meter serial number and address are validated numerous times to ensure accuracy and privacy. This process helps ensure you are billed correctly for your water usage. Additionally, after the meter reading is downloaded into the billing software, City billing personnel look for any anomalies that would indicate a problem such as unusually high or low consumption.

Are there any health hazards associated with the new technology?

- No. The equipment operates at a low-power radio frequency, comparable to a cordless telephone. All equipment operates in compliance with state and federal communication standards. Water meters are typically installed away from the house so potential exposure is very limited; the communication device only turns on for a fraction of a second per day (totaling approximately 2 ½ minutes per year).

Do the AMI communication devices meet Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Radio Frequency (RF) limits??

- Like all commercially available telecommunication equipment, the AMI communication devices are required to meet Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Radio Frequency (RF) limits. Equipment manufacturers have vigorously tested and reviewed independent lab results demonstrating that the communication devices meet or exceed FCC limits. Common household items like cell phones, microwave ovens, baby monitors, cordless telephones and Wi-Fi routers emit much more radio frequency energy than AMI meters.
- For more information on the FCC guidelines followed, please go to:
www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/human-exposure-radio-frequency-fields-guidelines-cellular-and-pcs-sites.