

# **Merrimac Water Department Meter Replacement Program**

## **1. Why is my water meter being replaced?**

Water meters and their registers can often lose accuracy as they age. Therefore, they should be replaced periodically. The majority of meters in Merrimac were installed in 2005 or later and are due for replacement. The new system will include new water meter technology that will save labor time and minimize the need for utility employees to go on the private property of residents.

## **2. Does my meter have to be exchanged?**

Yes, this is not optional. The new meter is required to enhance and control costs associated with our billing and meter reading activities.

## **3. What if I don't want my meter changed?**

This is not an option; all meters will be changed and customers refusing to allow the meter to be replaced will face the possibility of having their water supply disconnected or additional charges being applied to their bill. We need the help and co-operation of our customers to make this exercise as cost effective as possible.

## **4. 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. Your new meter will have a digital face without dials, and you will not see a meter reading unless you shine a flashlight into the light sensor.

## **5. Where is my water meter located?**

Most water meters are located about three feet off the floor in the basement or crawl space of your home. It is usually located on the wall facing the street or alley (if the water main is in the alley).

## **6. 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 milli-watts of power. This regular transmission allows the NFWB 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.

## **7. How much will the new meter cost me?**

There is no charge for the meter replacement. The new meters are an investment in our infrastructure that will improve billing and meter reading efficiencies.

## **8. Do installers need to come inside my house?**

Yes, this cannot be avoided on the basis the water meter is located inside the home.

## **9. What will they do inside my house?**

Installers will remove the old meter and take a note of the final meter reading on the old meter, install the new meter and leave the work area tidy.

## **10. Do I have to be present for the installation?**

Yes, for your peace of mind, we require that an adult be present during the installation. The installer will not enter your home unless authorized to do so by someone 18 years old or older. The installer will not enter your home if your children are alone.

## **11. What if I am a tenant and do not own this property?**

If you are a tenant, you will be asked to provide the installer with access to the meter. We will have contacted the owner and arranged a time/date for the meter to be changed and you should have been made aware of this.

**12. I am an owner and have tenants, but I do not reside at the property. What should I do?**

If you have tenants but do not reside on your property, you are responsible for calling the installer for an appointment and for providing access to the meter at the allotted appointment time

**13. Who will install the new system?**

Merrimac Water Department employees. For security purposes **ALL** Merrimac installers can show ID and drive marked vehicles. If you have any questions about the person at your door, please call Merrimac Water Department at 978-346-8407 to verify the identity.

**14. When will the new water meter be installed in my home?**

You will receive a letter asking you to call Merrimac Water Department to schedule an appointment. You can schedule this appointment at your convenience, Monday through Friday. Installation appointments will be scheduled at the time given, we arrive on time – there is no window of waiting.

**15. What if I need to reschedule an appointment?**

You will need to contact Merrimac Water Department prior to your scheduled appointment day. The scheduling office is open Monday - Friday 8-4 and the telephone number is 978-346-8407 should you need to reschedule. We appreciate a 24-hour notice.

**16. Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?**

Yes, 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 faucet on your laundry room tub can be opened to flush out trapped air.

**17. How much room do installers need?**

If possible, a 3' X 3' area.

**18. What if there is something in front of or blocking the meter?**

Please plan to have clear access to the meter when the installer arrives. The water meter is the property of Merrimac Water Department and homeowners are obligated to provide clear and unobstructed access to the water meter. If there are boxes or stored items in the way, these items must be cleared prior to the arrival of the meter installer. The installer is not allowed to move your personal items and this may delay the installation process. If, for any reason, the water meter has been covered by drywall or paneling, it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that the meter is accessible. It is your responsibility to make sure that the meter is completely accessible and the area is well lit.

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

The installer will explain procedures for problems prior to leaving a residence. You will be provided with an emergency phone number to call should any problems arise.

**20. Can I cover up my meter after the install?**

The meter needs to be accessible at any time. If you have done renovation work, your meter still needs to be accessible. This could be an access panel or other means of accessing it.

**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. However, you should be careful not to damage the meter or allow temperatures in your basement to drop to levels that would freeze the meter during the winter months. Be especially careful of your meter freezing if you have renovated and your meter is now behind a wall or panel.

**You will be charged for replacing the meter if it should freeze or be damaged.**

**22. How will this affect my service?**

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

**23. 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.

**24. How accurate are the readings from the radio transmitter?**

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

**25. What if I need a meter reading between regular readings?**

You can take a reading of the water meter yourself at any time.

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

The new meter has an LCD panel on top of register that will display a faucet icon when it detects a leak. A flashing faucet indicates an intermittent leak such as a leaky toilet flapper valve. A faucet icon that is displayed constantly is a continuous leak such as a hose left on outside. In addition the LCD panel displays a flow indicator arrow which confirms if meter is currently in use. This would also indicate if there is low flow water usage or reverse flow through the meter. As a customer service benefit, a homeowner can visit the meter location and access this information by shining a flashlight at the LCD panel. The display will provide the above information as well as toggle between meter reading (9 digits) and current flow rate (3 digits). The flow rate is the average rate of flow in the last 30 seconds. This will allow homeowners to monitor water usage and proactively manage leaks and water usage.

**27. Will I be able to read my own meter?**

Yes, the new meters will have a digital display so meters can be read manually. You will have to shine a flashlight onto the face of the dial to see the reading.

**28. 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. When your meter is installed, you will receive a phone number to call if there are any concerns or emergencies regarding the meter.

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

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

**30. Why did you choose the new radio read meters?**

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.