



WATER SERVICE UPGRADE PROJECT

The Water Service Upgrade Project is an important project forthcoming within the next two months affecting each customer of the Rainbow Municipal Water District. Once the project begins it will span over a course of 18 months, phased throughout applicable billing cycles. This expanded portion of our newsletter is intended to provide you with more detailed information regarding the Water Service Upgrade Project and ease any concerns or answer any questions you may have. Should you need additional information after reading this newsletter, please feel free to contact us by email at wsup@rainbowmwd.com or visit our website at www.rainbowmwd.com.

BACKGROUND

The connection of your water service (pictured here) to our distribution system is the main point of contact between the District (RMWD) and our customers. This connection is where we measure the water as well as provide certain features to help you manage your water use. Since a great deal of our systems are approaching the 40-year mark or over, we have identified the critical need to perform upgrades before these systems begin to fail causing impact to your service.



As most of our customers are aware, the District purchases the water delivered to you from the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA). Approximately 70% of the cost shown on your water bill goes directly to SDCWA. Each year water is purchased from SDCWA and transported through eight (8) large meters connecting to our system which is then stored and distributed to our customers through more than 8,000 smaller meters located at each property.

Due to the age of our current water meters, we sell 7% less water passed through customer water meters than we buy from SDCWA. We have done extensive meter testing studies and estimate over 6% of this unsold water is actually going through poorly functioning meters. While this may not seem like a large amount, all of our customers share in an extra cost of approximately 1.6 million dollars per year for this unsold or non-revenue water.

THE UPGRADE

As part of this project we will be replacing over 5,000 older meters with new, accurate meters, so water purchases are more closely aligned with our actual water sales. Below are several activities we will be performing during the upgrades.



THE WATER METER

ISSUE: A vast amount of water services have broken, substandard or undersized meter boxes.

SOLUTION: As part of this project we will be installing new standardized meter boxes to contain the components making up your water service. This will help ensure that should you need to shut off your water or want to read your meter, you can safely and easily access your water service.



THE SIGNAL

ISSUE: Nearly 75% of our customer meters are outfitted with a separate radio system that greatly decreases labor costs associated with manually walking our system to gather reads. While this system has worked fairly well, the radio system is separate from the meter and connected with a wire frequently damaged by rodents or other external factors. In addition, many of these radios have batteries nearing the end of their useful lives.

SOLUTION: As part of this project we will be installing a new radio meter reading system. This system has a few features benefiting customers in specific ways. First, this system is integrated into the meter register itself so there are no wires. This will decrease costs incurred with responding to dozens of rodent wire damage calls each month. Second, this new system will allow our customer service staff to visit a customer at their home, connect wirelessly to the meter, and show detailed water consumption graphs on a tablet. We will also be much better equipped to provide water consumption data to our customers during field visits.



THE WATER SHUT OFF

ISSUE: Several thousands of our customers do not have water shutoff valves downstream of their meters. This causes excessive water loss when the customer has a leak but cannot shut it off. The District has a special valve called a “curb stop” just before the meter that requires special tools and should not be operated by the customer.

SOLUTION: As part of this project we will be installing easy to operate ball valves on the customer side of the meter for your convenience. We will not be installing these valves for those customers who have backflow preventers just downstream of their meters since the backflow device already comes equipped with two easy access valves.



THE PRESSURE REGULATOR

ISSUE: A smaller number of customers have District owned and operated pressure regulators on the District side of the meter. These regulators are located in areas with particularly high pressure, tend to fail, and cause damage.

SOLUTION: While at each service, we will be replacing old pressure regulating valves with new ones. We have an ongoing project attempting to reduce pressure in our water mains so over time these individual valves will become less important. In the meantime, this will help prevent our customers from experiencing high pressure spikes.

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT YOU?

This project will affect nearly every customer of RMWD. The exceptions will be newer homes constructed over the last few years. Here is what you can expect:

TIMELINE OVERVIEW

We will be performing this work over an approximate 18-month timeframe with notices being sent out to particular neighborhoods a few weeks in advance. For most customers, we will need to shut off your water while our Contractor performs the work. If we are just replacing the meter, the shutoff should only take 15-30 minutes. In cases where more extensive plumbing work is required the shutoff could exceed an hour. We will take all possible steps to minimize the water outage at your property.

NOTICES

As the time for work in your neighborhood approaches we will be placing signs in your area with actual work dates. These signs will also include information and a QR code allowing access to our project website at www.rainbowmwd.com/wsup. Here is an example of what those signs and QR code look like. Feel free to utilize this QR Code to easily access the website for additional information.



The Official
WSUP QR
Code.

BEFORE THE UPGRADE

Before shutting off the water, the Contractor will attempt to contact someone at the property. If no one is reachable the Contractor will be instructed to proceed with the work. Should you have a special situation at your home where this could cause an issue, please contact us at wsup@rainbowmwd.com to discuss what accommodations can be provided. If you have extensive vegetation around your current meter box, we ask that it be trimmed back and cleared at least three (3) feet on all sides as required per our existing policies. We also request you look at your water service and take appropriate action before the upgrade project begins in your area.

Failure to meet these requests will result in our Contractor performing the prep work and may not have your preferred outcome. Should you have decorative paving, retaining walls, or other structural features in our easement where our meter box is located this will need to be removed. In the case of significant encroachments, you will most likely be contacted by our Engineering department staff to address the encroaching facilities.

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

In many cases, the Contractor will need to make a new connection to your privately owned water system due to the lay length of the meter which requires a valve longer than what is currently in place. The Contractor will cut into the line and professionally reconnect the new meter and valve to your plumbing.

THE OUTCOME

“WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?”

Our Contractor is required to complete the work and return the service area to its original condition. If you notice an issue with the work performed by the Contractor, please contact us at wsup@rainbowmwd.com and we will address the matter as soon as possible. Should the issue be of an urgent nature, please call us at (760) 728-1178 Ext. 328.

WARRANTY

There will be a one (1) year contractor warranty for any work performed requiring connection to your plumbing system. This warranty extends from the point of connection up to five (5) feet of your private plumbing systems. Please contact us at wsup@rainbowmwd.com or (760) 728-1178 Ext. 328 should you have any concerns.

THE NEW METER

Older water meters can be inaccurate and sometimes do not register all the water passing through them. After the work is complete you will have a new water meter. In many cases this new water meter will be more accurate than the one replaced.

The new meters are factory calibrated and each have individual test results documenting their accuracy. Even if you use the same amount of water as you did before the meter was replaced, it is likely the new meter will register use more accurately and your water bill may increase as a result. For most customers, this will be a small percentage increase, but for some it may be larger.

THE OLD METER

We will be retaining the old meters for 90 days after replacement. We will not be testing these devices upon removal as this would be prohibitively expensive. In limited cases we can test old meters in the event a very large differential occurred between your previous and new bills. Keep in mind, after 90 days removed meter will be scrapped and testing will no longer be possible. In the replacement of thousands of meters, conditions may vary including possible damage during the removal process; therefore, we cannot guarantee every meter will be available for later testing. We will, however, ensure care is taken in order to safeguard the meters to the best of our ability. Any concerns regarding this testing process can be brought to our attention at wsup@rainbowmwd.com.

THANK YOU

On behalf of the Rainbow Municipal Water District we would like to thank you for your patience during this transition process with the water service upgrades. We welcome any further questions or concerns you may have as we lead up to the project. You can always reach us at the contact information provided below and we will respond in a timely manner.

CONTACT

Email: wsup@rainbowmwd.com

Phone: (760) 728-1178 Ext. 328