

Q&A

KEY MESSAGES

1. Advanced metering technology is an example of City of Liberty's commitment to maintaining a high quality of life for our citizens through cost-effective, innovative programs.
2. The innovative system replaces monthly manual meter reads with a wireless system that collects multiple remote meter reads per day, allowing for better leak detection, increased billing accuracy, and improved customer service.
3. Our communities' drinking water will remain safe throughout the project.
4. Advanced metering supports the City of Liberty's commitment to preserving and protecting our environment in several ways, including reducing carbon emissions by taking meter reading vehicles off the road; enhancing our ability to quickly detect and stop leaks; and providing customers with daily information on water use so that they can improve their efforts to conserve.
5. Advanced metering will help keep Liberty's workers safe by reducing job-related injuries like shoulder, ankle, wrist, and back injuries as well as spider bites and bee stings.
6. Advanced metering will enhance privacy by removing the need for monthly visits by meter readers. Further, as has always been the case, City of Liberty will continue protecting the privacy of utility customer information according to all state and federal laws.
7. Advanced metering will enable us to do everything we can do today, just more efficiently and effectively by relying on advanced radio technology.
8. Advanced metering will enable our customer service to better serve you and answer your questions regarding water usage and billing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Can you explain the installation process?**
 - a. The project includes replacing approximately 1600 residential and commercial water meters with new, technologically advanced meters and registers that can communicate usage data via wireless technology directly to City of Liberty.
 - b. All meters in Liberty's utility service area, including domestic water, irrigation, and reclaimed water, will be read using the advanced metering system.
 - c. Installation of the new meter and communication module should take no more than 30 minutes in most cases, with your water service being unavailable for about 15 minutes of that time.
 - d. City of Liberty and our contractors and consultants are committed to minimizing impacts from this important project and will, therefore, prepare and work according to reliable, updated schedules and ensure that interruptions in water service are kept to no more than 15 minutes in most cases.

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- e. To ensure that the installation is complete, workers will briefly test the new meter.
 - f. While most work will occur within public rights-of-way and easements, the City of Liberty will restore to original condition any private property impacted by the installation.
 - g. Before temporarily interrupting individual water services, crews will make every effort to ensure that doing so will not impose an undue hardship on the customer. Such efforts will include observing the meter to see if water is being used and knocking on doors to contact those who may be inside.
 - h. Before leaving the site, door hangers will be left at all entrances to the property informing the residents of the status of the visit – installation complete, installation pending water was being used, unable to access water meter, other.
- 2. Do I need to do anything to prepare for the installation?**
- a. To help keep everyone safe, dogs and any other domestic pets will need to be kept out of yards during installation.
 - b. Always keep meter box lids unobstructed.
- 3. How will I be informed that the installation has taking place at my home or business?**
- a. Since it will take up to two months to complete the project, door hangers will be placed at the entrances to the property (front door, side door, garage door) after installation has been completed.
- 4. Who is doing the work?**
- a. The project is being managed for the City by Ferguson Waterworks, which will ultimately be responsible for the day-to-day execution of the project, including recommending equipment and materials, selecting vendors and contractors, overseeing installation, and ensuring the highest level of customer satisfaction.
 - b. Ferguson Waterworks managed the first phase of the project, which included evaluating and recommending equipment and systems as well as developing performance measures for the project's implementation phase.
 - c. Contractors working on the project will carry proper identification and have successfully completed a background check.
 - d. Contractors will not need to enter residential property, nor will they be asking for any form of payment from customers.
- 5. How does the system work?**
- a. The system works via wireless signals sent from a small radio unit inside the meter box that is connected to the water meter. The meter radio unit sends readings to regional collector units that then transmit the meter reading data to receivers in City Hall.

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- b. Each radio unit will send a 111-millisecond usage report from the meter to Liberty four times a day.
- 6. How does this system benefit customers?**
 - a. Currently, every month, the city must manually visit approximately 1600 homes to read meters. The advanced metering system will take vehicles off the road, significantly reducing the city's carbon footprint.
 - b. Thanks to its advanced technology and backup systems in the field, the new system will provide accurate, timely water use data regardless of weather conditions or power outages.
- 7. How much does this cost?**
 - a. The total budget for the project is \$742,835.64, which is being funded through the Liberty's Utility Fund.
- 8. Is this going to raise my water bill?**
 - a. The City of Liberty has a water loss average of 32%, that is 21% to 32% of water is not being billed to customers because of faulty meters and leaks in the ground. Some residents will see their bills raise a little, but most will not see an increase in there billing.
 - b. Water rates will not change at the current cost to customers.
- 9. What are our current water rates?**
 - a. Currently the Base Rate for water Inside the City is \$16.52 for 2000 gallons, and Outside the City is \$22.56 for 2000 gallons.
 - b. Over the 2000-gallon mark, customers are billed \$3.99 per 1000 gallons Inside the City and \$5.49 every 1000 gallons Outside the City.
- 10. If our water rates are so low, then why are our bills so high?**
 - a. Our water is bought from **Pickens Water Authority**, the City of Liberty maintains a payment contract with them for the cost of water.
 - b. Our sewer is Treated by **Pickens County**. The current cost of sewer treatment is \$19.34 for the first 2000 gallons inside the City, and \$25.00 for 2000 gallons Outside the City.
 - c. Over the 2000-gallon mark, the cost is \$9.46 per 1000 gallons Inside the City, and \$11.85 per 1000 gallons Outside the City. The City of Liberty has no other option at this time to be able to lower sewer costs, since it is a county run program.
- 11. What happens with the current meters and equipment?**
 - a. The existing meters being replaced during the project will be recycled or offered to other governments for reuse.
 - b. As is currently the case, water meters, and radio units will remain the property of the City of Liberty and the City will continue to perform the required maintenance on these units

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12. Will wireless technology affect my health or privacy?

- a. The new meters will not negatively affect health or privacy. In fact, overall health will be improved, and privacy enhanced by replacing vehicles and manual visits to your home with environmentally clean radio communication. The wireless portions of the system will be operated according to Federal Communications Commission rules and will not interfere with other radio frequencies in the area. The transmitters use one-quarter of the power of a cellphone. The amount of exposure to radio waves decreases with the square of the distance from the source. Exposure to radio waves from smart meters is absolutely tiny compared to cellphones. In addition, transmission time for the units we are installing totals 15 seconds per day.

13. Where can I get more information?

- a. Call the City of Liberty's Utilities Department anytime at (864)843-3177 x2 with questions or feedback.