

Water Meter Replacement Project

Frequently Asked Questions

The City of Northville is beginning a major project to replace water meters throughout the City to ensure more accurate readings and upgrade to the latest meter technology. The following frequently asked questions will help residents and business owners plan for the replacement and know what to expect.

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 an Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) technology that will save labor time, prevent recording errors, minimize wear and tear on vehicles, minimize the need for City employees to go on the private property of residents, and potentially allow water line leaks to be identified earlier by analysis of data collected. AMR technology will also streamline the process of transferring responsibility for an account when a customer moves in or out.

How does Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) work?

A small box, called a Meter Interface Unit (MIU), is installed on the exterior of your home. It is connected to your new water meter and transmits a radio signal to a data collector which relays the information to the City's Utility Billing. The system will provide hourly readings.

What exactly will be installed at my property?

Two components will be replaced with new equipment. Your existing water meter will be replaced with a new water meter including an unmeasured flow reducer (UFR) to more accurately record water use and assist in identifying leaks. Your existing water meter is connected to a component located on the exterior of your property. That component will be replaced with a radio frequency meter interface unit (MIU), which collects meter usage data and remotely transmits the information to data collectors. The MIU and water meter work as a unit to detect intermittent leaks, continuous leaks, reverse flow situations and zero usage situations.

Where is my water meter and what does it look like? All water meters are located inside. Most common areas to be installed is the basement, crawl space, utility room or even in the garage

Where will the MIU be placed?

The MIU will be placed on the outside of your home and positioned to give the best transmission results to the collector. It may be in the same place as your existing touchpad but not always.

Who will install the new system?

The City has contracted with Utility Metering Solutions (UMS) to install the new metering components. You will recognize the utility employees when you see them, because they will wear uniforms and photo I.D. badges. All UMS installers have completed training and background checks and will have identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

How long does it take to install the service?

Installation will take about an hour, depending on how easily we can access your water meter and connect with your meter interface unit. We ask that you please be sure to be at home at the scheduled time.

Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?

Yes. There will be a temporary service interruption during the meter replacement – typically 20 minutes. In some cases, other repairs may be necessary resulting in a longer interruption of service. Once water service is restored, 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.

How much room do installers need?

If possible, a 3' X 3' area.

Can I cover up my meter after the install?

No. Access needs to be available at all times.

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

Please plan to have access to meter when installer arrives.

Do installers need to come inside my house?

Yes, the water meter is actually located inside the home and they will be running a wire to the outside of the house to a Meter Interface Unit (MIU).

I own a business. Who do I call to schedule an appointment?

The procedures for small commercials and residential will be the same for scheduling purposes. Larger meters will require additional time with installers working to limit interruption of services.

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. As before, the City will take care of all maintenance; however, you should be careful not to damage the meter.

Will I pay more for water as a result of the change?

Your water rate will not change at the time the new meter is installed. Any future water or sewer increases/decreases will be the result of budgeting decisions.

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.

Does this mean my bill will be increasing? Not necessarily. In some cases, your bill may increase, but only if your current meter is underreporting usage. Presently the majority of residents are paying for the water they are actually using, while a few residents are only paying for a portion of the water. This condition is not fair to all customers. The new system will ensure fairness and equality for all the residents and businesses from this point forward.

When was the last city-wide meter replacement project?

Most meters were replaced in 1998 in City of Northville.

What is the current and new type of meters?

Neptune meters are currently in use. The new meters will be Neptune meters which are manufactured in Alabama.

What if I don't want my meter changed?

This is not an option; all meters will be changed.

Do I have to be present for the installation?

For your peace of mind, we require that an adult be present during the installation. The installer technician will not enter your premises unless authorized to do so by someone aged 18 or older. He or she will not enter if your children are at home alone.

How accurate is the system?

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

How often will you read my meter?

The radio frequency can provide as many as 24 reads per day, which is hourly. However, you will still be billed on a by-monthly basis.

What if I need a meter reading between regular readings?

Daily readings are available with AMR technology.

What if I disagree with the reading?

We will ask your meter for a new reading and call you with the new information it provides. Customers can also obtain a reading at any time to compare to bill.

Does Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) have any other benefits for me?

Yes! Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) will allow us to detect possible leaks in your plumbing faster and notify you of problems before they become serious...and costly. We'll eliminate the need for manually reading meters monthly. Accuracy will improve. In addition to speed and reliability, we won't have to enter your home, except for periodical maintenance or replacement of system components, when needed. Monthly reads at your residence will not be required.

How secure is the data/information that will be transmitted?

Because of the equipment and frequencies being used, the information would be extremely difficult for unauthorized acquisition or "hacking".

Will I be able to read my own meter?

Yes, the new meters will have a digital display so meters can be read manually.