

La Mesa Water Cooperative

WaterGram - March 2016

»»»REMEMBER TO VOTE FOR DIRECTORS USING THE ENCLOSED BALLOT«««

Board Approves Installation of New Smart Meters

As water meters age they become increasingly insensitive and tend to under report usage. This is particularly true for low flow situations like swamp coolers. Because worn meters increase maintenance costs and reduce revenue, as part of our established preventative maintenance program we regularly replace our old or worn meters.

Meter technology has changed very little in recent years, but there has been a revolution in meter reading technology. Over the last 15-20 years many utilities have installed meters that can be read remotely. These systems have been complicated, expensive, and suitable only for large utilities. However, recently costs have sharply declined and the technology has become less complex and more reliable.

After investigating available systems, last year the Board voted to convert to remote reading meters. Because replacing a meter, including labor, costs the Coop about \$400 we cannot do all of them at once. Instead, we plan to replace all of our meters with Badger Smart Meters over the next 3-5 years. Replacement will begin with our oldest meters. We installed about 35 new meters last fall and we plan to install around 75 this year.

How Do They Work?

Badger Smart Meters are read each hour and the data are sent to a server once a day over existing cellular data links. This is a completely automatic process. The data are then sent to the Coop. All of the electronics are located in the meter enclosure and are not visible on the surface. The meters are powered by a battery with an estimated 10 year working life.

Additional Cost to Members

The meters and all of the associated services will be provided to members at no additional cost.

Areas with Poor Cellular Service

Some areas in the Coop have very poor cellular service. Because cellular data service requires far fewer resources than voice service we have usually been able

to get data service even when voice is not available. In a few areas we may have to install a small exterior antenna, but if this is necessary they will be less noticeable than our present pipe mounted displays.

Important Advantages for Members

Members will be able to view their own data on a special website (eyeonwater.com). This will allow members to monitor their daily water usage via internet or cell phone. Importantly, members can request a text or e-mail warning when the system detects usage patterns suggestive of a leak. This allows potential leaks to be detected within a day or two. This allows the member to avoid or minimize charges for wasted water and prevent damage to their property. This feature should be of particular value to members who often out of town.

Our initial experience with the leak detection and warning feature has been very encouraging. The system can detect small leaks that have the potential to go on for months or years before they are large enough to give visible evidence of their presence. By that time substantial and expensive structural damage may have occurred.

How Will Replacements be Done

When meters are scheduled to be replaced the Coop will contact the member. Because this work is done as time permits, we usually can not specify a precise day and time. You don't need to be home to have the meter replaced but we will always knock on your door to make certain you know that we will be turning off your water and replacing your meter. Your water will usually be off for no more than one hour and total replacement time is normally less than two hours. A few days after your meter is replaced, you will receive instructions from the Coop on how to activate your access to the meter data. A more complete description of the smart meters and how they are used can be found at:

http://lamesawatercoop.org/?page_id=883

Board of Directors

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