Water

Water is a complex issue. It is essential for the quality of life we enjoy in North Texas, is critical for businesses to operate, and is necessary for public health and safety. The cost, however, continues to rise and estimates foretell that water will likely become the highest utility bill in our households as utilities respond to changes in water use and availability. To further compound the issue, from 2012-2015, North Texas experienced the most severe drought since the mid-1950s. While residential usage declined during that period due to water restrictions, costs continued to increase. Rowlett’s underground utilities also underwent four years of drought, causing damage to an already-aging infrastructure. Since then, necessary improvements to water and sewer lines, lift stations and pump stations have been ongoing and will continue into the foreseeable future to sustain this vital system.

Over the past few years, the City has taken several steps in an ongoing effort to structure this utility to meet the needs of EVERY Rowlett citizen and business. These include tiering the rate structure; replacing the daily-calculated base rate fee with a monthly flat fee; and launching the AMI meter system, giving residents access to hourly usage information.

While water quality remains the top priority, water conservation and the wise use of water is still critical. Although we’ve just experienced the wettest spring in years, we’re now entering the hot, dry summer months. For most us, outside irrigation is the main reason that water usage increases during this time, so I encourage you to check your sprinkler systems and monitor usage. You’ll be amazed at just how much water (and money!) you can save.

Mayor Tammy Dana-Bashian

I actually rode the mechanical bull (!) at Unite Rowlett’s “Celebrate Rowlett” event, held to wrap up an amazing Love My City Week of volunteerism in June.
AMI-Flexnet
Online Access to Hourly Usage Data

Realizing that we all have to work together to reduce water use, improve the reliability and sustainability of our water system and minimize costs, in 2016-17, the City replaced citizens’ meter radio antennas for this upgrade to the water meter reading system. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) offers increased reliability and customer convenience, as antennas transmit water consumption data directly to the City’s Utility Billing Department instead of storing that information. This eliminated the need for staff to drive by each home and business to acquire monthly meter readings.

The AMI system is a great tool to help you save money! You have the ability to access water consumption online and get hourly usage information. Simply create an account, set up your alerts, and start tracking your usage. Armed with this information, you can spot and repair potential leaks and monitor irrigation usage, all before they result in a higher bill.

WHAT IS AMI?

AMI stands for Advanced Metering Infrastructure. It is a method of using communication technology to read meters remotely without having to access the meter located in meter boxes in the ground.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The fixed-based network provides two-way communication from the meter box to strategically located Base Stations. The radio antenna, also referred to as an MXU, is used to collect and transmit meter reading data, unique identification numbers, operating status, and various alarms at regular intervals to the Base Stations.

WHY DID THE CITY UNDERTAKE THIS EFFORT?

Advanced meter systems are quickly becoming the standard for utilities around the country. These newer devices allow more accurate and faster collection of water usage readings and improve safety conditions for City staff. Introducing automatic meter reading as the standard for Rowlett allows us to better serve customers and improve utility department efficiency.

DOES THE ELECTRONIC DEVICE INTERFERE WITH OTHER EQUIPMENT?

No. The radio transmission operates in compliance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations to avoid interference with other electronic devices.

IS THE ELECTRONIC DEVICE DATA ENCRYPTED?

Yes. Data transmitted from the meter through the system is encrypted throughout the entire process.

CAN I ACCESS DAILY READINGS ONLINE?

Yes, you now have the ability to access a variety of data, including daily water consumption, online.

CAN I COVER UP THE METER NOW?

No. Access needs to be available at all times. There will still be instances when meter technicians will visit the meter on site to perform routine maintenance, verify readings, or emergency shut off. For example, be careful during the fall foliage season not to cover your water meter with piles of leaves!

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE MY READING & NOT SOMEONE ELSE’S?

Each radio frequency device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique number is compared to your account record electronically to ensure a match.

Learn More...
Watch the AMI/FlexNet video here

Get More Info
www.rowlett.com/AMI
For Fiscal Years 2013-2018, the City of Rowlett experienced an annual average 11 percent increase in the cost of water from the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD). For Fiscal Year 2019, we were pleased when the increase was just five percent. But these increases will continue in the coming years. Like many such water wholesalers, the NTMWD has a “take-or-pay” provision that requires their customers (including City of Rowlett) to purchase a minimum amount of water based on the historical highest annual usage. For Rowlett, this amounts to 3.2 billion gallons annually, which was set after the drought of 2006. Rowlett residents are currently only using approximately 2.4 billion gallons of water annually. So, over the past 17 years, Rowlett has paid $12.8 million to the NTMWD under the “take-or-pay” agreement for water we were unable to sell to Rowlett residents. This results in a higher per-unit cost to our residents as we must recover a portion of this $12.8 million paid to the NTMWD.

The four years of drought from 2012 through 2015 wreaked havoc with City infrastructure, and capital maintenance needs still remain high. To further compound matters, Rowlett’s infrastructure is older than in many other cities, which increases our cost of maintenance. Many cities are able to transfer some cost burden from residential customers to commercial customers. Rowlett has less flexibility in this area as our commercial base is less robust then many surrounding cities, which contributes to higher residential rates for Rowlett residents compared to many neighboring communities.

After researching and analyzing the rate structures of NTMWD cities and usage patterns of Rowlett customers, in 2017 we adjusted our rates - particularly the base rates. Rowlett had included increases from the NTMWD and the City of Garland (wastewater treatment) primarily to the base rate over the past few years due to uncertainty in the volume of water that may be used while the City was under water restrictions. This resulted in an unfair burden being placed on residential low-volume water users, therefore we implemented a pricing structure that was more equitable across the board. Adjustments were also made to our commercial rates - including multi-family developments - to more uniformly align them with our actual costs, which allowed us to reduce the cost burden to residential customers.

We do monitor our rates closely in comparison with other cities, including cities served by the NTMWD. In comparison to the 14 other cities served by NTMWD, our water rates are the third highest at 7,500 gallons of usage, the sixth highest at 15,000 gallons, but the sixth lowest at 25,000 gallons. The incremental cost of water with increased usage is extremely high compared to citizen expectations from many years ago, when water was relatively inexpensive.

We are all in the same boat, as across North Texas, residents are experiencing the ever-increasing cost of water!

Monthly residential base rate fees for fiscal year 2019:

- Water - $27.50
- Storm Water Management - $5.50
- Sewer - $22.36
- Trash (1 Trash/1 Recycle) - $17.85
- Maintenance Fee-Pavement - $3.00
- Trash Tax - $1.47

Additionally, there is a three-tier volume rate:

- 0 to 3,000 gallons: $4.61 per 1,000 gallons
- 3,001 to 15,000 gallons: $5.76 per 1,000 gallons
- 15,001 and above: $7.20 per 1,000 gallons

Utility Bill FAQ
Conserve Water and Save $$
Remember: Every Drop Counts!

Have questions about your monthly bill?
Most can be answered with a little knowledge of how the bill is formatted and where important information is located.

Your account number and customer ID number can be found in the upper right hand corner of your bill and is read as the account number “dash” customer ID number.

In the next section you will find the service period, or the dates the meter was read.

The section directly below contains the usage for both the current and previous billing periods.

The “Current Charge Summary” field consists of a breakdown of all current charges for the most recent billing period. The City of Rowlett bills for water, sewer, storm management, trash, and pavement maintenance (pays for the upkeep and maintenance of the City’s paved infrastructure such as alleys and roadways), all of which have a monthly base fee for active accounts. Water and sewer services have consumption charges added based on monthly usages.

Finally, it is important to pay attention to the images on your bill every month. This is one way the City of Rowlett communicates news and updates with you!
Utility Bill Adjustments and Assistance

Utility Bill Adjustments

In an effort to assist Rowlett utility customers in special circumstances, the City may waive late fees and offers a leak adjustment provision.

Late Fees
City policy provides that a ten percent penalty will be applied to all past due balances. Our community is blessed with many established charitable organizations, which occasionally assist citizens with their basic needs. In the past, when assistance was provided for a Rowlett residential utility bill, the organization paid all penalties. That policy changed in 2017, when the Senior Citizens of Rowlett (SCOR) requested the waiver of residential penalties when their organization assisted citizens with past due utility bills. Although only one other North Texas Municipal Water District member city waives penalties when charitable organizations assist citizens, Rowlett now provides that relief under the parameters to the right...

Leak Adjustment
Preventing the wasting of water is a concern that affects our entire community. Therefore, Rowlett has a residential leak adjustment policy wherein the City may provide adjustments to utility charges in the event of a leak based on the following parameters:

- Proof of an actual leak and the repair of the leak must be provided.
- Adjustment may be allowed only once per rolling twelve-month period for residential customers.
- No adjustments will be given for sprinkler systems, swimming pool equipment, commodes, above ground leaks or other leaks that should be noticeable by the residential customer.
- Adjustments will be given to the date the residential customer is notified by the City or the date the leak is repaired, whichever is earlier.
- The adjustment will be for a maximum of two months billed consumption.
- The adjustment will be calculated using the prior year consumption for the months being adjusted. If a customer does not have 12 months of consumption history, the adjustment will be calculated using the prior six months average.
- The adjustment will be limited to 50 percent of the consumption attributable to the leak, at the rate billed.

City of Rowlett Funds Utility Bill Assistance

Rowlett residents who need help with their utility bills may qualify to receive assistance administered by the Salvation Army in Garland:

Residents can receive utility assistance once every 12 months (on a rolling basis).

Residents will income qualify by showing they make 80% or less of the median income as defined by HUD.

Utility bill must be in the resident's name requesting assistance.

These funds can be used to pay for penalties.

These funds cannot be used to pay for deposits.

There is no residency length-of-time requirement.

Please visit http://www.salvationarmydfw.org/p/locations/Garland or call the Salvation Army Garland office at (972) 272-4531 for more information.
We care about the water you drink. We extensively test the water to assure that the City of Rowlett’s drinking water system maintains a “Superior” rating. This is the highest rating for water quality issued by the State of Texas.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality requires that water providers, such as the City of Rowlett, maintain chlorine residuals in transmission and distribution systems to assure water quality so that the treated water supply is safe for use. These chlorine residuals are depleted by increases in temperature during summer months. To maintain water quality, the City of Rowlett performs hydrant flushing to remove water that has decreased chlorine residuals. Occasionally, flushing will occur during off-peak hours or overnight due to the volume of water that needs to move through the system at a high rate of speed. This helps avoid a noticeable water pressure drop-off during peak hours.

I understand how it may look to you as a citizen, seeing a fire hydrant wide open as the system is being flushed for hours, but please know that flushing does not affect customer consumption or cost as this water does not go through customer’s meters.

In the summer, outdoor water usage can account for 50-80 percent of a home’s water use. Knowing when to water and how much to use are important factors in water conservation and maintaining lower water bills. Watering should always be done either in the early morning or late evening hours. This keeps water from evaporating between the sprinkler and grass, as well as off the grass itself. Most Texas lawns only require one inch of water once a week to maintain a deep, healthy root system. Lawns with a shallow root system are not drought tolerant and will not survive our hot Texas summers!

How and When to Water Your Lawn

Water Wise Tip

Learn more about the safety and quality of YOUR drinking water by reading the City of Rowlett Annual Drinking Water Quality Report.