

Facts About Water Meters



State Law and the Water Meter Retrofit Plan

State law (AB 2572) enacted in 2004 requires all water suppliers to install water meters on all customer connections by January 1, 2025. Additionally, beginning in January 2010, all metered services must be billed at a metered rate. However, the law allows for a short adjustment period after the meter is installed.

The Sacramento Suburban Water District's (SSWD) Board of Directors adopted a District-wide Water Meter Retrofit Plan in February 2004 (updated in 2007). SSWD is retrofitting approximately 1,300 - 1,500 existing flat rate services annually. Generally meter retrofitting takes place on an area-by-area basis. The Water Meter Retrofit Plan outlines when each area is scheduled to receive water meters.

While water metering is new to some areas of Sacramento, it is a common and long standing practice in almost every city and region of California. In some communities, meters have reduced the demand for water by as much as 20%. This delays the need for new water sources.

Future growth will continue to stretch the supply of safe and reliable water. It is important to use water wisely and efficiently to safeguard drinking water for future generations.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is everyone going to get a water meter?

Yes, every customer within the SSWD service area will have a water meter by 2025 as mandated by State law. In February 2004, the Board approved a Water Meter Retrofit Plan which outlines the criteria used to determine when an area within the District will receive water meters. For more information on the Water Meter Retrofit Plan go to sswd.org.

2. How long before I get a water meter?

The Water Meter Retrofit Plan uses specific criteria (e.g. age of pipe, size of parcel, backyard locations) to determine when an area is scheduled to receive meters. Contact Customer Service to learn when your area is scheduled for metering (please note that schedules are subject to change).

3. Do I pay for the meter and meter installation?

The full cost for the meter installation is not billed specifically to each customer. The cost of retrofitting services is spread among all District customers. The line item on your bill entitled "Capital Facilities Charge" covers the costs of District capital improvements including meters and meter installation.

4. If I have a meter, am I paying for other meters being put in areas currently not metered?

Yes. The cost of installing meters is spread among all District customers. Retrofitting residence and business services with meters is part of the District's capital improvement plan, which is a large component of SSWD's budget each year. This cost is part of the line item on the bill entitled "Capital Facilities Charge."

5. After my meter is installed, when will my bill change from a flat rate to a metered rate?

Your flat rate billing will be changed to metered rate billing in November of the following calendar year your meter was installed (e.g. a meter

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installed in June 2011 converts to a metered rate in November 2012). Shortly after your meter is installed, your water bill will include: 1) a consumption graph showing how much water is used each month; and 2) a message (located under the graph) noting what your metered bill would be based on that month's consumption. This information provides customers time to adjust their monthly usage to best optimize their water use.

6. Why do I pay a metered rate before every property is retrofitted with a meter?

Once a meter is installed, State law mandates that all metered customers are billed based on the actual volume of water used (a metered rate). State law and SSWD's Water Meter Retrofit Plan provides an adjustment period in metered billing after the meter is installed. Water bills during this time period show your monthly water usage and seasonal pattern.

7. Can I lower my water bill by having a meter?

Flat and metered rate customers may be able to reduce the connection or meter size to reduce their water bill. Contact the Customer Service Team for more information.

Flat Rate Customers:

You could see savings in your monthly water bill by changing to a metered billing rate if you are:

- ▶ A customer who uses minimal water for outdoor landscape purposes.
- ▶ A customer who owns a condominium and has minimal water usage.
- ▶ A customer who is conscientious of water consumption and uses less water than the "average" customer. (Flat rates are based on "average" consumption.)

In 2004, SSWD established a Voluntary Meter Program (VMP) that allows residential customers to learn the difference in cost of changing from a flat rate to a metered rate. From 2004-2011, out of the 137 participating customers, 74% would have experienced an average savings of 25% if on a metered rate. Many customers on the VMP switched to a metered rate, before their year pilot period was over.

With the VMP, a meter is installed but you continue to pay a flat rate until: 1) you tell SSWD to switch the account to a metered rate or 2) your area is metered. There is no direct cost to you to have a meter installed at your residential property. Contact the Customer Service Team for more information on this program.

Metered Rate Customers:

Other than reducing your meter size, the best way to lower your water bill is to reduce your water usage. The less you use, the less you pay. Also the District offers a Water-Wise House Call Program, which is a personalized evaluation at your property to identify potential water savings indoors and outdoors, at no direct cost to you.

8. Why does my residence already have a water meter?

A residence could have a water meter (See Figure 1) for any one of the following reasons:

- ▶ Since 1992, State law requires a water meter as part of all new construction.
- ▶ A meter was requested by the property owner.
- ▶ The property owner requests a change in service size.
- ▶ A water meter was installed prior to February 2004, when repair work was performed on the existing service line to save future labor cost.
- ▶ A water meter was installed per SSWD's Water Meter Retrofit Plan.
- ▶ SSWD's Water Main Replacement Plan (meters are installed at the same time the main is replaced to save labor costs).
- ▶ Repeated water waste violations.

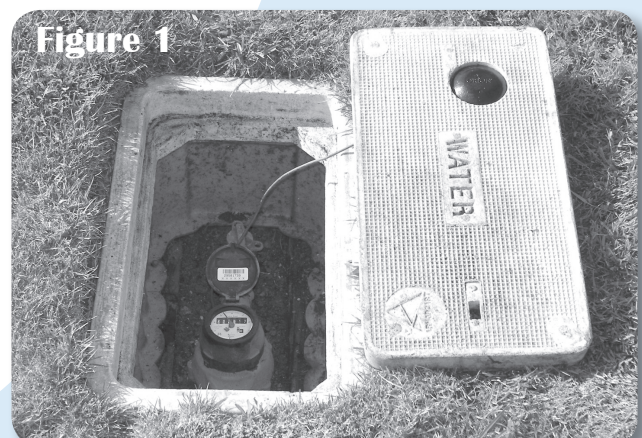


Figure 1
Typical residential water meter box with installed water meter.