



CITY OF ZACHARY WATER AND GAS

Water and Gas Meter Upgrade Project FAQ

- Why is the City of Zachary upgrading my water and gas meters?** The City of Zachary approved upgrading its existing meters to a completely automated and real-time reading network, referred to as Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), following years of consideration, analysis, and planning. In our initial phase, the City's gas & water meter smart points were replaced at about 300 sites. The billing software was integrated, so the entire process, from the meter to the bill, was tested and verified before beginning installation. The City will be installing water meters and equipment manufactured by Sensus and managing the data through the Sensus Analytics comprehensive meter data management system, thereby expanding the benefits of its existing metering equipment. Most existing gas meters will be retro-fitted with this equipment.
- Why is the City of Zachary changing the way it reads the meters?** The enhancement of existing equipment will provide 720 reads during each billing cycle rather than one read every 30 days as is currently designed. This detailed usage will enable the City of Zachary to automate its meter reading process, provide improved customer service through data access, reduce leaks to promote resource conservation, and improve Utility operational efficiencies by capturing real-time meter reading data.
- How does AMI work?** The Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system is made up of several advanced or more commonly referred to as "smart" components that communicate using wireless and radio frequency technology. Inside the water meter box, attached to the gas meter, a small radio is connected that records and transmits a reading hourly to a collector. These data transmissions last only several milliseconds and are smaller in data size than text. These network units will be mounted on top of the City's water towers. The collectors store all the reads and sends batch uploads six times daily to the software at the City's facility.
- Is the AMI system technology secure?** The hourly read data transmitted from the meter register to the collector and then onto the hosted server is secured by 128 AES encryption. No customer-identifying information is shared. The data stored in the collector is secured by end-to-end encryption, and the server has multiple levels of protection. Utility staff access to the system is password protected and is also encrypted.
- Is the AMI system technology safe?** The upgraded meters use wireless radio frequencies, similar to wireless Internet and cable TV, to send and receive information from the City of Zachary's Utility and Billing Staff. The meters and communication system is regulated to meet all Federal Communications Commission (FCC) safety standards and codes. No personal identifying information is captured by the smart point or transmitted by the meter.
- Do I pay for my new water or gas meter?** No, the City of Zachary pays for the meters' installation cost. The City of Zachary has prepared for the cost of this project as part of its annual capital improvement planning process. This project does not impact the City's existing water, gas, and sewer rates.
- Will my water or gas bill increase?** The new meters are highly accurate and will measure customer usage at hourly intervals as compared to once every month. Your upgraded meter measures the amount of water or gas used during the billing period by measuring how much water or gas passes through the meter, which is the same measurement process as your old meter. New water meters may register lower flows that your older water meter might not have been able to capture, which means that although your bill may increase, your meter is now accurately recording your water or gas consumption. The benefits of improved and more accurate usage information to the Utility and customers will reduce wasted water or gas through the enhanced system capability to send alerts and notifications such as stopped meter, customer leak detection, and utility distribution system leak detection.
- How long will I be without water or gas service during installation?** Gas services will not be interrupted to install the smart points. Water will require minor disruption to install the water meter and smart point. While replacement times will vary, replacing a water meter should take no longer than 15 minutes for residential water meters, during which the water will be shut off for a portion of that time. The installation crew will make every effort to keep the interruption to your service to a minimum. Commercial and industrial customers will be contacted in advance to schedule installation to minimize the disruption to their business. After the new meter installation, a door tag will be placed on the front door notifying customers the work is complete.
- Could I have a leak that is causing extra water or gas usage?** If you have an unexplained spike in your water or gas usage or show continuous flow, it may be an indication of a leak. Customer Service will be able to identify a leak based on your consumption profile and leak alarms from the advanced meter that will immediately notify Customer Service and you, if a leak is identified.
- Have the new meters been tested for accuracy?** Yes, all upgraded meters have been tested and guaranteed accurate by the manufacturer, Sensus, in compliance with American Water Works Association (AWWA) accuracy standards. Additionally, the design of the installation process includes a testing phase, which allows a sub-set of the meters to be installed and the billing software to be integrated, so the entire process, from the meter to the bill, will be tested and verified for accuracy prior to system-wide installation.
- Who is doing the work for the project?** The project is being managed for the City of Zachary by Equipment Controls (ECCO) and their meter and smart point installer Compass. These companies specialize in advanced metering technologies. Equipment Controls will be responsible for overall management of the project along with the prime vendor, Sensus. Compass is the install subcontractor. Field personnel working on the project will carry proper identification and have successfully completed a background check. Field personnel will not need to enter a residence.
- Who do I contact with questions relating to my meter replacement?** You can contact City of Zachary Utility Office. Please call [225-654-6566](tel:225-654-6566) with questions or concerns regarding your meter replacement or to schedule the replacement of your commercial meter.

