

Water Metering in Milwaukee

Water meters mechanically measure the water after it enters your property and the water moves through the device. The meter is usually located where the water service connects to a building, usually in the basement on the wall closest to the street.

The Milwaukee Water Works uses an Automated Meter Reading system (AMR) to read water meters. AMR uses a battery-powered device that sends a radio signal with information about water use that is read by a data-collecting device in a meter reading vehicle that passes by on the street. A receiver on board picks up the radio signal and transfers it to a central database for billing, troubleshooting and analyzing. Water bills should be based on actual readings and not estimates.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin requires utilities to make sure meters are working properly and producing accurate readings for utility billing purposes. You can compare your water use over time to look for high use that can indicate leaks. Find a graph of your water usage at the Milwaukee Water Works' website, www.milwaukee.gov/water. Choose Account Information, enter your account number, and choose Consumption History at the left for a graph of usage.

The typical residential meter is a disc type, 5/8" in size, manufactured by Badger Meter. The meters are read using the Itron Mobile AMR System. Meter accuracy is maintained at above 99%. Water used at apartments and multi-family buildings and, depending on the circumstances, at condominium complexes, is measured by one main meter for the entire building. Commercial/industrial meters range in size from 5/8" to 12". The meters of the largest 1,000 commercial and industrial customers are read manually on a monthly basis.

We are replacing water meters for residential and small business customers during the next several years. A meter service technician will visit your property to remove the water utility's old meter and replace it along with the automated meter reading device and the AMR battery. The old meters and electronic reading devices were installed in the 1990s and their working life is coming to an end. The Milwaukee Water Works owns the meters and electronic reading devices but we must ask property owners to allow us to enter each property to replace the meter.

The project will benefit single family homes and dwellings of four and fewer units, and small businesses in Milwaukee, Greenfield, Hales Corners, St. Francis, and West Milwaukee. The suburban communities are retail customers of the utility which provides water, system maintenance, and billing.

The Milwaukee Water Works will notify customers with a letter asking them to call (414) 286-8000 Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. and Saturday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to make an appointment to have the meter and electronic reading device replaced. Utility technicians also may call on a property without an appointment as they make replacements in a particular area. Also, if your bill indicates you have had multiple estimated meter readings, you will be asked in a letter or phone call to make an appointment to have the meter and electronic device replaced. The meter readings were estimated because the meter is not working properly or might have been disconnected.

If the Milwaukee Water Works is not able to schedule an appointment to replace the meter at your property, we will mail a water disconnection notice asking you to call and make an appointment. If, after 10 days, we still have not heard from you, we will disconnect water service to the property. Buildings without water service will be ordered closed by the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services.

Meters will be installed by Milwaukee Water Works employees. Our employees will arrive in a City of Milwaukee-identified vehicle and carry Milwaukee Water Works identification. Our meter technicians wear a blue shirt or jacket with the Milwaukee Water Works logo clearly visible on the front. If you have any doubt about the identity of a person asking to enter your property, please ask the technician to show you their identification. If they refuse, do not allow the person into your property.

The installation will take 20-30 minutes as the meter technician temporarily turns off the water, installs the new meter and electronic reading device, and turns the water back on.

Our automated meter reading devices provide these benefits:

- AMR eliminates, with rare exceptions, the need to estimate a bill.
- Reliable readings gained with AMR help customers identify plumbing leaks that result in higher-than-normal bills.
- AMR eliminates the need for a water meter reader to visit the home, once the meter and battery have been replaced.
- There is no charge for the meter and battery replacement. It is included in the cost of service.

On a historic note, our entire service area has been metered since 1912. Milwaukee was one of the first cities in the United States to have 100% water metering, a public works distinction at the time.