

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****August 3, 2021**

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SUBJECT: MyH2O COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Communication to Fort Worth water customers regarding the implementation of advanced metering infrastructure, through the program known as MyH2O, has been and remains a high priority. These communications began long before meter exchanges began and will continue after that work is completed, all in accordance with a detailed communications plan. To date, more than 200,000 locations have received new meters with smart points, enabling remote read water billing.

Early communications about the program included bill inserts and stories that ran online in City News, on the city's website and in City Times. Before exchanges, every residential customer is sent an 8 ½ x 11-inch mailer informing them the work will soon happen at their location and what that work will involve. That mailer was updated recently to include tips for what customers can be doing prior to the meter exchange, including tips on how to find private plumbing leaks. Approximately 250,000 of these mailers have gone out to every customer in our 21 billing cycles. Door hangers informing the customer of activity at their location are left following the exchange. In addition, installers have handed out thousands of business-size cards with the utility's call center number to customers when they are asked questions. Installers are directed to not answer customer questions; rather they are to refer them to customer service to ensure consistent and accurate communication.

Prior to the pandemic, customers were invited to open houses to learn about the meters and the program benefits. Those were moved to online meetings. Extensive information about the meters and program is on the city's website, including videos and an extensive FAQs section. Those FAQs were recently updated and include information about meter safety and a link to Texas Public Utility Commission's website on meter safety. An "open house" video is pushed to the neighborhoods through Nextdoor. In addition, communication staff has personally responded to emails and phone calls and, to date, customer service representatives have fielded about 8,000 inquiries on topics from general questions to high bills and leaks.

Staff has also responded to a limited number of concerns from customers asking to opt out of receiving a new meter and smart point, expressing concerns their health may be at risk from exposure to the radiofrequency (RF) signals, an issue that has been studied for decades.

Fort Worth Water provides relevant and prominent regulatory and scientific information to customers when asked about smart point safety. Scientific research and data do not indicate a viable health risk, and that information is provided in the MyH2O section of the city's website.

The utility is committed to ongoing communications throughout each stage of the MyH2O program. Future communications will include additional mailings, videos and social media posts letting customers know it's time to get on the portal, which provides customers with hourly use data only available through the advanced metering systems that have been deployed.

For questions on this report, contact Chris Harder, Water Director, at 817-392-5020 or Kara Shuror, Deputy Water Director, at 817-392-8819.

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City Manager