

Automatic Meter Reading (AMR)

Frequently Asked Questions

Altoga WSC will be implementing an automatic meter reading project beginning in May, 2010. Old water meters will be replaced with new, more accurate water meters and connected to a radio transmitter to collect meter readings remotely. Altoga hired Elster AMCO Water, Inc. to supply new water meters and radio transmitters and to supply and install the AMR system. Pittard Utilities Services, Inc. was hired by the Altoga to install the new water meters and radio transmitters.

Why is the Altoga installing new water meters?

- The majority of the existing water meters are over 10 years old and can no longer be accurate. The new meters will transmit the water meter reading directly to handheld and accurately report your consumption every day.

Will I still have to read my meter myself and report it to Altoga?

- No. The new water meter reading system is automatic, and can be read without residents having to report their usage.

When will the installations begin taking place?

- Installation of water meters will begin in late May, 2010, and installation of residential water meters will be in June, 2010.

Do I need to pay to have my meter installed?

- No.
- The installation for the entire water system will take up to two months (July, 2010) to complete. The installation contractor has been given your existing meter information in order to schedule to replace your meter. Altoga will monitor the contractor to assure that your meter will be replaced.

Will workers need to enter my home in order to install the new meter?

- No.
- If you ever have any question about the identity of someone who claims to be working on behalf of the Altoga WSC or Pittard Utilities Services, Inc., please call the Altoga WSC at 972-529-9595 during normal business hours from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM or the 24-hour Emergency Call Pager at 972-540-3580.

How long will it take for my meter to be installed?

- Once inside your property, each meter installation will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

Do I need to be home for this meter change out ? No

- No

Will Altoga WSC need to interrupt my water service?

- Yes, service interruptions will generally last less than a half hour.

What are the benefits of AMR?

- Improved customer service, including:
 - Minimizing the need to access your property to read your meter.
 - Controlled meter reading costs.
 - Fewer employee injuries, especially in areas with fenced yards, dogs and landscaping.
 - Elimination of estimated bills.

How does AMR work? Using wireless radio transmitters AMR remotely reads customer meters and then transfers the data into billing system. AMR will drastically reduce the need for meter readers to manually gather utility meter readings.

What information will be transmitted? The modules transmit meter reading and meter identification number. Diagnostic information is also transmitted to verify that the meter is operating correctly.

Is my account information secure?

- Yes, only meter readings and meter numbers are transmitted.
- Personal customer information will not be transmitted.

Is this new system really needed?

- Yes. We strive to provide the best possible customer service, high reliability and billing accuracy. The AMR technology will help us achieve these goals. As water meters get older they become less accurate and need to be replaced.
- No, the radio transmissions occur on a frequency different from those used by television signals, cordless phones, garage doors, and pacemakers. In addition, the transmissions last less than one second.

Are there any potential health concerns with the radio signals?

- Studies made on low-power RF transmissions have revealed no negative health impacts.

What powers the AMR radio transmitter? The Radio is a battery –powered device the expected life of the battery is 10 years.

Does this mean my bill will be increasing?

- Not necessarily. In some cases, your bill may increase, but only if your current meter is under reporting usage. Presently the majority of residents are paying for the water they are actually using, while a few residents are only paying for a fraction of the water. This condition is not fair to all residents. The new system will ensure fairness and equality for all the residents and businesses from this point forward.

Will I see a change in my service after AMR is installed?

- The only significant change to your utility service will be that once the AMR system is operating, meter readers will not need to visit your property to collect the meter readings. Service personnel may visit the meter periodically to confirm proper operation or perform routine maintenance.

Do I need to maintain the AMR meters?

- No.

Doesn't the upgrade work require a licensed plumber?

- No.

Isn't my water meter on the outside of the home?

- Yes
- Is this radio device a listening device used to listen to my conversations in my home? No

Is this something I have to do?

- Yes, this is a mandatory meter replacement/upgrade. Altoga WSC requires that all utility customers participate in the program. Failure to do so may result in utilities being shut off.
- If your meter has been upgraded with the AMR technology and your meter is still being read manually it just indicates that we have not completed the AMR network in your area, and we are not yet ready to read your meter remotely. Once we are receiving radio readings from your meter, future readings will be collected remotely by the AMR network.

How do you know that my reading is accurate?

- This “state-of-the-art” meter reading technology uses electronic registers to collect the meter readings and a radio to send the data that have proven to be more accurate than visually reading the meter by removing the possibility for human errors. Also, each radio device has a unique identification number that is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique identification number is compared electronically to your account record to ensure that the meter reading received matches the meter assigned to your account.

How long will it take to complete the project?

- The project is scheduled to be completed by January, 2011.

What will happen to my old water meter?

- Your old meter will be taken by the installation contractor and stored for 6 months and then recycled. This is done should there be any disagreements regarding prior water consumption.

Has this new AMR equipment been tested for accuracy and reliability?

- Yes.

What if I have more questions about the AMR implementation?

- You can contact Altoga Water Supply Corporation.