



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is the City of Galveston replacing meters?**

As part of an ongoing effort to deliver best-in-class service to our customers, the City of Galveston is embarking on an exciting new Sustainable Interactive Customer Connections (SICC) project that will upgrade all water meters to advanced metering technology. This important, grant-funded project will make a big difference in how you manage your usage, control your bills and are notified about potential leaks in your home. In addition to supporting environmental stewardship, the SICC project will enable the City of Galveston to provide enhanced customer service and improve operational efficiencies.

### **What is AMI?**

AMI is Advanced Metering Infrastructure, called AMI for short. With AMI, every customer's water meter within our service area will be able to reliably measure the use of water in your home or business and automatically send a brief, private, digital message to a data collection tower using a cellular signal—much like a cellphone does now. The cell tower then transmits all meter reads to the City of Galveston, where the information is processed within its billing system.

### **I don't get great cellular reception at my house. Will this affect my water meter?**

No. Despite using existing cellular infrastructure, the meter is not using the same signal as your cell phone.

### **How will AMI benefit the City of Galveston?**

Installing advanced meters will enhance our customer service by minimizing the potential for missed or inaccurate reads—allowing our customers to have confidence in the bills they receive. We are excited to adopt AMI because it will enable us to provide faster service, better information and reliable bills for all our customers.

### **How will AMI benefit me?**

AMI technology ensures that customers pay only for the water they use—no more and no less. By ensuring that your bill is based on actual usage, AMI technology eliminates billing based on estimated reads. AMI improves accuracy by eliminating the potential for human error in manual meter reading. It can also help to identify any irregularities in water usage, such as leaks. The City of Galveston and its customers can be alerted to abrupt or abnormal changes in water usage much earlier than previously possible, potentially saving customers hundreds or even thousands of dollars from an undetected leak. It will also remove the need for someone to come onto your property for manual meter readings, increasing the privacy of your home.





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## **Do I have to have my meter replaced or can I choose not to participate?**

Every residential meter will be replaced. The meter is the property of the City of Galveston and an upgraded meter is required for continued water service. For more information, please visit [galvestontx.gov/smartwater](http://galvestontx.gov/smartwater).

## **How much will this upgrade cost me?**

There is no cost to customers for the AMI upgrade.

## **When will this project begin and when will it end?**

The meter replacement portion of the project will begin in June 2022.

## **What type of system is being installed?**

We have selected a smart water system that features Badger Meter E-Series® Ultrasonic water meters with ORION® Cellular Endpoints.

## **Who will be replacing the meter?**

The City of Galveston has contracted with Utility Metering Services (UMS) for the meter replacement work. Information on the installation team will be available at [galvestontx.gov/smartwater](http://galvestontx.gov/smartwater).

## **What is involved in a typical meter replacement?**

The meter replacement will be performed by a contracted meter technician from Utility Metering Services (UMS). All installation personnel will present photo identification and will be driving a clearly marked vehicle. The meter technician will need access to the meter. You do not need to be home and you do not need to schedule an appointment to have your meter changed. The area around the meter must be free of obstructions and pets must be secured. Under normal circumstances, the installation will take approximately 30-60 minutes. Water service will be interrupted during this time.

## **Will I need to have any plumbing work done in conjunction with meter replacement?**

It is the homeowner's responsibility to provide an operable shut-off valve on each side of the water meter. If the meter technician cannot operate the valves to shut off the water, the homeowner may be directed to have this work performed at his/her expense.





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## **How will my replacement be scheduled?**

Residents do not need to schedule an appointment or even be home for the installation. You just need to make sure access to your water meter is safe and clear, and that pets are secured. Most installations will take place Monday through Friday during regular business hours over the next few months.

## **Is AMI safe?**

Yes. The power of the radio frequency signal used is too low to pose a health risk. The products that make up the AMI system are stringently evaluated for safety and meet all standards established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). The system sends a signal that can be compared to a cellular text message. It uses low-powered radio frequency (RF) to transmit data. The technology fully complies with U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines for human exposure to RF energy. The endpoints have been certified by the FCC and tested in accordance with Title 47, Part 15 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Food and Drug Administration and the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health have determined that the RF emitted by AMI systems is non-ionizing radiation, which doesn't have enough energy to change the structure of molecules. That means that they are less harmful than X-rays and even ultraviolet light. Some devices that also use non-ionizing radiation include TVs, radios and remote controls.

## **Will the transmitter radio signal interfere with other electronics?**

No, the radio transmission operates in compliance with FCC regulations to avoid interference with electronic devices.

## **Will my information be secure?**

Yes. Your account information is secure. Data transmitted through the system is protected and proprietary communication protocols are used. Each radio frequency device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique number is compared with account records to ensure a match. No personal account information is transmitted via radio frequency.

## **How accurate is my new meter?**

The Badger Meter E-Series® Ultrasonic meters meet or exceed the American National Standards Institute and the American Water Works Association standards for accuracy. All meters are tested and calibrated at the factory before shipping and come with a multi-year material and accuracy warranty.





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## **How do you know that the meter reading is accurate?**

Water utilities all over the world are adopting AMI technology, first and foremost because it provides accurate information. The reading at the meter is regularly converted into a digital format using technology that has proven to be highly reliable and secure. It improves accuracy in large part because it eliminates the potential for human error in manual meter reading.

## **Will my water bill increase?**

As some water meters age, they can run slower and under-register water use. When we change out your current meter with a new smart meter, the first bill may be higher simply because the new meter is running more accurately.

## **Will the billing frequency change?**

No. Water utility bills will continue to be issued monthly.

## **Will the City of Galveston be monitoring my water consumption?**

No. Water consumption by individual users is not monitored but the system is designed to notify the utility if hourly consumption readings increase significantly and consistently, indicating a possible internal plumbing leak.

## **Will I be able to access my own water consumption data?**

Yes. Customers will have easy access to information about their own water consumption through a user-friendly smartphone app and online portal that allows you to compare current usage to previous periods and set email and text alerts to achieve conservation goals.

## **Will there be any difference in the delivery or quality of water after my meter replacement?**

No, you will continue to receive the same high-quality water you have come to expect from the City of Galveston.

## **What if I have questions about the last meter read before my replacement?**

The meter technician will take digital photographs of the last meter reading. Should any questions arise, our utility billing staff will have this information available to answer your inquiry.

## **What if I have additional questions?**

Please visit our smart water program webpage at [galvestontx.gov/smartwater](http://galvestontx.gov/smartwater).

