



Thurston PUD Newsletter

We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to our customers.

August 2020

Leadership Message

How COVID-19 Changed the Way We Think About Work

By: Ruth Clemens, Administrative Services Manager

All across the globe, governments at all levels face the difficult decisions of when and how to reopen safely. Guidelines and orders have become a moving target that seem to change daily for those of us who have been tasked with creating policies and procedures for employees. Keeping all employees safe has become a balancing act of meeting compliance measures and respecting employees' privacy and rights.

Our small utility has a forward-thinking senior leadership team that has worked hard to stay informed and ahead of the changes and complexities the pandemic has brought. For instance, in anticipation of flu season, the PUD Board of Commissioners, at the recommendation of the senior leadership team, held the Budget Hearing in July instead of September. The 2021 budget was passed on July 28, 2020 and can be found on the website at www.ThurstonPUD.org.

The senior leadership team has recommended reopening to the public after the new year. If approved, this means our buildings will remain closed to the public, Commission meetings will continue to be held virtually, and employees will continue to work safely from home. Our decision was not lightly made, but for our small utility, losing one employee to quarantine or worse, could have major impacts for the District.

With over 275 water systems to manage and maintain, all 30 of our employees are essential to keeping water flowing through your taps.

Lastly, I want to remind you that you should reach out to our team if you are having difficulty paying your bills during this time. Some utilities are already feeling the impacts of COVID-19, and we are at the beginning stages of understanding the long-term impacts to the District. The Governor's proclamation which prohibits shut-offs will end, and by alerting us of any financial hardships you are experiencing, we will be able to assist in payment plans which can prevent disconnection.

COVID-19 may have forced us to revisit and revise some policies and procedures. However, we remain steady in our commitment to customers. Although we are unable to forgive unpaid bills, we are able to create a sustainable, long-term plan with you to get you back on track. No gimmicks. No hidden motives. Our commitment and quality of service to you is not a job, it's an attitude and a belief. You are the heart of our operations, and we want to offer continuous support to you during these uncertain times. We are here to help.



Ruth Clemens,
Administrative Services
Manager

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman





District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

Important Messages

-  PUD offices will remain closed until further notice.
-  The **Equal Payment Plan** enrollment period is **now open until August 31**. Sign up today! *More information on Page 2.*
-  Don't miss another water alert! Give us a call to update your contact information!
-  Hot weather is finally here. Don't let your bill surprise you. Your monthly bill has your consumption totals.

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Equal Payment Plan Program - Enrollment Open Now!

This year, our Equal Payment Plan (EPP) Program launched for the very first time in May. Due to the success of this program, we're offering another open enrollment period for customers that are interested in this program. **Enrollment is open August 1, 2020 and ends on August 31, 2020.**

What is it?

The Equal Payment Plan (EPP) is a free, stable payment plan. You can find comfort in knowing what to expect each month because you'll pay roughly the same amount year-round. EPP is not a discount program, but it allows you to better manage your monthly budget by keeping water costs predictable and manageable. That way, you can avoid spikes in your bills caused by seasonal changes in how much water you use. Remember: there's no fee to enroll, and it's easy to manage. It's just another way we can help you better manage your monthly water costs.



How does it work?

Your monthly bill will be based on your average usage from the past 12 months. On your EPP anniversary date, we will recalculate your next year's payment. Your bill will only change if your usage amount changes. This may result in the PUD crediting your account or you may owe money to the PUD. ***Paying attention to your water consumption throughout the year is critical with this payment option.*** When you sign up for EPP, we first determine your average monthly bill.

What if I use more or less water than I paid for?

If your water use differs greatly from your budgeted amount, we will adjust your future bills accordingly on your EPP anniversary.

Who is eligible?

The Equal Payment Plan program is open to Thurston PUD who have 12 or more months of historic consumption data. If you rent your home, the program enrollment application includes a section for landlord authorization. Please visit www.ThurstonPUD.org for more eligibility requirements.

When can I sign up?

Enrollment is open August 1, 2020.

When is the last day to sign up? When will it begin?

Open enrollment closes August 31, 2020. You will see your first EPP bill amount on the billing statement you receive in October.

How to sign up

Go online to www.ThurstonPUD.org and fill out an application to enroll.

- You can email your completed application to PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.
- You can print and fax your application to (360) 357-1172.
- You can print and mail your application to us at 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.
- You can also request an application, and we will print and mail one to you.

For more rules and details, visit www.ThurstonPUD.org or call us at (866) 357-8783.

Sign up today!

Conservation - Make it Work for You!

Water is a finite resource. Water conservation - using water efficiently and avoiding water waste - is essential to ensure that we have an adequate water supply today and into the future. Water conservation is not only good for the environment, but it can also save money and energy!

Approximately 70 percent of residential water usage occurs in the home. Here are some tips to help conserve water indoors:

- Turn off the water while performing routine tasks like brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Take short showers instead of baths. If you keep your showers to under five (5) minutes, you can save up to 1,000 gallons in a month.
- Wash only full loads of laundry or dishes - be sure to select the appropriate water level and load size option for your appliance.
- Don't use water to defrost frozen foods. Thaw foods in the refrigerator overnight.
- Fix leaks! A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons per day.

While most residential water usage occurs inside the home, there are several ways to help conserve on outdoor usage too, especially during the hot summer months. A list of tips is shown below for outdoor water usage:

- Consider using native and drought-tolerant plants in your garden or landscaping.
- Purchase an inexpensive hose timer to avoid over-watering. Soaker hoses are a great option to prevent evaporation.
- If installing weather-based irrigation controls on your irrigation system, be sure to apply for our Smart Irrigation Rebate. More information is listed on our website at www.thurstonpud.org/rebates.htm.

For more information on conservation, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/water-systems.htm.

You May Qualify for a Leak Adjustment

Thurston PUD regularly audits customer meter reads to find errors or irregularities. In some cases, PUD staff will identify high, unexplained consumption and notify customers so that a possible leak can be found and repaired. In certain cases, customers are eligible for a leak adjustment to reduce their bill.

In order to qualify for a leak adjustment with the PUD, customers must:

1. Find and repair the leak within 10 business days of receiving leak notification from PUD staff.
2. Notify the District's Customer Service Team by phone or by email that the leak has been repaired.

Once PUD staff has verified that a leak has been repaired, our Customer Service Team will note the account. Once the leak consumption has been billed, a Customer Service Representative will calculate the leak adjustment amount and notify the customer of their new account balance.



Some things to keep in mind:

- Leak adjustments cannot be granted until PUD staff has verified that the leak has been repaired.
- Customer Service staff must bill you for the leak consumption before issuing a leak adjustment. This ensures that our consumption records are accurate for planning purposes.
- The leak adjustment amount is based on your water usage for the prior year. You may still owe a balance on your account after the leak adjustment is applied.
- Customers are eligible to receive one (1) leak adjustment per 12-month period.

If you believe you may have a leak, please contact our Customer Service Team at (866) 357-8783.

Help Our Crew Find Leaks

Summertime is officially here for the Puget Sound region, and this can mean dry, warm weather. One benefit to the PUD during this time is that major leaks may be easier to identify and repair.

Repairing leaks as soon as possible is critical:

- Leaks contribute to the “wear and tear” of a water system. More “wear and tear” could lead to infrastructure failure.
- Leaks can lead to higher energy costs - the more water pumped from the ground, the more energy it takes to pump.
- Leaks are a potential pathway for bacteria and other harmful contaminants to enter a water system.

See something, say something! If you see a patch of wet concrete or a damp spot in the yard that can't be explained by recent irrigation, this could be a leak.

Please report these cases to the PUD any time by contacting us at (866) 357-8783 or PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.



A large puddle on the road caused by a leak.

Project Help - Customer Support Program

Do you qualify as income-eligible and need assistance with paying your water bill? Have you and your family been affected financially by the COVID-19 pandemic? You may qualify to receive a credit towards your utility bill through our Project Help Program.

To be eligible for assistance you must (1) be a customer with the PUD, with an active account in your name, (2) have received a past due notice for your water service, and (3) provide documentation that household income is \$40,000 or less or are economically affected by COVID-19 and can provide documentation of unemployment status. If you are a customer in need, we encourage you to reapply yearly. Contact our Customer Service Team with any questions or concerns about the program's requirements.

To apply, visit our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org to complete the Project Help application (found on the front page of our website). If you'd like to request a paper copy of the application, please call us at (866) 357-8783 to speak with our Customer Service Team.

If you're interested in making a one-time or monthly donation, please call us at (866) 357-8783, email PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org, or return the form below with any payments mailed to our office.

I authorize Thurston PUD to bill my account \$ _____.

- One-time only
- Each month

This authorization shall remain in effect until the PUD receives written notification from me to terminate this agreement. I understand that if my account becomes past due, this authorization becomes invalid.

Name: _____ Account No.: _____

Service Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____