



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

February 2021

Commissioner Message

Leadership in Times of Stress

By: Linda Oosterman, PUD Commissioner

This is your Thurston PUD. Hopefully, most of the time you do not think about what goes into bringing your water to you, but I want to assure you that good leadership is at its core. We want to reassure you that PUD leaders are skilled at promoting the very best values, that in turn, influence all of our staff.

Leadership communication creates a good work force, and at its foundation, supports and brings out the best in each and every employee. Basic values of fairness, honesty, and communication are paramount. Being able to reach and confer with managers gives all employees the ability to confirm their tasks, which in turn, reduces levels of stress.

Crucial components are our General Manager and highly skilled senior management team. Because having access to clean, safe drinking water is vital to life itself, one primary thought is to seriously prepare for a disaster.

In this particular time of a pandemic, several changes had to be made immediately. Our General Manager, John Weidenfeller, always had basic emergency plans in place. Administrative Services Manager Ruth Clemens has done a great job overseeing the COVID-19 responses, working with the managers, has kept PUD leaders informed on the ever-changing health guidelines, and has ensured employees had the proper personal protective equipment to perform their work. This preparedness led to quickly making specific changes to our operations which continues to be done each and every day.

In times of crisis, managing stress is critical. Leadership means providing a sense of calm, reassuring others of current information, and having confidence in the strength of individuals and managers. It provides a specific time and means for questions and concerns and to give new plans as they are developed. It means listening. It means keeping work as “normal” as possible and continuing to recognize the good work that each contributes to the whole. With team work already established, each employee will always have a coworker to speak with.

COVID-19 has brought about a weariness that we recognize. We must pull from our depths our best selves and reach for the inner strength that we all possess. Look for the small things that surround us. Name it and be grateful. This is a long period of uncertainty. Discover new ways to bring satisfaction to you and those around. We have choices. Let us share with each other the ways we find resilience.



Linda Oosterman,
Commissioner - District 1

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman





District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

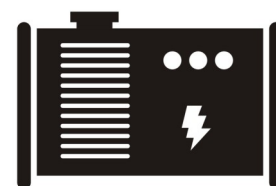
Important Messages

-  PUD offices will remain closed until further notice.
-  Learn more about the PUD’s Generator Program on Page 2.
-  Want to know what’s going on at the PUD? Read about the PUD’s different teams on Page 3.
-  Do you qualify for Project Help? Review Page 4 for more information on this important Customer Support Program.

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Keep the Water Running with the PUD’s Generator Program

We are committed to providing safe, clean, and reliable water service to your homes every day. However, power outages can occur, and a major event such as a severe winter storm, earthquake or wildfire could disrupt utility services for an extended period.



Although most PUD water systems do not have a generator installed for back-up power, we’ve taken steps to lessen the impacts of power outages by establishing and promoting PUD customers on priority lists for power restoration. We’ve also joined local county emergency management organizations, entered into mutual aid agreements, and developed an automated system to contact customers when a scheduled or emergency water system outage occurs.

The Thurston PUD Board of Commissioners created a Generator Program that helps customers of a water system share the cost of the purchase, design and installation of a backup generator and transfer switch to safely power their water system during an outage. Due to the high volume of requests, we are re-examining our current protocols for the generator program. Protocols will be updated in the coming months.

How the Program Works

We encourage customers to contact Administrative Services Manager Ruth Clemens to express their interest in the program. If enough interest is generated by customers belonging to a PUD water system, our staff will send a ballot to property owners to approve or disapprove a surcharge that would pay for the purchase, design and installation of a generator. The ballot requires 66 percent of property owners to vote in favor of installing a generator. Note: an in-favor vote of 66 percent is calculated based on all active connections, not 66 percent in favor of the votes received by our office. It’s also important to note that the PUD Board of Commissioners must approve any and all charges imposed to customers on a water system.

Choosing the Right Generator

Because of the varying water demands throughout the day and the design needs and intricacies of a water system, the District must work with an engineer to design and install a generator. An engineer design ensures that the generator will produce clean and stable power without burning up circuits or our pumps.

Estimated Costs

We have worked with water system design engineers to come up with estimates of what a generator would cost to install. If approved by water system customers and PUD Commissioners, the PUD would pursue a low-interest loan that those water system customers would pay through an additional monthly surcharge on their bills for the life of the loan which typically is 20 years. The surcharge amount depends on the total cost of the generator and how many connections are on the water system. Engineering experts estimate, depending on the water system, the design and installation of a generator can cost between \$35,000 and \$50,000.

Below is a table that gives a range of a monthly surcharge based on the number of connections. The table is for demonstration purposes only. Surcharge amounts are based on final costs.

No. of Connections	Cost Range/Monthly Surcharge	
	\$35,000	\$50,000
10	\$26.83	\$38.32
60	\$4.47	\$6.39
200	\$1.34	\$1.92
1000	\$0.27	\$0.38

For more information about the Generator Program, contact Ruth Clemens at rclemens@thurstonpud.org or at (360) 357-8783 ext. 106.

What's Happening at the PUD?

As we say goodbye to 2020 and get into the full swing of things in 2021, we will begin a series of articles from the different teams that comprise the PUD. We want to share information on what we're currently working on or projects we're looking forward to in the near future as well as information on the responsibilities and functions of different areas of the PUD.



Accounting & Finance

Our Accounting & Finance Team includes the Finance & Customer Service Manager and one Accounting Assistant. The Accounting & Finance Team are hard at work wrapping up things for 2020, like preparing year-end documents and tax filing information. After the year-end process is completed, this team will begin compiling and finalizing financial documents for the annual audit later in the year.

Administrative Services

Our Administrative Services Team includes the Administrative Services Manager and one Administrative Assistant. Currently, the Administrative Team is helping to recruit for an open Accounting Professional position for the Accounting & Finance Team. For more information about job openings, please visit the PUD website at www.ThurstonPUD.org.

Customer Service

Our Customer Service Team includes a Customer Service Supervisor and three Customer Service Representatives. While most of the work accomplished by Customer Service is cyclical (posting payments, processing bills, etc. each and every month), this team is working on uploading a large amount of customer data into our billing system.

Field Operations

Our Field Operations Team includes the Director of Field Operations, eight Field Technicians, two Meter Readers, one Laborer, and one Project Management Specialist. Recently, this team was able to repair a major mainline leak at a water system in Thurston County. The rate of water loss for this leak was estimated at 2,000 gallons per minute, so this team worked hard to isolate and repair the leak as quickly as possible to prevent further water loss and property damage.

Planning & Compliance

Our Planning & Compliance Team includes the Director of Planning & Compliance, two Operations Specialists, and one Administrative Assistant. This team is working on moving the PUD to a new software program for cross-connection control.

Project Spotlight: Hawley Hills Water System Consolidation

Thurston PUD is currently working on a consolidation project for four Thurston County water systems: the Deerfield Park 1, Deerfield Park 2, Hawley Hills, and Marvin Gardens water systems. These four systems will be combined into one large system, and this new, consolidated water system will be known as the Hawley Hills water system based on feedback we received from customers belonging to those four original water systems.

So why consolidate? Consolidation offers many benefits, including:

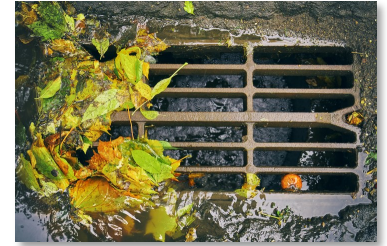
- **Simplified management.** One system is easier to manage than four separate systems.
- **Increased reliability.** Better service quality, better water pressure, and back-up power generation will be available to these water system customers.
- **Cost savings.** We estimate a cost savings of \$1.4 million over the next 18 years due to extended life of the water system's assets and other project aspects.

One important thing to note: this project has no impact to our customers or ratepayers! This project has been fully funded by a grant provided by the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Program.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact our office by calling us at (866) 357-8783 or emailing us at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

Winter Storm & Outage Reminders

In past years, February has been a challenging month weather-wise here in western Washington. In order to prepare for winter storms and any unexpected outages, we created a short list of suggestions for our customers:



- **Keep drinking water on hand.** Most PUD water systems do not have a generator installed to provide back-up power so when the power goes out, you may experience a water service outage. Keep bottled water handy or fill buckets to ensure that you have enough water to drink and cook with in the case of a water outage or emergency.
- **Store water for other purposes.** Fill buckets or fill your bathtub with water to use for washing and flushing toilets in the case of a water outage or emergency.
- **Keep your contact information updated.** We utilize an automated calling system to inform customers of planned maintenance and emergencies. Please keep your contact information with our office current so that our staff has a way to reach you.

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. For other available resources, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm.

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** have been financially impacted by COVID-19 and can provide documentation of your employment 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 at Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

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: _____