



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

June 2021

## Leadership Message

### Learning and Teaching are Part of the Job

By Jim Campbell, Director of Field Operations

Did you know that utility workers are available around the clock to ensure essential services are delivered right to your home? No matter the weather, the time, the day, or the county’s pandemic phase, essential utility workers, like Thurston PUD employees, are here to respond to your call.

Availability is only a small fraction of the team’s commitment to providing safe, reliable, clean drinking water. Our team enrolls in and attends important training to keep up their certifications and stay informed on industry standards.

As the Director of Field Operations, I know that it takes the collaboration of the entire organization to help customers. In this message, I want to give you some insight about the team I manage.

Each field technician, at a minimum, holds a Water Distribution Management I certification with the State Department of Health (DOH). We have several technicians who have expanded their certifications to include Labor & Industries (L&I) Electrical and Plumbing credentials, as well as DOH’s Backflow Assembly Tester credentials. I’m fortunate enough to lead a team that goes the extra mile and understand the importance of obtaining and maintaining professional knowledge.

Our water operators not only take time to ensure that their paperwork is order, but they take the time to safely exercise what they’ve learned. Safety is our top priority at Thurston PUD.

Our field technicians are loyal teammates, and working safely is one of the ways they take care of one another — and themselves. They have attended courses like Fall Protection In-Person Training which will help them safely scale reservoirs like the Quail Run water system’s 75-foot-tall reservoir.

Our team has not only grown in size the past few years, but we have also grown in education, training, experience and comradery. One more important note, our team welcomes its newest member, David Gruver, from the Pattison Water Company. We’re fortunate David came to us already equipped with the same principles and philosophies. His team is teaching him to operate a vactor, well pump hoist, excavator, dump trailer and much more.

If you see any of the field technicians in your neighborhood, please wave hello.



Jim Campbell,  
Director of Field  
Operations

## Thurston PUD Commissioners

### District 1

Linda Oosterman

### District 2

Russell E. Olsen

### District 3

Chris Stearns

## Important Messages



PUD offices remain closed until further notice.



Enrollment for the PUD’s Equal Payment Plan (EPP) program opens soon. Read more on Page 2.



This month, we take a look at our Field Operations Team. More information on Page 3.



Review Page 4 for information on this year’s conservation tools, resources and rebates.

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## Equal Payment Plan Program - Enrollment Open Soon!

The PUD's Equal Payment Plan (EPP) Program launched in 2020, due in large part to the Utility Rate Advisory Committee (URAC) group, made up of several PUD customers. Due to the program's success, we're offering another open enrollment period for customers that are interested later this summer.

### 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](http://www.thurstonpud.org) for more eligibility requirements.

### When can I sign up?

Enrollment opens August 1, 2021.

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

Open enrollment closes August 31, 2021. You will see your first EPP bill amount on the billing statement you receive in October. Instructions on how to enroll will be published at the end of July 2021.

## Bill Payment Options

Thurston PUD offers several options to pay your bill. As a reminder, those options are listed below:

- Pay online at [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org). Customers can also set up automatic payments using our Auto Pay service by logging into their account online.
- We offer a Direct Debit service. To sign up for this service, visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org) and click on the Links & Forms tab to download a Direct Debit application.
- Call us toll-free at (866) 357-8783. We offer an automated payment option by phone, available 24/7.
- Payments can be mailed to our office at: Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.
- Although our office is currently closed to the public, customers can leave their payments in the secured drop box located in our parking lot at 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

## What's Happening at the PUD?

This month, we'd like to put a spotlight on the PUD's Field Operations Team. This team ensures that each of the PUD's 277 water systems are providing safe and clean drinking water to our customers. Read the information listed below to learn more.

### What specific functions does the Field Operations Team cover?

The Field Operations Team covers many specific duties and processes within the PUD. Below is a list of some of the team's top priorities and functions.

#### Daily Operations/Maintenance:

- Reading water meters
- Checking high/low chlorine residuals
- Servicing treatment systems
- Routine water system flushing
- Investigating water quality complaints
- Repairing water line leaks

#### Capital Improvement Projects:

- Replacement of treatment systems
- Replacement of plumbing or pressure tanks
- Drilling new wells
- Performing water system upgrades
- Replacement of well and booster pumps



The PUD's vacuum truck allows Field Operations staff to "vacuum" soil and debris around water lines to find and repair leaks without damaging other pipes or infrastructure.

### How many people are employed within Field Operations?

The Field Operations Team is the largest section within the PUD, comprised of fourteen employees: nine Field Technicians, two Meter Readers, one Laborer, one Project Management Specialist, and the Director of Field Operations. Having a fully-staffed Field Operations Team is critical to coverage during emergencies and addressing the wide array of tasks and responsibilities for a water utility.

### What is the Field Operations Team working on now?

While some Field Operations duties are recurring (like reading meters and test sampling), there are instances of unplanned work, such as repairs or replacements due to infrastructure failure or water line leaks. For example, several Field Operations staff members responded to a catastrophic failure at a water system in Pierce County in May. After some troubleshooting, staff found that the 25-year-old submersible well pump had failed. As a short-term solution, our team inter-tied the system to another nearby PUD water system, which means one system was temporarily providing water to another, a decision typically reserved for emergencies only. While the systems were inter-tied, the Field Operations Team installed a new well pump and restored water service to those customers within the same day.

There are numerous examples of the Field Operations Team's work during emergencies as well as planned Capital Improvement Projects. Keep an eye on future newsletters and the PUD's website for more information on the PUD's Asset Management Plan and Capital Improvement Projects.

## Notes from Customer Service

Here are two important notes from our Customer Service Team:

- Our offices will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2021 in observance of Independence Day.
- If you use your bank's Bill Pay option to make your water bill payment, please note that the PUD is not able to accept these payments electronically due to banking restrictions. Instead, these payments are printed on a paper check by a third-party and mailed to the PUD with your account information. Please keep in mind that these payments may take several business days to reach our office.

## Conservation Tools, Resources and Rebates

Each year, Thurston PUD promotes water conservation inside and outside your homes by offering tools, resources and rebates. This year, the PUD is offering a \$50.00 rebate toward the purchase of a qualifying WaterSense weather-based irrigation controller and/or add-on plugin device. Weather-based irrigation controllers can reduce water waste and lower utility bills. The “Smart” controller automatically adjusts the watering schedule based on the local weather data; and may be further customized by entering soil, and plant types to create a personalized water schedule.



Irrigation control technologies can significantly reduce overwatering by applying water only when plants need it. The EPA estimates that up to 50% of irrigation water is overwatering. For more information on the smart irrigation rebate, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/rebates.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/rebates.htm).

We are also offering a limited number of mechanical water timers. These timers fit on outside faucets to control garden watering and irrigation. If you'd like to request a timer, please contact our Customer Service Team at (866) 357-8783 or [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).

There are a limited number of rebates and water timers available, so contact us at your earliest convenience!

## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.

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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: \_\_\_\_\_