



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

August 2022

Leadership Message

How Inflation Impacts and Supply Chain Issues in the Water Industry

By: TaSeana Tartt, Finance & Customer Service Manager

All across the world, people are feeling the pressure of inflation at the grocery store, gas pump and in their pocketbooks. For water utilities, inflation is increasing the cost and availability of materials, equipment and labor and is pushing utilities to reexamine capital projects and their budgets. Thurston PUD has felt inflation in the following ways:

- Increased cost of vehicle replacement
- Gas prices
- Computer and technology availability
- Water treatment chemical costs
- Chlorine
- Materials
- Equipment and infrastructure components
- Contractor/laborer costs



TaSeana Tartt, Finance & Customer Service Manager

The worldwide supply chain backlog halted our ability to replace critical infrastructure like equipment at water systems and computers. We have always maintained an inventory of specialized or custom-built water system components, but the disruption to the global supply chain has made buying even standard components difficult. Earlier this year, there was a nationwide chlorine shortage as one of the three chlorine manufacturing plants was temporarily shut down. Thurston PUD braced for the worst outcomes, but with careful planning and close observation, we were able to stretch our supply and ensure we would be able to provide safe drinking water to our chlorinated systems.

Careful planning and keeping a finger on the pulse on rising costs and inflation rates has helped us weather much of this storm, but we are still anticipating more changes in the future. We will continue to monitor what is happening around the world and nation to make sure we are protecting our assets and anticipating any major changes that may affect our operations. We look forward to the economy recovering, until then, we will continue to be good stewards of your ratepayer monies.

If you have any questions about your account or water service, please do not hesitate to contact our Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman

District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

In This Issue

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Summertime usually means higher water usage. Don't let your bill surprise you!

Thurston PUD
1230 Ruddell Road SE
Lacey, Washington 98503
(360) 357-8783
Toll-Free: (866) 357-8783
Fax: (360) 357-1172
www.ThurstonPUD.org

Reminders from Our Customer Service Team

Here are a few important reminders from our Customer Service Team:

- PUD offices will be closed on Monday, September 5, 2022, for Labor Day.
- Our office is currently open to the public. Due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in our area, we recommend wearing a face mask while inside our building. We have face masks available in our Customer Service lobby.
- Our normal business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- If you experience a water service emergency, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 at any time. If your call is received after normal business hours, you will be connected with our afterhours answering service and on-call staff.
- Commission meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Members of the public can attend in-person, by phone, or virtually via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Meeting agendas are posted on our website at www.thurstonpud.org.
- We welcome your feedback! Contact us at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.



Electronic Payments Save You Time and Stamps

The PUD has a number of ways for customers to make payments which are free to use, and *we never charge a transaction fee*. Our electronic payment options can save you time and money.



Make an online payment or enroll in Auto Pay

You can make a payment online by visiting the PUD's website at www.thurstonpud.org and clicking the Pay Bill Online link in the upper left corner of the webpage (as shown on the image to the right). Once you have registered for an account online, you will be able to make one-time payments with your bank account, Visa, or MasterCard. You can even sign up for Auto Pay and paperless billing once your account is verified.

Customers who enroll in Auto Pay and paperless billing are eligible to receive a one-time credit of \$5.00 on their bill. For more information, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/credit.htm.

Sign up for the PUD's Direct Debit service

For customers that do not want to create an account online, we offer Direct Debit service, an automated payment service that drafts payment from your bank account around the 15th of each month. To enroll in this service, please download the Direct Debit application on our website at www.thurstonpud.org/links-and-forms.htm.

Make a payment using our automated phone system

You can skip the hold times and make a payment using our automated phone system. Our automated system is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week for you to conveniently and securely make a payment by phone. To use the automated phone system, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 and press 1.

Make a payment in person

Customers are still welcome to make a payment in-person during regular business hours or by using the drop box located in our parking lot. Our regular business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Customers can pay in-person or mail payments to Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

If you have any questions about the PUD's payment methods or your account, please contact us at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or send us an email at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

What's Happening at the PUD?



A large puddle on a dry road, caused by a mainline leak.

Help Our Crew Find Leaks

The weather is finally heating up in Western Washington! A benefit of having dryer weather for the PUD is that major leaks can be easier to detect and repair.

Repairing leaks as soon as possible is critical:

- Leaks can cause a system to work harder than normal and can increase the “wear and tear” on system equipment which can result in early equipment failure.
- Leaks can lead to higher energy costs.
- Leaks are a potential pathway for bacteria and other harmful contaminants to enter a water system.

If you see something, say something. If you spot a patch of wet concrete or a damp area in the yard or road 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 (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or by emailing PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

Summer is Time for Repairs & Replacements

Like most critical infrastructure organizations, the PUD takes advantage of the warm weather and uses this time to tackle important work and projects. Our Planning & Compliance and Field Operations teams work together to ensure our daily operational work is completed as well as our long-term Capital Improvement projects.

Here are some examples of the work our team is completing on this summer:

Operations & Maintenance

- Mainline and service line leak repair
- Grounds maintenance (mowing, weed whacking, etc.)
- Water system maintenance (painting pump houses and other infrastructure repairs)
- Treatment system/water quality work (flushing, investigating quality complaints, etc.)

Capital Improvement (CI) Work

- Water treatment system replacements at the Armstrong (389) & Violet Meadows A-D (747-750) water systems
- Field Office improvements
- Emergency replacements (booster/well pump replacements)

Employee Spotlight

This month's Employee Spotlight is Assistant General Manager Julie Parker. Julie has been with the PUD for over 15 years, making her one of its longest-serving employees. As Assistant General Manager, Julie oversees all financial operations of the PUD and assists the General Manager in the overall operation of the PUD. She also serves as the PUD's Chief Technology Officer and is responsible for the coordination of the Board of Commissioners meetings.

Julie earned her Bachelor's degree from St. Martin's College in Accounting and, prior to working for the PUD, worked for the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, managed a private accounting business, and served as a consultant for water companies.

Julie is mother to two accomplished daughters, now adults, and enjoys working out and keeping active. Julie is an important part of the PUD and the Senior Leadership Team. We thank her for her contributions that support the mission and vision of Thurston PUD!



Julie Parker, Assistant General Manager

You May Qualify for a Leak Adjustment

PUD staff regularly audits customer meter reads to find errors or irregularities. Each month, we will identify high, unexplained consumption and notify customers so that if they have a leak, it 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 PUD's Customer Service Team by phone or by email that the leak has been repaired.

Once we verify that the leak has been repaired, our Customer Service Team will note your 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 (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

Conserving Water While Irrigating Your Property

While the title of this article may seem like an paradox, there are ways to conserve water while you irrigate your lawn or garden this summer. Please read the tips we have compiled for our customers that water their property this season.

- **Water your yard in the morning or evening.** Water evaporates quickly when the sun is high, so irrigate your lawn or garden during cooler temperatures, early in the morning or late in the evening.
- **Water deeply but less frequently.** Lawns only need about one-inch of water per week in the summer to stay green. Scatter tuna cans or other small containers to measure the amount of time it takes you to water one-inch so that you can irrigate accordingly.
- **Tune up your system.** If you have an irrigation system, inspect the system and check for leaks or broken/clogged sprinkler heads. Make sure that your sprinklers are not spraying areas you do not want to irrigate, like the sidewalk, street, or your driveway.
- **Use timers or weather-based irrigation controllers.** Timers and weather-based irrigation controllers can help conserve thousands of gallons of water annually. When purchasing weather-based controllers, look for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) WaterSense-labeled devices to ensure efficiency and performance. The PUD is currently offering a limited amount of garden timers to customers. Visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/water-systems.htm to request one before these timers are all gone.
- **Install mulch in your garden or yard.** Mulch prevents evaporation by shielding your soil from the sun.



An example of a drip irrigation system. Commonly used to concentrate water in spots where plants receive the most benefit.

For more information on conservation, including a list of conservation programs the PUD is currently offering, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/water-systems.htm.