



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

January 2024

## Leadership Message

### Project Help Customer Support Program Revamped

By: TaSeana Tartt, Finance and Customer Service Manager

As the cost of living continues to rise and impact our communities, we understand the increasing financial struggles our customers may be facing. We are committed to helping our customers by providing financial assistance programs, tools, and tips to save water.

Since 2013, Thurston PUD has offered a Project Help Customer Support Program. The program is meant to provide financial assistance to qualified, low-income District customers and is funded primarily with customer donations. This year, District Staff reviewed the program and made some changes to provide more financial support to customers in need.

The Thurston PUD Commissioners budgeted \$15,000 to help provide support for customers that need help with their water bills. This will allow us to increase the assistance amount from a maximum of \$50.00 to a maximum of \$750.00 annually per customer account on a calendar basis. District staff also updated the eligibility requirements to be consistent with the income threshold for property tax exemptions.

Eligibility requirements for receiving these funds are:

- i. The applicant must be the owner or tenant of the property and have an account in their name.
- ii. The applicant must have received a disconnect notice for their water service.
- iii. The applicant must provide documentation that the household income is \$64,000 or less.

If you qualify as income-eligible and need assistance paying your water bill, you can apply for Project Help. For an application, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/links-and-forms.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/links-and-forms.htm) and select *Project Help Application For Assistance* under “Service Forms”. You can also call our Customer Service Team toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to request that a paper application be mailed to you.

If you’re interested in making a one-time or monthly donation, please call us at (866) 357-8783, or email [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).



TaSeana Tartt, Finance and Customer Service Manager

## Thurston PUD Commissioners

### District 1

Linda Oosterman

### District 2

Russell E. Olsen

### District 3

Chris Stearns

## In This Issue

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- ◆ Avoid scams! More on Page 4

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## Stay Safe During Winter Weather

We are in the midst of our winter season here in the Pacific Northwest. During this time, we are susceptible to winter storms which can create a higher risk of vehicular collisions, hypothermia, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion. Winter storms bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds.

A winter storm can last a few hours or several days, cut off heat, power and communication services, and put older adults, children, sick individuals and pets at greater risk.

Familiarize yourself with winter weather terms so you know what risks are prevalent and how to stay safe. Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of freezing weather and winter storms. Listen for emergency information or alerts and sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.

Winter Weather Term	Description
<b>Winter Storm Warning</b>	Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring. Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.
<b>Winter Storm Watch</b>	Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.
<b>Winter Weather Advisory</b>	Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconveniences and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.

**Prepare for winter weather.** Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups. Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Remember the needs of your pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights. In case of an emergency, be prepared for winter weather at home, at work, and in your car.

**Stay safe during winter weather.** Stay off roads if at all possible during severe winter weather. If trapped in your car, then stay inside and out of the elements until help arrives. Limit your time outside. If you need to go outside, then wear layers of warm clothing and watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Reduce the risk of a heart attack by avoiding overexertion when shoveling snow and walking in the snow. For more information, visit [www.ready.gov/winter-weather](http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather).



**Learn the signs of and basic treatments for frostbite and hypothermia.** Frostbite causes loss of feeling and color around the face, fingers, and toes. Hypothermia is an unusually low body temperature. A temperature below 95 degrees is an emergency. For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/).

**Install working carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home.** Winter is an especially hazardous time for carbon monoxide poisoning because fuel-burning devices are used to heat homes and windows and doors are generally kept shut during cold weather.

# What's Happening at the PUD?

## First Look at the Adopted 2024 Budgets

On September 25, 2023, the PUD Board of Commissioners adopted the 2024 Budgets as well as the rates, fees, charges, and surcharges for 2024. In September, PUD staff presented several budget goals to the Board of Commissioners, and we wanted to share a few of these goals below.

- Meet the revenue requirement to operate and maintain 279 water systems serving 9,836 customers in six (6) counties.
- Meet our payment obligations for existing bonds and loans and debt coverage ratio.
- Provide funding for water system projects identified in the Asset Management Plan.
- Provide funding for emergency preparedness for water systems, employees, and buildings.
- Develop rates that would improved revenue stability and not rely heavily on unpredictable weather conditions.

If you would like to review the Adopted 2024 Budgets, Adopted 2024 Rates, Fees, Charges, and Surcharges, or take a look at the bill impact scenarios that estimates your bill amount based on several levels of consumption, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/our-rates.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/our-rates.htm).

## Office Closures

The PUD will be closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day - Monday, January 1, 2024
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Monday, January 15, 2024
- Presidents Day - Monday, February 19, 2024

**If you experience a water service emergency, contact us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783. Calls received outside of normal business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday) are routed to our answering service and on-call staff.**



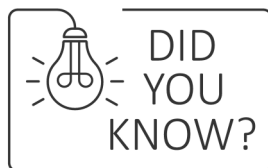
## Employee Spotlight

This month's spotlight is shone on Dillon Pflugmacher. Dillon was hired as a Temporary Laborer in 2021 before coming on as a permanent employee in 2022. Most recently, he was promoted to be a Meter Reader. As a Meter Reader, his primary responsibilities include reading over 9,000 water meters monthly for billing purposes, changing out and installing new meters, and completing various service requests.

Dillon enjoys spending time with his family and going on adventures throughout Washington State, especially Cape Flattery in Clallam County. He also has a knack for smoking meats and cheeses and often shares his treats with his fellow coworkers. If you see Dillon out reading your water meter wave hello!



Dillon Pflugmacher,  
Meter Reader



According to the Times Square Official Website, about one (1) million people gather in New York City's Times Square to watch the ball drop. The Times Square New Year's Eve ball drop came about because of a ban on fireworks. The first ball in 1907 was 700 pounds and was lit with 100 25-watt lights. Today, it is covered in 2,688 crystals, lit by 32,256 LED lights, weighs 11,875 pounds and is 12 feet in diameter!

Trivia answers from page 4: Question 1: 1938; Question 2: 279 water systems; Question 3: Six counties; Question 4: 9,836 customers; Question 5: 3 Commissioners; Question 6: 6 years; Question 7: Field Operations

## Protect Yourself Against Scams

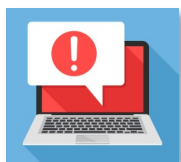
Utility scams are common, though maybe not as common as other types of scams like online shopping scams, banking or credit card scams, and debt collection scams. However, utility scams are still prevalent, and we want to provide you with information to help identify scams and suspicious activity. Please read more below.

### *How do utility scams work?*

Scammers can contact you by phone or email, or they may even visit your home. Scammers usually threaten to disconnect your water service if you do not make immediate payment. Their intent is to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they are telling you.

### *How can I avoid utility scams?*

If you are on the phone with someone claiming to be a Thurston PUD representative and you suspect a scam, please hang up and contact us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783.



**Never wire money or pay with a prepaid or reloadable gift card or cryptocurrency to anyone who demands it.** Thurston PUD only accepts cash, checks, money orders, and Visa or MasterCard payments. Our employees are prohibited from accepting physical payments from customers while out in the field and will always direct you to contact our Customer Service Team to make a payment.

### *How can I verify a PUD employee?*

PUD employees working in the field drive vehicles with PUD logos on the sides and an identifying number on the back. Our employees may also be wearing clothing with PUD logos and can provide their employee identification upon request.

If you experience any suspicious activity, please call our office immediately to report. For more information on scams, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/scams.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/scams.htm).

## National Trivia Day—January 4, 2024

National Trivia Day is celebrated on January 4th! Below are some trivia questions pertaining to Thurston PUD. Can you answer all 7 trivia questions? Answers are at the bottom of Page 3.

1. What year was Thurston PUD officially formed?
2. How many water system does Thurston PUD operate?
3. How many counties does Thurston PUD have water systems in?
4. How many customers does Thurston PUD provide water to?
5. How many Commissioners govern Thurston PUD?
6. How long are PUD Commissioners elected to serve for?
7. What Department within Thurston PUD employs the most personnel?

