



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

March 2023

## Leadership Message

### Infrastructure Replacement & Capital Improvements

By: Jim Campbell, Director of Field Operations

In 2014, Thurston PUD started planning for rehabilitative and replacement efforts with the use of an Asset Management Plan (AMP). All Thurston PUD owned water systems have an AMP and when we acquire new water systems, our team immediately goes to work analyzing and collecting information to construct AMPs for each of them.

An AMP is a tool used to forecast the capital improvements and/or replacements that will be needed for your water system in the next 50+ years, specifically the timing of the improvements and/or replacements and projected costs.

Capital improvements and infrastructure replacements are partially funded by the PUD's Capital Surcharge which is charged to every PUD customer. Infrastructure is a general term for the basic physical elements of a water system. Examples of infrastructure include pipeline, well pumps, and treatment systems. For Thurston PUD, capital improvements can be defined as improving the condition or value of an asset/infrastructure beyond its original state at the time of purchase. These include permanent structural changes or restoration that enhances our infrastructure or increases its useful life. Examples of capital improvements can be replacing the roof on a pumphouse, installing fencing around a reservoir, and replacing aging booster or well pumps.

The Capital Surcharge is the primary financial tool used to help fund infrastructure replacements and capital improvements based on a water system's AMP. Capital surcharges are used to help fund system replacements at the end of an asset's life cycle. The capital surcharge is paid by all PUD customers, and infrastructure replacement costs are shared by all PUD customers like a cooperative.

Keep an eye out for a list of completed 2023 Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) in a future newsletter.

For more information on your specific water system's AMP, or if you have any questions about infrastructure replacement or capital improvements, please contact our office by phone at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).



Jim Campbell,  
Director of Field  
Operations

### Thurston PUD Commissioners

#### District 1

Linda Oosterman

#### District 2

Russell E. Olsen

#### District 3

Chris Stearns

## Important Messages

- Check out the "All About Our Field Operations Team" article on Page 2.
- Want to learn more about what our Rates, Fees and Charges pay for? Review Page 3 for more information.
- What is Flushing and Why is it Done? Read Page 4 for the answer!

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## All About Our Field Operations Team



The PUD crew performing work at a water system in Thurston County.

This month, let's shine the spotlight on the PUD's Field Operations Team. This team is one of the most integral pieces of our operation. We invite you to review the information listed below to learn more about our Field Operations Team.

### Who are they?

Our Field Operations Team is the group of individuals who are at our water systems daily performing routine maintenance, water sampling, meter reading, flushing, repairs, and more to ensure we are not only providing clean, safe, reliable water to our communities, but also that we are remaining in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws that govern our municipality.

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

The Field Operations Team covers many different aspects of work related to operation and maintenance of our water systems. Listed below are some examples of the work that the Field Operations Team handles frequently.

- Checking water lines for leaks
- Repairing leaks on mainlines
- Flushing and other routine tasks related to water quality
- Responding to "no water" or low pressure calls
- Responding to other water service emergencies

In addition to the tasks listed above, the Field Operations Team provides the skill, labor, and expertise for a large amount of Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). This includes replacing key infrastructure like well pumps, booster pumps, and treatment system components. This also includes important upgrades and improvements that prolong the useful life of your water system. You can read more about other tasks that the Field Operations Team performs below.

### What are some recurring duties the Field Operations Team oversees?

Recurring duties include reading customer water meters monthly for billing purposes, taking routine water samples and submitting to a water lab for testing, locating water lines for construction work involving digging, monitoring and tending to treatment systems, and exercising water valves for regular maintenance. These are only a few of the many tasks for which this team is responsible.

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

Currently our Field Operations Team employs the most staff members with 14 employees, half of our workforce! This team includes our Director of Field Operations, one Laborer, two Meter Readers, and ten Field Technicians. Three out of the ten Field Technicians were recently hired and are undergoing training.

You may see our Field Operations staff members working at a water system near you. PUD employees can be identified by the PUD logo on their clothing. They will also be driving a vehicle with the PUD logo on it. PUD employees also carry an identification card. Feel free to waive or say hello if you see one of our employees in the field!

If you have any questions about your account, contact our Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or send



The PUD crew is shown using safety equipment to access an underground well at a water system in Pierce County.

## Breakdown of My Bill—An Explanation of Charges

When reviewing your monthly billing statement from Thurston PUD, you will see there are three (3) items listed under current charges: the base rate, consumption (water usage), and the capital surcharge. The PUD's rates cover the costs needed to operate and maintain 279 separate water systems. This includes, but is not limited to, water system operations and maintenance, water system treatment, transportation, staff salaries and wages, administrative costs, debt repayment, facilities maintenance, and emergency/disaster preparedness.

To the right, you will find an example of the current charges section on your monthly bill. Please note: based on your meter size and property (residential, commercial, etc.), your bill may vary from the example. Our Customer Service Team often receives questions about what each charge covers. Below, you will find more information to help answer these questions.

### CURRENT CHARGES

BASE RATE - 3/4" RESIDENTIAL	45.20
CONSUMPTION-RESIDENTIAL	8.68
CAPITAL SURCHARGE	11.00
<b>TOTAL CURRENT CHARGES</b>	<b>64.88</b>

**Base Rate and Consumption** — These funds are collected to pay for operating expenses including but not limited to water system general maintenance, testing water quality, transportation costs, administrative costs, certified training and payment towards debt service.

**Capital Surcharge** — This surcharge helps cover the cost of replacing major infrastructure. The PUD has committed to be a good steward of Capital Surcharge monies and only use them for infrastructure replacement. For detailed information regarding this surcharge, check out the front page of this Newsletter for our "Infrastructure Replacement & Capital Improvements" article.

## Assistance For Your Water Bill Is Available

If you are unable to pay your bill, please contact our Customer Service Team to discuss options that may be available to you. Our staff can work with you to establish a payment plan for your past due balance, provide local agencies that may be able to assist you with your bill, or you may be eligible for our Project Help Program.

The PUD has compiled a list of resources throughout the south Puget Sound community so that customers may refer to this list in seeking additional assistance opportunities. Please visit our Customer Community Resources webpage at [www.thurstonpud.org/community-resources.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/community-resources.htm) for this list.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us using one of the methods listed here. Our staff looks forward to answering any questions you may have and providing the best service we can!

<b>Main</b>	<b>(360) 357-8783</b>
Toll-Free	(866) 357-8783
Email	PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org
Website	www.thurstonpud.org

## Thurston PUD Offers 24-Hour Water Emergency Assistance



As part of our commitment to providing excellent customer service, Thurston PUD offers around-the-clock water emergency assistance. If you have a water service issue or emergency, our phone lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you contact us outside of regular business hours, your call will be handled by an after-hours call center that will notify on-call District staff.

**For both emergency and non-emergency assistance, please call:  
Local (360) 357-8783 or Toll-Free (866) 357-8783.**

## What is Flushing and Why is it Done?

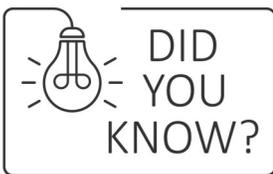
PUD staff frequently schedules automated calls to customer when emergency or scheduled work is performed on a water system. When we send automated calls, we often recommend to flush from an outside hose or faucet for about ten minutes prior to clear your service line, prior to using water inside your home. Our Customer Service Team often receives questions regarding this recommendation, so we wanted to provide more information about this topic.

Flushing a water line is the act of sending a surge of water through a pipe which scours the pipe to remove minerals and other naturally-occurring deposits. It's one of the many preventative maintenance activities the PUD uses that can improve water quality. This process removes sediment from the water mainlines which can be especially helpful for water systems that pull water from aquifers with minerals like iron and manganese which can build up in pipes over time. Flushing frequency varies from system to system, and mostly depends on the composition of the earth minerals found in that area. All water is different.

After a water outage, we routinely flush the mainlines to “refresh” the water and remove any air, sediment, or minerals that may have accumulated during our work. After service is restored, water will still need to be flushed from the pipes that run from the mainline to your home. Customers may experience a higher than normal amount of sediment or air in their water. Water may even be discolored. If this occurs, we advise that customers flush by running water from an outdoor faucet or a hose bib. If you prefer to flush indoors, we recommend using a bathtub faucet to flush as sediment can get trapped and clog sink faucet screens.

If you have any questions about water system maintenance or flushing, please contact us at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or send us an email at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).

**Helpful tip: If you are not at home for a week or more, it may be a good idea to clear out the water that has been sitting in your home's pipes. We also recommend running your faucets for at least a minute prior to using the water for consumption. You can use the water you ran on the plants around your home!**



All Thurston PUD water systems use groundwater sources! Groundwater travels through holes and cracks in the bedrock. The amount of rock space and the ability for water to travel through it is known as porosity and permeability. Groundwater with high porosity and permeability value can travel quickly and are known as aquifers. An aquifer with high pressure can cause the groundwater level to rise to the surface once a well has been dug ([Groundwater Association, 2012](#)).

## Employee Spotlight

This month's featured employee is Kurin Miller, the PUD's Administrative Services Coordinator. Kurin attended South Puget Sound Community College to study business and accounting. Prior to working for the PUD, she was employed by a firm that managed homeowners and condominium associations. She has been employed by the PUD since 2014, first in Customer Service before transferring to Accounting, then Administrative Services. Kurin has also served as Clerk to the Board of PUD Commissioners for several years. Her hobbies include traveling, reading, watching movies, exploring the Puget Sound area, and spending time with her husband.

Kurin's advice to customers, “By signing up for an account on the PUD's website, you can opt-in to receive your bill electronically, have it delivered via the United States Postal Service, or both! You can also access your bill amounts, usage information, and sign up for Auto Pay. To get started, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/credit.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/credit.htm).” Thank you, Kurin!



Kurin Miller,  
Administrative Services  
Coordinator