



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

November 2020

Leadership Message

COVID-19 Relief Money Available Through Your County

By: PUD Leadership

Thurston PUD operates and maintains 275 water systems in six counties: Thurston, Pierce, Lewis, Kitsap, Grays Harbor and King. We are proud to serve water to nearly 8,000 families, businesses and schools in our region. Providing water to you isn't our only job; we also have a duty to help all of our customers, especially those in need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a lot of financial stress on families across the world, and our little corner of the world is no different. Many have lost their jobs or businesses, some have had their hours cut back at work, some have been forced to cut back hours in order to care for children who cannot attend school in person. Each have a story of their own and some are behind on their bills.

The Governor's moratorium prohibits utility shut-offs and late fees (extended to December 31, 2020), and unfortunately, no federal aid was provided to water utility customers forcing the PUD to reach out to counties to assist.

Over the last month Thurston PUD leaders advocated to your county commissioners or councilmembers on behalf of those customers struggling to pay their water bills. We proposed an agreement between the PUD and counties that would allow the PUD to apply federal aid to customer accounts. Thurston County provided \$170,000 to the Community Action Council that can be used to help pay utility bills for low income customers. The Lewis County Commissioners and its County Manager answered the call to help customers from their county by compassionately contributing \$3,809.29 toward unpaid bills. This money only applies to Thurston PUD customers from Lewis County.

Although the moratorium prohibits shut-offs and late fees, it does not release customers from their financial obligations to pay their bills. Some bills are growing to proportions that are nearly impossible to pay without some sort of assistance. The PUD has assistance programs that can help get you back on track.

Despite the fact that we were unsuccessful in our attempt to secure critical federal aid from all the counties we contacted, we still want to provide resources to those of you who need assistance. **Don't wait too long—federal CARES Act aid is set to end on November 30, 2020.**

County	Utility Assistance Program	Number	Website
Thurston	Community Action Council	(360) 438-1100	caclmt.org
Pierce	No Programs Available	211	
Kitsap	No Programs Available	211	
Grays Harbor	Coastal Community Action Program	360-500-4524	coastalcap.org
King	No Programs Available	211	
Lewis	Thurston PUD	(866) 357-8783	thurstonpud.org

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.

 Don't miss another water alert! Give us a call to update your contact information!

 Prepare for winter storms by reviewing the PUD's suggestions on Page 3.

 Do you qualify for Project Help? Review Page 4 for more information on this important Customer Support Program.

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

PUD Workers and Services are Essential

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic caused millions to lose their jobs or work from home and many businesses have closed or modified their operations, essential workers like Thurston PUD employees are still reporting to work each day ensuring that water gets to your home. Our team is part of the County's 17 million essential infrastructure workers who were essential before COVID-19. The importance of supporting and keeping our staff healthy has become critical, as well as ensuring that each member of our team is cross-trained to be able to help out in the event we encounter an exposure at work.

Just like the infrastructure in a pumphouse, our infrastructure workers require investment as well. Hiring, training and retaining water operators requires years of investment in a single person. The loss of one water operator can have major impacts on a water utility. For example, in 2017 Thurston PUD received a request to assist a city that lost its sole water operator. As an act of mutual aid, Thurston PUD agreed to help and stepped in and operated the city's water system for over a year until they could successfully train and certify a new water operator.



The PUD crew installs a well pump at a water system in Thurston County. (Taken in 2018)

We commend and extend sincere gratitude to the heroic efforts by all front-line responders during this pandemic. This includes medical workers, firefighters and paramedics, police personnel, grocery store workers, waste collectors, IT professionals, and all public works employees. Each one responded to the call for action and showed up to work each day in order to keep some sort of normalcy alive.

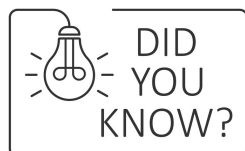


Customer Service Representatives working from the PUD's administrative headquarters. (Taken in 2018)

Thurston PUD operations did not shut down for one day when the pandemic was declared. Employees were able to swiftly shift to the "new normal" and have been making adjustments each day.

We anticipate that our offices will reopen in 2021. Until then, we encourage you to keep reaching out to us by phone call, email, or mail. We also encourage you to continue giving our field operations team the space they need to conduct their work, by keeping at least six feet of distance. Please continue to allow our staff access to your water system by not blocking driveways or easements. Our operators need clear access to water system components such as valves, meters and pumphouses.

We thank you for your continued cooperation, and we look forward to continuing to serve you and your family.



Flashback! In 2011, Kim Gubbe, formerly the PUD's Operations Manager, was recognized as "Operator of the Year" by the Washington State Department of Health Office of Drinking Water. Kim is now the PUD's Director of Planning & Compliance. Our employees are a valued asset here at the PUD!

Preparing for Winter Storms

For Winter 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts a colder and wetter than normal winter for western Washington. In order to prepare for winter storms, here are a few recommendations for the upcoming months.

Recommendations for Outside Your Home

- **Keep your gutters clean and clear from debris.** Clogged gutters can lead to costly roof damage.
- **Rake leaves and debris away from storm drains.** Help prevent flooded streets and damage to personal property by keeping storm drains clear.
- **Keep your vehicle fueled.** Fuel may not be available in a dire emergency, ensure your vehicle is topped off during bad weather.
- **Test and/or service your generator.** If you have a generator for your home, test it annually during non-emergency situations to ensure it can perform during emergency situations.
- **Install faucet covers.** For any outdoor faucets, install insulated covers to prevent frozen pipes or burst pipes.

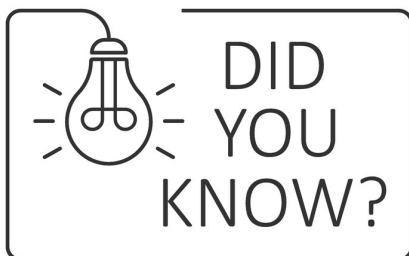


Recommendations for Inside Your Home

- **Prepare an emergency kit.** Visit www.ready.gov/kit for a list of basic disaster kit supplies. Be sure to have an emergency kit prepared for your vehicle as well; a list of emergency supplies for your car kit is located here: www.ready.gov/car.
- **Ensure fire and carbon-monoxide alarms are in working order.** Regularly test your fire and carbon monoxide alarms.
- **Insulate exposed pipes.** To prevent possible freezing inside your home in colder areas like a basement, attic or garage, insulate exposed pipes and other plumbing fixtures.
- **Don't forget the flashlights.** In the case of a power outage, keep flashlights, batteries, candles, or any other kind of illumination handy. If you're using flashlights, keep batteries in stock.
- **Most importantly – keep drinking water on hand!** Keep bottled water on hand or fill buckets with water prior to an expected storm in case you experience a water outage.



If you experience a water outage, call us immediately at (360) 357-8783 to report your location. Our field technicians are on-call 24/7 to respond to water emergencies.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 48% of Americans lack emergency supplies for use in the event of a disaster.

Thurston PUD is continually updating emergency management plans, and we encourage customers to create their own emergency plans as well.

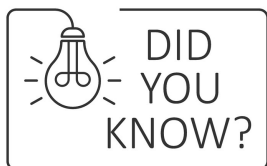
Customer Service Reminders

If you have experienced hardship due to COVID-19, please contact us to discuss your account and find out ways we can help with bill payments. Call us during business hours at (360) 357-8783 (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday), email us at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org or write us at: Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Rd SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

Some team members are working remotely to prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, we are dedicated to providing excellent customer service no matter where we are working from.



If you have any questions or concerns about your bill, your account or your water service, do not hesitate to contact us by phone, email or mail.



Flashback! In 2009, the PUD-owned Lazy Acres water system won Evergreen Rural Water of Washington's 9th Annual Drinking Water Contest for "The Best Tasting Drinking Water in Washington State." We are honored to serve our customers and strive to provide safe and reliable drinking water for all!

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.

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** are economically affected 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: _____