

## Leadership Message

### October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month

By: Ruth Clemens, Administrative Services Manager

As time progresses, we have a more prominent virtual and technological footprint. This is especially true following the COVID-19 pandemic, as in-person options have declined and life has transitioned to a virtual way of life.

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, so we wanted to provide our customers with basic security tips to follow in order to minimize the risks of cyberattacks. The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) advises:



Ruth Clemens,  
Administrative  
Services Manager

- **Be suspicious of unexpected emails.** Phishing emails are currently one of the greatest risks to the average user. The goal of a phishing email is to gain information about you, steal money from you, or install malware on your device. *Be suspicious of all unexpected emails.*
- **Keep your software up to date.** Install software patches so that attackers cannot take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities. Many operating systems offer automatic updates. If this option is available to you, you should enable it.
- **Run up-to-date antivirus software.** A reputable antivirus software application is an important protective measure against known malicious threats. It can automatically detect, quarantine, and remove various types of malware. Be sure to enable automatic virus definition updates to ensure maximum protection against the latest threats.
- **Use strong passwords.** Select passwords that will be difficult for attackers to guess, and use different passwords for different programs and devices. It is best to use long, strong passphrases or passwords that consist of at least 16 characters.
- **Change default usernames and passwords.** Default usernames and passwords are readily available to malicious actors. Change default passwords as soon as possible to a sufficiently strong and unique password.
- **Implement multi-factor authentication (MFA).** Authentication is a process used to validate a user's identity. Attackers commonly exploit weak authentication processes. MFA uses at least two identity components like the answer to a secret question to authenticate a user's identity, minimizing the risk of a cyberattacker gaining access to an account if they know the username and password.
- **Install a firewall.** Firewalls may be able to prevent some attack by blocking malicious traffic before it can enter a computer system, and by restricting unnecessary outbound communications. Some device operating systems include a firewall. Make sure you enable and properly configure the firewall as specified in the device or system owner's manual.

For more information about Cybersecurity Awareness Month and for other resources and tips, please visit the CISA website at [www.cisa.gov](http://www.cisa.gov).

## 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.
- Review available customer support programs on Page 2.
- Read about "What's Happening at the PUD" on Page 2.
- Protect yourself from scams. More information on Page 3.
- Fun corner alert! Take a peek on Page 4.

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

## Customer Support Programs Available Now!

Governor Inslee's emergency proclamation preventing the shut-off of water, electricity, or natural gas services and prohibiting late fees ended September 30, 2021. If you are a customer that has an outstanding balance on your account with the PUD, we encourage you to consider one of the following options:

- **Utility Relief Assistance Program (URAP):** There is money available to pay unpaid water bills for qualifying customers who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information or to apply, visit the URAP page on our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/URAP.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/URAP.htm).
- **Project Help Customer Support Program:** This program is one of the PUD's longest-running customer support programs. If you are income-eligible and/or have been impacted by COVID-19, you may qualify for this program. For more information, see Page 4 or visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm).
- **Deferred or Monthly Payment Plan:** A Deferred or Monthly Payment Plan allows customers to create payment arrangements that accommodates their financial needs. If you are interested in this program, please contact one of our Customer Service Representatives toll-free at (866) 357-8783 or send us an email at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).



Our Customer Service Team is able to address any questions or concerns you may have about the PUD's available customer support programs. Additional resources in your community can also be found on our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/community-resources.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/community-resources.htm).

We expect some confusion about billing amounts, due dates, etc. during this transition period. If you have any questions, our Customer Service Team is available at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org). We also expect a rise in utility scams; for more information on how to avoid scams and scammers, please review the article on Page 3.

## What's Happening at the PUD?

### PUD Office Closures

The PUD will be closed on the following days:

- Thursday, November 11, 2021 - Veterans Day
- Thursday, November 25, 2021 - Thanksgiving Day
- Friday, November 26, 2021 - Day After Thanksgiving
- Friday, December 24, 2021 - Christmas Day (observed)

The PUD is closed for major holidays, but we always committed to our customers. Staff is available 24/7 for water emergencies. **If you experience a water emergency, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to connect with our answering service and on-call staff.**

### 2021 Great Washington ShakeOut

For the past several years, the PUD has participated in International ShakeOut Day on the third Thursday of October. This year, the Great Washington ShakeOut, a statewide opportunity to practice how to be safer during large earthquakes, will occur on October 21.

While staff are performing the drill, you may be disconnected while speaking with us or you may be unable to reach our office around 10:21 a.m. on Thursday, October 21, 2021. However, once the drill is completed, our staff will be available to answer questions and concerns. For more information on ShakeOut Day, please visit [www.shakeout.org/washington](http://www.shakeout.org/washington).



## Protect Yourself Against Utility Scams

In August, our office received a report of an individual visiting a customer's home and attempting to collect payment for an outstanding utility bill in order to avoid disconnection. This incident was immediately reported to the Sheriff's Office.

In order to prevent scams, we want you to be aware of the scammers and con artists who target utility customers in our area by posing as utility representatives and demanding immediate payment of a past due bill to avoid disconnection of your water service.



### What to Watch For

- Scammers posing as utility employees by phone or going door-to-door.
- Scammers threatening to disconnect water service if payment is not immediately made.
- Scammers leaving a voicemail message with a call back number, usually a 1-800 or unfamiliar area code number.
- Scammers pressuring customers to purchase any kind of prepaid card to make immediate payments.

### How to Verify a Thurston PUD Representative

Our field technicians and representatives:

- Will never call, e-mail, or make a home visit demanding immediate payment.
- Will never make a home visit requesting credit card, banking, or financial information.
- Will never request payment on a prepaid card.
- Will provide employee identification on request.
- Wear clothing and drives vehicles with the Thurston PUD logo to identify themselves on official business.

### What To Do When You Expect a Scam

If you think someone is trying to scam you, contact Thurston PUD during regular business hours to check on the status of your account. Remember:

- Thurston PUD accepts cash, checks, money orders, and Visa or MasterCard payments. It is never necessary for you to purchase separate prepaid cards to avoid disconnection. For a complete list of payment methods available, visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org).
- Never give your credit card, debit card, or banking information to anyone without knowing their true identity.
- Scammers can use 'spoofing' technology to display Thurston PUD's name and number. Be wary when speaking with individuals for calls you receive.

### How to Report a Scammer

Please contact our office toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to report any suspicious activity. Report scammers to one of the following agencies as well:

- *Your local Sheriff's Office.* If you were approached by a scammer, please contact your local Sheriff's Office to file a police report.
- *Washington Attorney General's Office.* Visit [www.atg.wa.gov](http://www.atg.wa.gov) to file a complaint or call (800) 551-4636.
- *Federal Trade Commission.* Visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call (877) FTC-HELP.

## Fun Corner!

October is the start of the wonderful Fall season. With cooler temperatures and wetter weather, you may want to curl up with a good book or enjoy some time inside. If you're looking for a movie night with your family, consider watching some of these water-related films!



- Rango (PG)
- Surf's Up (PG)
- Splash (PG)
- Finding Nemo (G)
- The Life of Pi (PG)
- Castaway (PG-13)
- Moana (PG)

What are your favorite movies to enjoy with your family during this time of the year?

Our staff wishes you and your family a happy and safe Fall season, as well as a fun Halloween!



## 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.

-----  
I authorize Thurston PUD to bill my account \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Check one)       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: \_\_\_\_\_