SOQUEL CREEK
WATER DISTRICT

Intelligent METERS

Water Consumer — Water Use Info & Data — Water Meter

Wireless Communication Antenna on Water Storage Tank

Water Utility Office — Soquel Creek Water District — Water Use Info & Data
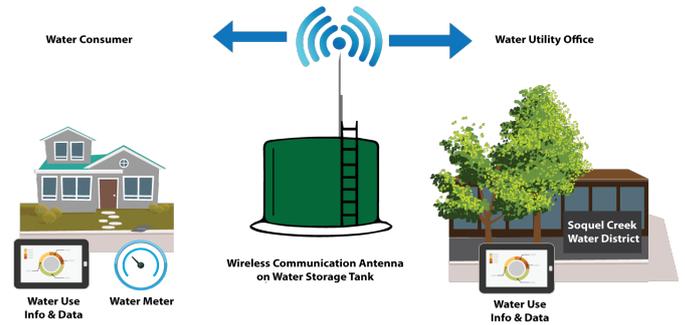
ABOUT INTELLIGENT METERS (i-Meters)

i-Meters electronically record daily and hourly water usage readings and upload them to cloud storage, where the water district can access the information. Additionally, customers can access their usage and billing information by registering to use the WaterSmart Customer portal. i-Meters are an upgrade from our most recent Advanced Meter Reading (AMR) system, which requires District staff to drive by each meter to pick up a single monthly meter read.

HOW DO i-Meters WORK?

The i-Meters are comprised of two components: a meter body and an electronic register. The register collects hourly water consumption information from the meter and sends it twice per day to a Data Collection Unit (DCU) antenna via radiofrequency transmission (450 – 470 MHz). The register also sends leak alerts upon detection of a suspected leak.

Water consumption data and leak alerts from the DCUs are sent to the District for billing purposes and to provide leak notification to customers. DCU antennas have been installed at some existing District facilities to collect transmissions from meter transmission units in the surrounding area.

BENEFITS OF i-Meters

Increased Leak Detection – Leaks are expensive and a waste of precious resources. An average toilet leak can waste several hundred gallons per day or, if left undetected over a month, thousands of gallons. i-Meters detect leaks daily, leading to much faster leak detection and customer notification than previously possible.

Learn how/when you use the most water – Once your meter has been fully upgraded and programmed and all DCU antennas are in place, you can see how much water you are using hourly, daily and monthly! A great way to see if you have a misbehaving irrigation timer or to investigate a high bill.

Better control over your bill – You can set customized alerts via the customer portal when you reach a certain amount of water used or if your bill is forecasted to exceed a set amount.

If you have not yet received an i-Meter upgrade, or we are still working on DCU antenna installs in your immediate area, please know that we are working as quickly as possible to provide you with the benefits of i-Metering.

i-Meter PROJECT STATUS *(as of December 1, 2020)*

- For about 95% of District customers, the i-Meter upgrade consists of exchanging the existing AMR register on your water meter with a new i-Meter register. Close to 15,000 meters (of 16,000 total) have already been upgraded and the remainder will be upgraded in early 2021.

- About 5% of District customers will receive a new meter fitted with an i-Meter register. Most of these whole meter replacements are for commercial customers with larger meters sized 1.5 – 6 inches. District staff is just getting started on this part of the upgrade and expect to complete work in 2021.

- Over 90% of the DCU antennas have been installed throughout the District's service area.

- Over 11,000 of the upgraded meters have been reprogrammed to send usage information to the DCUs. Others require reprogramming once remaining DCU antennas are installed. This work is also expected to be completed in 2021.

- The WaterSmart Customer Portal was rolled out to all customers in early December 2020.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Why is the District installing i-Meters?**

   Two core District values are customer service and environmental stewardship. Installation of i-Meters allows us to provide a higher level of customer service by providing almost real-time leak detection and high usage alerts and tools for customers to better manage and understand their day to day water use. Earlier leak notification reduces water waste and helps protect our community's groundwater supply.

2. **Are i-Meters safe?**

   Yes, our i-Metering system exceeds all health & safety standards set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The radio frequency (RF) energy emitted by the i-Meters is much less than other common household devices such as microwaves, televisions, cellular and cordless phones, and WiFi routers. In addition, RF energy exposure from i-Meters is reduced further due to the location of the meter (typically near the street) and the very brief period of transmission (less than 1 second per day).

3. **Is i-Meter data secure?**

   Yes. Our i-Metering system transmits on a private FCC- licensed channel that can legally only be used by the District. For additional security, the system uses end-to end encryption and only transmits non-personal customer data such as the meter identification number and water consumption data. Personal customer or account information is not transmitted.

4. **When will my meter be upgraded?**

   While we have completed the majority of i-Meter upgrades and DCU antenna installations, we still have some work ahead and plan to complete the project in 2021. Again, please know that we are working as quickly as possible to bring you the benefits of i-Metering.

5. **Who is performing the upgrade?**

   A District contractor completed most of the i-Meter upgrades. Remaining i-Meter register exchanges and whole meter replacements will be conducted by District staff. As always, District staff will be traveling in marked vehicles, wearing uniforms and carrying identification.

6. **Will you need to turn off my water?**

   We only need to turn off your water if you are scheduled to receive a complete meter replacement. In this case, we will contact you prior to replacement. Most complete meter exchanges only require the water to be turned off for 20 minutes

7. **How will I know that I received the AMI upgrade?**

   You can see if your meter has already been upgraded by lifting your meter lid and taking a look. If your meter read is shown on a digital display, it has been upgraded.

8. **When will I get access to the online customer portal?**

   Now! A welcome letter was sent out to all customers in early December 2020.

9. **If I do not sign up for the customer portal, will the District continue to notify me of any possible leaks?**

   Yes, District staff will continue to monitor the i-Metering system daily and provide leak notification to customers during regular business hours. However, we strongly encourage customers to register for the portal and set your customized notification parameters (e.g., continuous use/leak alerts, bill amount thresholds, etc.) as well as establish your communication preferences (i.e. email, phone/voice or text). Additionally, customers can pay bills on-line or via text through the customer portal using a single sign-on.

10. **Will the i-Meter affect my bill?**

    If you are only having a register replaced, the upgrade will not affect your bill as the physical mechanism for measuring water flow through the meter is unchanged. The only difference is that the meter reads will be automatically transmitted to the District. If you are scheduled for a complete meter replacement, there is a chance your bill may increase as your existing meter is nearing the end of its functional life. As meters age, their accuracy begins to decline and they under-measure water use. The new meter will accurately reflect your consumption. If you have any questions about your bill, please contact us.

11. **How do I read my i-Meter?**

    Only read the numbers to the left of the decimal point as shown on the digital display. The meter records usage in cubic feet (1 cubic foot = 7.48 gallons). Please see our Read Your Meter page for additional information.

12. **How is this project funded?**

    This project is funded through fees charged to new water service applicants through the District's Water Demand Offset (WDO) program, not through District rates. The WDO program requires applicants offset two times the amount of water their new development is expected to use by funding conservation and water supply projects within the District.

13. **Can I opt-out of this upgrade?**

    Yes, you can opt-out and we will install a non-electronic meter; however, we will assess a manual meter read fee (currently $10 per month) and you will not be able to take advantage of the i-Meter's early leak and high usage notification benefits. To participate in the opt-out program, please contact us at (831)475-8500 or see our website for an opt-out application.

14. **Who do I contact if I have more questions?**

    You can check our "About the Meters" page on our website which has additional information on the project. Or, you can call us at (831) 475-8500 or email custserv@soquelcreekwater.org .