

Water District preps for meter change, reducing water use and cost

Written by: Robert McDonald, General Manager

This summer, the Carpinteria Valley Water District (CVWD) is launching several projects as a part of our Efficiency Program. CVWD is initiating a comprehensive water meter replacement program that will allow for streamlined operations and will provide our customers with access to near real-time water consumption data. In addition, the District will be implementing an LED lighting retrofit project and installing solar arrays to offset our electrical costs. These projects are expected to save the District thousands of dollars per year and are anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2018.

The District will be replacing approximately 4,450 older meters with new ultrasonic meters equipped with an automatic meter infrastructure (AMI) system, which will benefit both the District and our customers. One of the great advantages of an AMI system is early leak detection. Historically, detecting high water use, potential caused by a leak, has been a manual process. Data is analyzed after meters are read at the end of each month and sizeable and expensive leaks are often not discovered until it is too late. With the new AMI system, leak detection will happen much more quickly. CVWD employees will be able to contact customers about apparent leaks before hundreds of dollars and hundreds of gallons of water have gone down the drain. This is especially important as the drought continues in Santa Barbara County. Water is a limited resource in this semi-arid region and every drop counts. To better manage our water supply it is essential that CVWD updates its meters with new technology to more accurately track water usage and evaluate water demands.

The AMI system will provide many benefits in addition to leak detection. The new meter system will also save CVWD money and minimize the need for meter-reading personnel to go onto your property. The current meter system requires thousands of CVWD meters to be read at the end of each month. This is a time-consuming process that takes place over several days by a contracted meter-reading company. The new AMI system allows for meter information to be remotely obtained from radio communications to a cloud based data center where all the data is organized into easily understandable reports. This will eliminate the need for manual meter reading and the associated errors of manual collection while providing more insight into daily water consumption. Having access to this data will allow our customer service representatives to better investigate and diagnose customer issues such as a high bill or a suspected leak.

If you are a commercial, industrial, public authority, or residential customer with a meter two inches and under, your meter will be replaced as a part of this project. A letter was sent along with your June bill containing additional information about this process; however, more information is provided on our website, www.cvwd.net, if needed. A door hanger will be placed at least 24 hours prior to the meter change and customers will be notified in person if available just prior to the new meter installation. Beginning in mid-September, you will see representatives from Pedal Valves, Inc. throughout town starting the installations. They will be wearing blue shirts with the logo "PVI Meter Team" and driving trucks with the same insignia. While your meter is being replaced, there will be a temporary service interruption which may last for approximately 30 minutes and in rare cases, longer. CVWD and Pedal Valves, Inc. will ensure that you are notified well in advance. We recognize that some customers require continuous water availability and we will work with these water sensitive accounts to schedule a convenient time for your meter replacement. CVWD is committed to implementing programs that provide safe, efficient, and reliable service to all of our customers.

Overall, these projects will allow for the District to save energy, money, time, and most importantly, water. The new meters will provide our customers with the tools and information necessary to help them better understand their water consumption patterns and discover ways to be more water efficient. Working with our customers is the best way to reduce water use and improve the reliability and sustainability of our water supplies. If you are interested in more information about CVWD and the water meter replacement program, please visit www.cvwd.net, follow us on twitter @CarpWater, and like Carpinteria Valley Water District on Facebook.