



ATL READ

AUTOMATED METER READING PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q. What is the ATL READ Automated Meter Reading (AMR) Project?

A. The Department of Watershed Management's ATL READ Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project includes the replacement and retrofit of Atlanta's water meters with AMR devices that will allow them to be read electronically.

2. Q. How does the AMR system work?

A. The AMR system allows meters to be read electronically. Its components include an electronic meter register and a meter interface unit (MIU) that are linked to the water meter. The MIU's circuitry reads the water meter and then transmits a radio signal to a data collector (this can be a handheld or mobile device or a data unit on a utility pole or building). Meter readers are able to drive by in vehicles fitted with the mobile device and receive usage readings for the water meter. The information is then transmitted to the billing system. Data collectors affixed to utility poles are programmed to receive transmissions from MIUs on nearby meters and re-transmit them by radio signal to the utility office.

3. Q. How is this project beneficial to customers?

A. Since AMR technology allows customer water usage data to be collected and transmitted electronically, the accuracy of customer bills is always ensured. Customers can be assured that they will only be billed for what they use.

4. Q. How will the project benefit DWM?

A. In addition to enhancing customer service and streamlining the billing process, the project will allow DWM to: (1) Increase revenue by replacing aged, under-registering meters, (2) Reduce meter reading, billing and customer service operating expenses, (3) Prevent water loss by easily identifying leaks and other distribution system problems, and (4) Detect meter malfunction, vandalism and tampering.

5. Q. Why is the City of Atlanta installing the AMR system at this time?

A. AMR technology is being used successfully by numerous local and national utilities. The Department of Watershed Management is always seeking new technologies to enhance customer service and operations, and is pleased to implement the AMR system to address both of these goals.

- 6. Q. Will I have the AMR device installed at my address?**
A. Yes. Over the next three years every water meter within Atlanta's distribution system will be fitted with the new meter reading device. All meters must be fitted with the device to gain maximum efficiency from the system.
- 7. Q. How long will this new device work?**
A. The meter reading device will last for more than 10 years and a new water meter has a life expectancy of 20 years. The Department will perform periodic inspection and maintenance of the devices to ensure that they are operating properly.
- 8. Q. Who will install the AMR device?**
A. The Department has contracted with K & V Meter Automation, LLC to do this work.
- 9. Q. When will the project begin in my neighborhood?**
A. The system-wide project will begin in December 2006 and last for approximately three years. Work will be conducted on a meter route/billing cycle basis. We will inform you when work is set to start in your area.
- 10. Q. Will I be notified before the installation takes place?**
A. Yes. You will receive a postcard in the mail two weeks prior to the start of work in your neighborhood. Commercial customers will receive a formal letter two weeks prior to the start of work and will be contacted by a K & V representative to make an appointment for installation.
- 11. Q. Will I have to be home during the installation?**
A. No. We will not have to access your private property. Installers will work at your meter box.
- 12. Q. How is the installation done?**
A. Old, non-functioning meters will be replaced with new meters already fitted with the AMR device. The AMR device will be installed on existing meters that are still functioning properly and that are compatible with the new device. There will be no noticeable difference in the appearance of your meter. The installer will clean the area, make sure that your water service is on and confirm that the unit is working before leaving.
- 13. Q. How long will the installation process take?**
A. In most cases, the process will take less than an hour to complete.
- 14. Q. Will my water service be disrupted during this process?**
A. Your water service will only be disrupted if your meter must be replaced. If your meter needs replacing, the installer will knock on your door to notify you that your water will be turned off. The disruption will last for approximately 30 minutes.
- 15. Q. Why do I need a new meter?**
A. You may not. However, if your meter is aged, malfunctioning or is not compatible with the AMR device, it must be replaced.

- 16. Q. Will the AMR device's radio signals affect the operation of other electronic devices in my home?**
A. No. The low-powered strength of the device's radio signal is similar to that of a cordless phone. It will not interfere with the signals of other electronic devices.
- 17. Q. If I notice a problem after installation, whom should I contact?**
A. If you notice a problem after installation, please call 1.866.750.8022 to report it.
- 18. Q. How can I get more information on this project?**
A. You can call the Clean Water Atlanta Helpline at 404.529.9211 or visit www.cleanwateratlanta.org.
- 19. Q. Will I be charged for this new service?**
A. No. There is no additional cost to you for installing the new meter reading device and/or a new water meter.
- 20. Q. How much will the project cost the City?**
A. \$35 million
- 21. Q. Will water rates go up to pay for it?**
A. Your rates will not go up directly because of this project. Rates may increase over the years to fund Clean Water Atlanta, our \$3.9 billion infrastructure improvement program to rehabilitate Atlanta's wastewater and drinking water systems.
- 22. Q. Will the new device affect my bill?**
A. You may notice a difference in your bill if you have an older meter. Older meters tend to run slower and therefore do not measure all the water going through them. If you notice a higher bill after your meter has been upgraded, it could be because your old meter was under-registering your usage.
- 23. Q. How do I know that my reading is accurate?**
A. After installation of the AMR device, all usage readings will be transferred electronically. Unlike the current system, which is read by meter readers and occasionally depended on estimated readings, the AMR system will ensure 100% accuracy every month. There is no chance of human error.
- 24. Q. If I have a question about my bill, whom should I contact?**
A. Contact DWM Customer Service at 404.658.6500 for all billing and service questions/concerns.
- 25. Q. Will I be able to read my water meter after the AMR device is installed?**
A. You will not be able to read your meter after the AMR device/new meter is installed. Your meter will be covered with a locked lid to protect the AMR device and reduce meter damage and tampering. You can check your usage by contacting Customer Service or by using the new online customer information system feature, WebConnect, which provides detailed account information.
- 26. Q. Will water meter readers still come out to read my meter after the AMR device is installed?**
A. Meter readers will still be employed but will no longer manually read meters.