

## **New "green" water meters will allow city to measure water usage wirelessly**

*The Good: Eliminates needs for meter readers and other related costs*

**The Not So Good:** New meters to give more accurate account of water used, possibly raising water and sewer bills

### **\$6 million project starts next week**

Water customers in Cleburne are one week away from seeing the start of a new project that will change the way the city monitors water use.

The city and Siemens/PVI Meter Team will begin the process of changing every water meter that measures usage from residential, commercial and industrial water customers next week. After a couple days prep work, the actual replacement of the meters will begin on September 23. Work is scheduled to continue through mid to late April.

City Manager Chester Nolen says this will impact every customer in one way or the other.

"We have some meters that have been in the ground for over 20 years, and they do not measure water usage as well as they used to. So there will be some customers who will see a dramatic increase in their bills simply because they have a new meter," Nolen said

But he stresses there is another change that will benefit the city. Instead of having meter readers go from meter to meter to manually record water usage, the new meters will ultimately be read wirelessly by computer. This will allow the utility billing department to essentially get all of the water readings in one day. This will save the city from having to hire people to read the meters and pay for the cars and gas to get the meter readers from meter to meter.

"We're going to reassign most of the current meter readers to other city jobs that are open now," Nolen said.

Work to replace the meters will occur between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Cleburne Budget and Purchasing Manager Kim Galvin said contractors will work with commercial and industrial customers to minimize the impact of this change out program on their business operations, and will even schedule meter replacements outside the 9 to 5 work window.

The meter replacement should take approximately 30 minutes. Customers will get a notice either by door hanger, letter or in person, telling them when they can expect to get their new water meter. Anyone having special needs for water should notify the Utility Billing Office at 817-645-0919.

Crew members will wear navy blue shirts marked with the logo "Siemens/PVI Meter Team". The work teams will use trucks with the same logo markings during meter swap outs.

This is all part of an overall efficiency program the city is enacting that will play a big role in reducing energy costs for the city. It will affect everything from operations at the water and sewer plant to how city-owned buildings use electricity, including air conditioning.

"The total program cost is \$10 million. The new meters are a big part of that and will cost over \$6 million. We have some new construction costs to put in better pumps, motors and blowers at the water and wastewater plants," Nolen said. "All of the lights in all of the city offices will change to a more efficient system, including air handling systems for heaters and air conditioners. So it is a fairly substantial operation that will occur."