

## Water meter replacement projects FAQs

### 1. Why is my water meter being replaced?

Water meters and their registers often lose accuracy as they age. Therefore, they must be replaced every 20 to 25 years. In addition, the new system will include new water meter technology that will save labor time, ensure accuracy, and minimize the need for utility employees to go on the private property of residents.

### 2. How does the new radio read device work?

The meters transmit a radio signal containing a meter number and a meter reading that can be picked up by a radio receiver in our company vehicle. The meter reading from that transmission is used to generate a water bill.

The transmission lasts for 7 milliseconds (0.007 of one second) and occurs once every 14 seconds, using less than 100 milliwatts of power. This regular transmission allows SPRWS to capture readings as it drives by and on-demand should a special reading be required at any time. In other words, the meters transmit about 45 seconds a day from a single "D" cell battery that the manufacturer states will last 20 years.

### 3. Where is my water meter located?

Most water meters are located about three feet off the floor in the basement of your home. It is usually located on the wall facing the street.

Water meters can sometimes be found in pits in older homes. The meter is not located outside. If you have a basement that has been finished, occasionally meters have been placed behind walls, in cabinets or other remodeled areas.

In some new condominiums, individual water meters are located in a utility room on the first level.

### 4. What does my meter look like?

Your current water meter is a device with a round face attached on each side to your water pipes. The face has dials and the numbers on the bottom read like a car odometer.

Your new meter will have a digital face without dials, and you will not see a meter reading unless you shine a flashlight into the light sensor.

### 5. What exactly will be installed at my property?

Your existing water meter will be replaced with a new water meter that contains a radio transmission device. It transmits the reading and a unique ID from the meter to a receiver that the meter reading staff uses.

### 6. Does my meter have to be exchanged?

Yes. The new meter is required for future billing.

7. What if I don't want my meter changed?

This is not an option; all meters will be changed.

8. How much will the new meter cost me?

There is no charge to individual customers for the meter replacement. The new meters are an investment in our infrastructure that will improve billing efficiency and customer service.

9. Do installers need to come inside my house?

Yes, the water meter is located inside the home.

10. What will they do inside my house?

Installers will remove the old meter, install the new meter and clean up the area, if needed. Installers will have you sign a digital reader acknowledging the new meter has been installed, and provide you with an emergency phone number in the event you have questions or concerns after the installation.

11. Do I have to be present for the installation?

For your peace of mind, we require that an adult be present during the installation. The installer will not enter your home unless authorized to do so by someone 18 years old or older. The installer will not enter your home if your children are alone.

12. What if I am a tenant and do not own this property?

If you are a tenant, you will be asked to provide the installer with access to the meter. We also ask that you notify the owner of the property about the notification letter you received.

13. I am an owner and have tenants, but I do not reside at the property. What should I do?

If you have tenants but do not reside on your property, you are responsible for calling the installer for an appointment and for providing access to the meter.

14. Who will install the new system?

The City of New Richland has contracted with Ferguson Waterworks to install the new meters.

All Ferguson Waterworks installers have completed training and background checks and will have photo identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

If you have any questions about the person at your door, please call 1-888-497-4171 to verify the identity.

15. When will the new water meter be installed in my home?

You will receive a letter asking you to call Ferguson Waterworks to schedule an appointment. You can schedule this appointment at your convenience, Monday through Saturday. Some evening appointments are available. Installation appointments will be scheduled in two-hour windows of time, for example, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

16. What hours can you offer me?

Installers are available Monday-Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Our scheduling office is open Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. should you need to re-schedule. Our number is 1-855-863-3398 or you can schedule online at [www.fergusonscheduling.com](http://www.fergusonscheduling.com).

17. What if I need to reschedule an appointment?

You will need to contact Ferguson Waterworks prior to your scheduled appointment day. Our scheduling office is open Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. should you need to reschedule. We appreciate a 24-hour notice.

18. When will this work be performed?

The project will begin at the end of October or November 2014. The majority of the work will be performed during normal working hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, arrangements for evening or Saturday installation will be available.

19. I own a business. Whom do I call to schedule an appointment?

The procedures for small commercial and residential water meters will be the same for scheduling purposes. Larger meters will require additional time with installers working to limit interruption of services.

20. How long does it take to install the service?

A typical residential installation will take less than 30 minutes, depending on how easily we can access your water meter. We ask that you please be at home during the scheduled time.

For large commercial meters, significantly more time may be needed.

21. How do I know who is authorized to do the work?

The City of New Richland has contracted with Ferguson Waterworks to conduct this service. They will be driving marked vehicles, wearing photo identification, and wearing uniforms.

22. Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?

The installer will turn off the water on either side of your old meter during the installation. A typical installation should take 30 minutes and the water will be turned back on when completed. In some cases, other repairs may be necessary, resulting in a longer interruption of service.

Once water service is restored, the installer will attempt to purge any air trapped in the service line. If some air is left in the line, you may notice a sputtering sound the first time you operate a fixture. This should only last a few seconds and will not cause any harm. The first few gallons of water may be discolored.

You can remove any additional air trapped in your line by running cold water for a few minutes. Typically, the faucet on your laundry room tub can be opened to flush out trapped air.

23. What if the valves won't work or a valve is broken during installation?

The installers can freeze the inlet pipe long enough to replace the meter. If the water needs to be turned off at the stop box, this may involve rescheduling the appointment. If the valve is broken by our installer, it will be replaced.

24. May I change the valves while the water is off?

No.

25. How much room do installers need?

If possible, a 3' X 3' area.

26. What if there is something in front of or blocking the meter?

Please plan to have clear access to the meter when the installer arrives.

The water meter is the property of City of New Richland and homeowners are obligated to provide clear and unobstructed access to the water meter.

If there are boxes or stored items in the way, these items must be cleared prior to the arrival of the meter installer. The installer is not allowed to move your personal items and this may delay the installation process.

If, for any reason, the water meter has been covered by drywall or paneling, it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that the meter is accessible.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the meter is completely accessible and the area is well lit.

27. What if there is a leak at the meter or any other problem after the meter is replaced?

The installer will explain procedures for problems prior to leaving a residence. You will be provided with an emergency phone number to call should any problems arise.

28. Can I cover up my meter after the install?

The meter needs to be accessible at any time. If you have done renovation work, your meter still needs to be accessible. This could be an access panel or other means of accessing it.

29. Is there any special care or maintenance that I need to do to my new meter?

No, your meter does not require any maintenance by the homeowner.

However, you should be careful not to damage the meter or allow temperatures in your basement to drop to levels that would freeze the meter during the winter months. Be especially careful of your meter freezing if you have renovated and your meter is now behind a wall or panel.

You will be charged for replacing the meter if it should freeze or be damaged.

30. How will this affect my service?

There will be interruption of service for a few minutes during the change.

31. Will I pay more for water because of the change?

Your water rate will not change at the time the new meter is installed. Any future water rate increases/decreases will be the result of budgeting decisions.

32. Does this mean my bill will be increasing?

Not necessarily. In some cases, your bill may increase, but only if your current meter is under-registering usage. The new system will ensure fairness and equality for all the residents and businesses from this point forward.

33. Will the appearance of my monthly bill change?

No.

34. What will be the timeframe for future bills?

Bills will continue to be generated monthly.

35. How accurate are the readings from the radio transmitter?

Meter readings obtained over radio frequency transmissions are 100 percent accurate.

36. How often will you read my meter?

Your meter will be read at the same interval as it is now.

37. What if I need a meter reading between regular readings?

You can take a reading of the water meter yourself at any time.

38. What if I disagree with the reading?

You can take a reading of your meter at any time to compare to the bill.

39. Do the new meters have any other benefits for me?

Yes! We'll eliminate the need for manually reading meters. Accuracy will improve.

In addition to speed and reliability, we won't have to enter your home, except for periodic maintenance or replacement of system components, when needed.

Entering your private property to obtain meter readings at your residence will not be required.

40. How is this project being funded?

Funding for this project is from the water utility fund.

41. How secure is the data/information that will be transmitted?

Because of the specialized equipment and alternating frequencies being used, the information would be extremely difficult for unauthorized acquisition or hacking.

The transmission itself contains only the numbers associated with your current meter reading and number identifying your meter to compare with our records to ensure a match. To protect your privacy, no personal data is transmitted.

42. Will I be able to read my own meter?

Yes, the new meters will have a digital display so meters can be read manually.

43. What if we have a leak after the meter is installed?

The installers will make every effort to dispatch service personnel as quickly as possible to determine the cause of the leak and to take appropriate action. When your meter is installed, you will receive a phone number to call if there are any concerns or emergencies regarding the meter.

44. How do I know that you have my reading and not someone else's?

Each radio frequency device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique identification number is compared to your account record to ensure that there is a match.

45. Is there a hazard from the radio transmitter in my home?

Neptune, the manufacturer, states the radio devices comply with FCC Part 15.247 regulations.

More information from Neptune.

46. Is there anything hazardous inside the equipment?

No, only ordinary electronics and batteries are inside the equipment.

47. Will the radio interfere with my television, cordless phone, or pacemaker?

No, you will not see interference with your television reception, phone or pacemaker. Of the 9 million Neptune water meters in operation for the past 13 years, no interference with any other RF devices has ever been documented.

48. Does this system use a land phone line to monitor and transmit the reading?

No, this equipment uses a radio transmitter to send the information to an employee driving by with a receiver.

49. Is this system monitoring how many people are in my house?

No, this equipment does not monitor how many people are in the house or any personal activity. It is only capable of collecting the reading from the water meter and transmitting it to the receiver.

50. Why did you choose the new radio read meters?

The new meters will eliminate estimated meter readings caused by lack of access to the reading box on the house. The City of New Richland's goal is to base customer's water bills on actual water use, not estimated use.

The new, drive-by system is more efficient, saving labor costs in both meter reading and billing. Meter readers no longer need to walk door-to-door for each meter. With actual meter readings, bills no longer have to be adjusted as they are with estimated readings.

51. How do the radio-read meters transmit?

As the name implies, radio-read meters transmit data using the same airwaves as your AM or FM radio, only on a different frequency.

The radio-read meters operate within the 902-928 MHz frequency band.

This spectrum is governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) CFR Part 15, with which the meters are in full compliance.

[Find out more about the FCC and radio frequency](#)

52. How many Neptune radio-read meters are in operation?

There are 9 million Neptune water radio-read meters operating across the country. They have been in use for more than 13 years.

53. What about other types of meter reading devices that can transmit data over radio frequency waves?

Counting gas, electricity and water meter reading devices across the country, the number of 900 MHz radio devices deployed in residences total more than 100 million.

54. Are there any health hazards associated with this kind of technology?

According to the Federal Communications Commission and the World Health Organization, radio frequency signals produced by radio read meters or other such wireless networks have shown no occurrences of adverse long- or short-term health effects.

The WHO's conclusion is that: "Considering the very low exposure levels and research results collected to date, there is no convincing scientific evidence that the weak RF signals from base stations and wireless networks cause adverse health effects."

[WHO report on Electromagnetic fields and public health](#)

[You can also find out more on our health and safety page.](#)

55. Where can I find out more information on the water meters?

To find out more about the Neptune meters being installed, please visit [www.neptunetg.com](http://www.neptunetg.com) or call 800-844-8334 and ask for the Meter Division.

56. Where can I find more information on radio frequency?

[Understanding Radio Frequency](#)

[Federal Communications Commission](#)

[Radio Frequency Safety](#)

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

[OSHA Report](#)

World Health Organization  
WHO Electromagnetic Field Information  
WHO Report on EMF Health Effects