



# UTILITY TALK

Summer 2023

Natural Gas Wastewater Stormwater Water Streetlights | Serving Richmond, Henrico and North Chesterfield

## Protect Our Most Important Natural Resource

Richmond is home to one of our most precious natural resources –the James River. Not only does the James River supply the community with so much including scenic backdrops, recreational opportunities, food sources and home for aquatic life, it is also the source of the region’s drinking water supply. Clean and safe drinking water is essential to life and something the City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities works hard to bring households and businesses each day.

It is easy to take clean and safe drinking water for granted, especially in our region where we are fortunate to experience adequate levels of snow and rainfall that help replenish the river. Nonetheless, it takes a lot of planning to ensure adequate levels of safe drinking water is available to all citizens now and well into the future. These efforts are captured in the Water Supply Plan, which also encourages, promotes and protects all other beneficial uses of water resources; and encourages, promotes and develops incentives for alternative water sources.

Water conservation is key to protecting future uses, and is a big component of the Water Supply Plan. A drought watch for the summer and fall months when river flows are lower is one of the conservation factors. During this period from July to October, river levels are measured daily to ensure the region can adequately supply drinking water. Falling below threshold levels can trigger conservation measures, voluntary water restrictions or mandatory water restrictions. In the event action is required, the public is alerted through a series of notices including public service announcements via local media channels.

Conserving water should be a priority for us all, not just during periods of low river flow. Here are some tips on how you can be a good steward of this limited resource:

- Switch from baths to showers.
- Turn off the tap while shaving or brushing teeth.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator overnight.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator.
- Put a stopper in the sink or use a wash basin when hand-washing dishes.
- If possible, choose to use a dishwasher at full capacity over hand-washing dishes.
- Scrape clean your dishes before loading them into the dishwasher.
- Use the appropriate water level or load size selection on the washing machine.
- Upgrade older appliances to WaterSense labeled and Energy Star certified products.



Stay aware & safe while enjoying our James River by knowing the water level before you go in the water. Check current James River conditions online at [bit.ly/3NZwD0B](http://bit.ly/3NZwD0B)

## DID YOU KNOW?

Utility lines can be buried just a few inches below the surface. As we approach August 11th, also known as National Safe Digging Day, remember always call 811 at least three business days\* BEFORE you dig.



\*Excludes Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

30901-I-0274

# New Meter Readers On The Block

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities is committed to limiting estimated bills as much as possible. We are currently working through backlogs to reduce estimated bills. With the assistance of our newest class of meter readers, we're making strides to address estimated reads in a timelier manner. Usually, gas and water meters are read electronically when a computer-equipped truck drives by a residence or business, picking up signals. However, if the signal from the electronic reading device is blocked or unresponsive an estimated read will be generated based on previous usage. After consecutive estimated reads are reported at the same location an investigation is launched to determine the cause. This investigation consists of a meter reader visiting the site of the estimated read to locate, analyze and collect data from the equipment manually. The most common causes of estimated reads are blockage of equipment or faulty equipment. DPU encourages customers to keep their meter box clear of any obstructions such as mulch, flowerbeds, trashcans, built-up dirt, hedges and vehicles. We also encourage customers to make sure their meters are accessible. An appointment for a manual analysis and reading will be scheduled in situations where the meter is unable to be located or accessed. Once an actual read is obtained, customers could potentially receive a credit or may owe more to make up for the usage difference.



## 5 Signs of a Water Leak Before the Bill

No one wants the surprise of an abnormally high water bill. If you receive such a bill based on an actual read (indicated by the "A" ) versus an estimated read, it's highly likely you have a water leak. But don't wait until you receive your bill to learn of a leak. There are other signs you could be potentially overlooking that come before the bill such as:

1. **Running water sounds** when all fixtures are turned off could indicate a leak outside or inside of your walls. Water is always flowing through your main water lines. However, due to the pipes' closed system, the sound cancels out unless there's a flaw in the system.
2. **Wet spots** indicating a potential leak commonly can be found on the ceiling, walls and floor. If your ceiling is frequently leaking there's a possibility of a leak in the main water line. Minor leaks can be mistaken for a spill because often times they can stop before you notice. Irrigation leaks can be indicated by one area of the lawn growing better than the rest.
3. **Reduced water pressure or a sudden drop in water pressure** when no other appliances are in use could be a sign of a leak. Less water is able to flow through pipes when there is a leak.
4. **Stains near the water line** once a wet patch continually returns after drying up. The area can be a dark spot, yellowed (if on a white surface) or other discoloration.
5. **Mold and mildew growth** can occur in as little as 24 hours after a water leak. Mold spores spread in the air, and can lead to respiratory issues when breathed in. Mold has a musty smell that can be detected before the mold is visible.



If you think you may have a leak, contact a local plumber for a further evaluation immediately - every drop counts and costs.

**Stay connected with us for more information on programs, events and conservation tips.**

