

QUICK FACTS

- **91 percent of TMWA's 93,000 customers** are currently billed at the metered rate.
- **All businesses** in Truckee Meadows pay the metered rate.
- **All businesses and any home built after July 1998 are required to have a meter**, as well as any home that has had a change of tenant since March 2002.
- The average water use by a 3/4" metered residential customer is **137,000 gallons a year**.
- The average water use by a 3/4" flat-rate residential customer is **241,000 gallons a year**.
- To view a video on how meters work or to request a water meter visit www.tmwa.com/conservation/retrofit.

FLAT-RATE TO METERED BILLING

How are customers currently billed?

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) customers are billed in two ways: flat-rate or metered rate. More than 91 percent of our customers pay based on a metered rate. However, some residential customers still pay a flat rate regardless of how much water they use. A growing number of residential customers, recognizing the savings of the metered rate, have voluntarily converted to meters. In addition to the voluntary conversions, many conversions to metered billing occur when there is a tenant change at a flat-rate service.

Why are there two residential rates?

The legislation that amended the water meter ban in the Truckee Meadows required any new home built after July 1, 1988 to have a water meter; however, the law also stipulated that water meters were voluntary for residences in existence prior to that date. Some of those homes are still occupied by the same owners, and these owners have not volunteered to move to the metered rate. In addition, the physical process of installing meters including the unraveling and separating of shared customer service lines has taken many years – with less than 450 services remaining to be retrofit.

Since TMWA was formed in 2001, the Board of Directors has reviewed converting all remaining flat-rate customers to metered billing on multiple occasions. The Board's Change of Tenant Policy, enacted March 1, 2002, accelerated the conversion to metered billing by requiring that any flat-rate service must be converted to the metered rate when a change of tenant occurs. After years of study, on December 13, 2007 the TMWA Board of Directors voted to convert all customers who have a meter installed to the metered rate, but did not set a date for this conversion. Until the Board sets the meter conversion implementation date, the switch of the remaining flat-rate to metered billing for existing flat-rate customers is voluntary.

How many TMWA customers pay the flat rate?

Approximately 9 percent of TMWA's 93,000 customers still pay a flat rate. Most people recognize the fairness of a "pay-for-what-you-use" system. With flat rates, the cost of service is averaged for all customers within the flat-rate customer group, requiring those who use less water to subsidize those who use more. For example, in 2010, the lowest annual use of a single customer in the 3/4" flat-rate service class was 23,000 gallons; the highest was 10,262,000 gallons, but both paid the same monthly bill of only \$86.30. Once all flat-rate customers are converted to metered billing, all customers will pay for the water they use.

Will a flat-rate customer save money if billed on the meter rate?

That depends on how much water a flat-rate customer actually uses. Based on current usage by flat-rate customers, more than 80 percent would pay the same or save if billed at the metered rate. Generally, customers with smaller lots (less than 7,000 square feet) with lawn areas under 2,500 square feet, and who follow the watering schedule pay less at the metered rate than at the current flat rate.

About TMWA:

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) is a not-for-profit water utility, overseen by elected officials from Reno, Sparks and Washoe County. TMWA employs a highly skilled team who ensure the treatment, delivery and availability of high-quality drinking water around the clock for more than 330,000 residents of the Truckee Meadows.

About this series:

Water Topics in Our Community is a series of papers designed to provide the citizens of the Truckee Meadows information about key water topics in this region.

To access all of the papers, go to www.tmwa.com/topics.

About TMWA's**Board of Directors:**

The TMWA Board welcomes you to attend and comment at any board meeting. Meeting schedules are posted at www.tmwa.com/meetings.

To send a question to the Board, visit us online at www.tmwa.com/comment.

Questions or feedback?

We'd like to hear from you. Please call our Community Communications line with any remaining questions you have on this topic or other water topics. The number is **(775) 834-8290**.

However, customers with larger properties will probably have larger water bills during the summer months, but their winter bill should be well below the flat-rate amount. All single-family residential flat-rate services have non-billing meters installed, and the monthly usage, along with the metered billing comparison, is printed on their bill.

How do water meters work?

Most water meters, including the meters that TMWA uses, depend on very reliable odometer technology—the same kind that has been used in cars for more than 100 years. All meters are factory calibrated to exacting standards prior to being shipped. Water meters must have water flowing through them to operate and record use. Water used at homes and businesses flows through the meter and, through an assortment of mechanisms, turns the gears inside which in turn operate the mechanical water meter counter. The mechanical water meter counter, or odometer, records the volume of water that has passed through the meter; meters do not record any level of consumption unless water is flowing through it.

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