

Frequently Asked Questions – Water Meter Replacement Program

The Town of Oxbow is providing this information in response to resident questions.

What is the Water Meter Replacement Program?

In 2017, the Town of Oxbow identified the need to update and standardize its' water meters to replace old technology and provide a variety of benefits to the town and its customers. The Water Meter Replacement Program was approved as part of the 2018/2019 Capital Budget and installation will begin in the fall of 2018. Residents have been informed of the program via the website, Facebook, Council meeting minutes, personal discussions, and during telephone calls made to gather the current state of the water meter distribution and consumption measuring system. The Town of Oxbow is working with Neptune Technology Group. Neptune Technology Group serves several municipalities across Canada and in Saskatchewan, including surrounding communities like Carnduff, Redvers, Estevan, Weyburn, and Carlyle.

BENEFITS OF THE WATER METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

- Replacement of old technology. Approximately 40% of current water meters are broken and/or inaccurate. Many remote receptacle connections on the external house wall do not work or are difficult to access.
- Participation in water conservation practices aimed at increased water efficiency by Saskatchewan municipalities (including full metering of all users and improved monitoring)
- Less water waste comes with awareness and measured use
- Faster detection of leaks and other problems such as reverse flows
- Free up staff time by making meter reading faster and more efficient – there will be no need for staff to enter your premises unless there is a problem
- Billing equity and ability for greater accuracy in future billing to ensure fairness
- Testing of valves and the larger distribution system will ensure the system is functioning and targeted maintenance/renewal will promote proactive infrastructure investment
- Meter logs record and save use online, with greater billing equity and accuracy ability
- The full benefits of this program to the Town and residents will be realized over the years to come

Are these water meters safe?

- Neptune's water meters run on a small lithium battery and are not connected to any electrical power. There are no electrical connections and there is no connection to the power grid.
 - It is important to note that this is **not** the same technology being recently reported in the media, in Saskatchewan. They are not smart meters, they are AMR systems (Automatic Meter Reading)
 - Neptune's water meter technology is used in hospitals across Canada. The MHz used by these water meters is **902-928 MHz** – designated as unlicensed bandwidth by Industry Canada. These transmitters do not operate near the same level as that of microwaves which typically operate at 2,450 MHz.
 - Other common conveniences that operate in this low range are baby monitors, remote car keys, garage door openers, TV broadcasts and radio-controlled toys
 - Consider that Neptune's water meters are only powerful enough to send a signal from your basement to a handheld radio receiver that can be used from streets in the neighbourhood. They are like remote car keys where you have to be close enough to the car to send the signal.
 - Cell phones operate at approximately 1,000 MHz or more: much higher than AMR water meters. Cell phones need more power to reach long distances to send and receive signals to cell towers.
 - Health Canada has concluded that exposure to RF energy from these meters does not pose a health risk (see link on page two)
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What is the process for installation and monitoring?

- Here is the 5-step process:
 1. Town notification followed by information mailed to residents by Neptune Technology Group
 2. Book an appointment for installation by contacting Neptune or the Town
 3. Installer comes to the house and shuts off the water. If a new valve is required, it is installed as part of this process and a check is made for leaks. The old washers are removed and new meters are installed.
 4. The installer answers questions and explains how the meter works
 5. A 24-hour contact number is provided for residents who may have questions after installation.
- The meters will transmit a signal every 14 seconds. Each transmission lasts for a fraction of a second, with a total radio frequency transmission of less than 45 seconds a day
- The water meters are read by a hand-held radio unit in a vehicle and data stored in a software program
- Health Canada notes that the radio frequency of water meters is “*far below the human exposure limits specified in Health Canada's Safety Code 6... and does not pose a public health risk.*”
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/meters-compteurs-eng.php>

Does everyone need to get a new meter?

- Most likely, unless your meter has been replaced within the previous 6 months – it is important that all property owners are connected to the municipal water service and participate in the water meter replacement and upgrade program.
- The Town may enter premises to repair, remove or replace measuring devices, without interference and following written notice.
- As a resident you have a right to access water, and this program is how the Town administers your water use. The meters are the property of the Town of Oxbow
- Prior to installation, you are invited to discuss this program with a Town representative, who will listen to your questions and provide you with accurate and factual information

What is the cost of these meters and what are the long-term benefits?

- The installation of the new water meters was approved in the 2018 budget with a total of \$380,000 over two years. These funds include the cost of the radios to read the meters and the software to import the data
- The project is fully funded from 3 sources: 2017 through 2019 Gas Tax revenue, the Water Capital Reserve, and the dissolution of the water meter deposit account. There will be no additional water charges to fund this initiative
- The life span of the meters is 25-30 years
- The program is compatible with Munisoft software program used by the Town’s Administrative department

What if I have other questions about these water meters?

- Residents are welcome and invited to contact the Town to discuss this program
- Town Administrative staff will be happy to listen and to provide accurate and factual information.
- Neptune Technology Group Information brochure about radio frequencies of AMR/AMI meters: https://www.neptunetg.com/uploadedFiles/Content/About/White_Papers/12-NTG-176%20WP%20RF%20Health%20Effects%2005.12.pdf