

Non Responsive

Water Meters and High Readings in May/June

A number of customers have called to report high use in May and/or June. Many of these customers have made an assumption that either the City increased its charges or that there is something wrong with their meters. An important thing to understand is that the meter is a mechanical device and it is in the customer's house where the City does not typically have direct access to it. The only thing that will cause the meter to turn is water moving through the meter. Because it is a mechanical device, it can slow down over time (as the device wears out). It cannot, however, speed up and then slow back down.

I am aware of two situations where a meter was over-recording use: in both cases, the calibration was wrong at the time of installation (device was set up wrong to start with).

I am also aware of very rare situations where the radio read devices reported a reading that was different from the actual meter. Just like at a gas station, if there is a discrepancy between the reading device and the meter, the meter is correct.

Something to bear in mind is that, for the same period when we pushed use down, Saskatoon was reporting 33% higher use than usual. May was an extremely dry month as was June. Customers often do not recall what their actual use was after the fact.

If customers believe that their meter is over-registering, they can try a test. More than 90% of our residential customers have a meter that reads all the way to the litre (the third decimal place). They can take a reading and after making sure that no other use is happening (nothing should be moving on the face of the meter), Fill a 4 litre pail (like an ice cream pail). The meter should register 4 litres. Note: you do need to make sure that you know the measurement of the pail.

Cindy Howden

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 2:05 PM
To: Cindy Howden
Subject: FW: Saskatoon water usage up

1.

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Monday, July 06, 2015 11:59 AM
To: Myrna Stark Leader
Subject: RE: Saskatoon water usage up

Thanks, Myrna. I did intend to send this to both Debbi and Debbie, since Debbie L is still tied in to Utility Billing and is working on Business Continuity for me.

The Mayor is right this is an emotional issue. I had a very long conversation with a customer who admitted that he watered during the shortage and still was upset that his water use went up in May. He simply didn't think it should have gone up that much. I am continually astonished at how little understanding people have of their actual use.

I think that our best response is to remind people that the meter (that we use to bill them) is always available for them to monitor their water use. They could read before and after they water their lawn, fill their bath, take a shower, flush their toilet, run a load of laundry. Most customers have immediate access to their meter and can see exactly what it's recording.

16(1)(e)

pw

From: Myrna Stark Leader
Sent: Monday, July 06, 2015 11:18 AM
To: Pat Wilson
Subject: RE: Saskatoon water usage up

Hi Pat,

Thanks for this. The Mayor wasn't upset at our meeting this morning but we did talk water at the weekly update. As he says, this has become an emotional issue for residents now. I worked to share and reinforce the messages that were provided to all Councillors last week around some of the facts. And, I also restated that we conserved 20% of the water use that we would normally see during a dry period, not during a normal winter period. We know that water use goes up in summer.

I think he may not believe that there is not a problem with billing, but Debbi MP assures me that they aren't finding technology issues.

Oh, I did you mean to send the email below to Debbie L or Debbi MP?
Myrna

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Monday, July 06, 2015 10:53 AM
To: June Schultz; Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Cc: Ed Archer; Myrna Stark Leader; Debbie Leibel; Ann Anderson; Karen Gasmol
Subject: Saskatoon water usage up

Folks – Something for us to bear in mind while customers are questioning their high water usage in May is that Saskatoon’s use was up 33% in May. I’m not sure if we were quite as dry as they were, but it was certainly hot and dry in May, which is when people are planting and generally doing more watering. My experience is that people will start to let their lawns brown off a bit in July/August, but in May, they expect everything to be lush and green and may have been watering far more than they realized, both before conservation and to catch up after.

The attached story just mentioned the Saskatoon stats from May.

<http://ckom.com/story/saskatoon-water-usage/560586>

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From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 2:05 PM
To: Cindy Howden
Subject: FW: Media request: Water Bills

3.

From: Desirae Bernreuther
Sent: Friday, July 03, 2015 3:17 PM
To: Myrna Stark Leader
Cc: Pat Wilson; Pat Hanley; Ed Archer; Karen Gasmu; Candace Seon
Subject: FW: Media request: Water Bills

Hi Myrna,
I know this question has come up but what is the answer?
Please let me know and I'll email Natascia.
Thank you
D

From: Lypny, Natascia (The Leader-Post) [<mailto:nlypny@leaderpost.com>]
Sent: Friday, July 03, 2015 2:57 PM
To: Desirae Bernreuther
Subject: RE: Media request: Water Bills

Hi Desirae,
Thanks for setting up that interview. One follow-up question: How are the costs associated with finding solutions to the Buffalo Pound Lake issues during the conservation period being absorbed? Will the City of Regina and Moose Jaw cover those or ...?

Thank you,
Natascia

From: Lypny, Natascia (The Leader-Post)
Sent: Friday, July 03, 2015 10:12 AM
To: dbernreu@regina.ca
Subject: Media request: Water Bills

Hi Desirae,
I forgot to mention this on the phone: Would it be possible to do the water bills interview on camera? I can meet someone at City Hall, or wherever the spokesperson is.

Thanks,

Natascia Lypny
Regina Leader-Post
E: nlypny@leaderpost.com
O: 306-781-5243

Cindy Howden

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 2:06 PM
To: Cindy Howden
Subject: FW: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

4.

From: Myrna Stark Leader
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 4:22 PM
To: Desirae Bernreuther; June Schultz; Pat Wilson; Tanya Van Curen
Cc: Chris Holden; Candace Seon; Ed Archer; Patrick Book; Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Subject: RE: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

Thank you for this June. I have cc'd in Tanya so that she is aware of your media message below as Service Regina may see increased calls, pending what the paper publishes online and tomorrow.

Tanya, a good tip from Pat that your folks could share with the public is that if people want to see if they are using water when they think they are not is to turn off everything in their home that uses water, and then look at their water metre. If the metre is still running and everything appears to be off, they may have a silent water leak and should get it checked out. I love that I learn something every day here.

Myrna

From: Desirae Bernreuther
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 3:32 PM
To: June Schultz; Pat Wilson
Cc: Myrna Stark Leader; Chris Holden; Candace Seon; Ed Archer; Patrick Book; Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Subject: RE: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

Thank you June!

D

From: June Schultz
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 3:29 PM
To: Desirae Bernreuther; Pat Wilson
Cc: Myrna Stark Leader; Chris Holden; Candace Seon; Ed Archer; Patrick Book; Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Subject: RE: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

Talked to Natascia. She said she understood the comments I provided the last time we talked about this, but since she was still seeing a number of questions, she wanted to get some information out on the issue.

She indicated that she reviewed our conversation from a couple of weeks ago and she understands that there are a number of factors that affect the water bill.

Her biggest question is why are some people saying that they are conserving water and see their bills of up by \$10-\$20 and 3 times the consumption.

A/ It is really hard to speculate why some people see their bills increase. Their bills are subject to a number of factors:

- Number of days included in their bill
- Their cut-off period
- Their usage before, during and after the period they were conserving
- The weather – if it was hot, they may be watering. I indicated that it was hot before and after the consumption period.

I also indicated that we are unable to look at the water used by a resident on a daily basis. We only see what they used in total over the billing period.

I indicated that people need to think about what they were doing before the consumption period because if their usage was up, their conservation may not have gotten them down to below what they may “normally” have used.

Closing Key message:

The City of Regina promotes the wise use of water to protect our limited resource to ensure there is sufficient water for all of our residents. In addition, if residents have questions about their bill, they can call Service Regina and someone will be able to ensure they understand their bill as well as look at their specific situation and run through some items to check if they think there may be a problem.

--- I anticipate our calls to Service Regina may increase.... I understand that the number of calls received for Utility in the last couple of weeks have been consistent to historical numbers, but Service Regina has indicated that they are mainly questions about their consumption.

June

From: Desirae Bernreuther
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 10:56 AM
To: June Schultz; Pat Wilson
Cc: Myrna Stark Leader; Chris Holden; Candace Seon; Ed Archer; Patrick Book
Subject: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request
Importance: High

Hi June and Pat,
 The Mayor's Office has indicated that the Mayor may want to call Natascia back.
 Please provide answers to the following questions to Patrick, cc'd in this email before 1 p.m.
 Thank you
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- She wants to know how much do residents have to conserve to see a reduction in their water bills.
- Some residents have noticed 60 dollars more on their bills, why didn't reducing water counteract that?
- Questions about water rates and consumption charges (math related)

Desirae Bernreuther
 Media Relations Consultant
 Communications Department

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C: 306.530.0970

E: dbernreu@regina.ca

Regina.ca

Cindy Howden

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Communications Department

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Cindy Howden

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 2:07 PM
To: Cindy Howden
Subject: FW: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request
Attachments: image002.png

6.

From: Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 1:10 PM
To: June Schultz
Cc: Pat Wilson; Myrna Stark Leader
Subject: FW: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

Hi there,

Per Desirae, this has been referred to you for response.

1. How much to residents need to conserve to see a reduction in their water bill?
 - The two - three weeks prior to the water conservation period was hot and dry – many households significantly increased their water usage during this time (i.e. watering, washing cars, washing exterior of home, etc)
 - To see a true reduction in the water bill, the water conservation effort would need to offset the increased usage, and then beyond that to actually see a reduction in the water bill
2. Some residents have noticed 60 dollars more on their bills, why didn't reducing water counteract that?
 - Depending on when we read the meter, the water conservation period could be reflected on two separate bills.
 - The utility bill is calculated based on both the # of days in the bill period and the consumption
 - If consumption increased during the weeks prior to the water conservation period, then a few days of returning to normal household usage – there wouldn't be an actual reduction in the utility bill.
 - Average system demand for water May 1-25 was 80.7 megalitres of water. Average demand May 26-31 was 83.4 megalitres

This is just additional information for you. I just got the daily consumption data for May from Water Operations. What it shows is that our consumption crept up, peaking on May 25th, then creeping back down after that. But, when people started reducing, they really just returned to "normal" usage patterns within the household (on average...I know some of our residents were much more conservative). Average system demand for water May 1-25 was 80.7 megalitres of water. Average demand May 26-31 was 83.4 megalitres.

Not sure what more I can add. I'll pop up with a rate sheet so you have it handy.

Deb

From: June Schultz
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 10:58 AM
To: Desirae Bernreuther; Debbi McCaig-Paisig
Cc: Pat Wilson; Myrna Stark Leader; Chris Holden; Candace Seon; Ed Archer; Patrick Book
Subject: Re: Mayor's Office request for information related to LP media request

Debbi - can you pull the required info by 1

June Schultz, CPA, CMA
Director, Finance
City of Regina

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 29, 2015, at 10:55 AM, Desirae Bernreuther <DBERNREU@regina.ca> wrote:

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<image001.png>

<image001.png>



Cindy Howden

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 2:08 PM
To: Cindy Howden
Subject: FW: FB - High water bill

7.

From: Ann Anderson
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2015 2:57 PM
To: Pat Wilson
Subject: RE: FB - High water bill

Thank you.

Ann

From: Pat Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2015 2:56 PM
To: Ann Anderson
Subject: RE: FB - High water bill

Ann – This would be for Utility Billing. I suspect that it would likely be because of the actual billing period for that customer (could have been for more days of service) but UB would need to know the specific account to answer specific questions.

pw

From: Ann Anderson
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2015 2:53 PM
To: Pat Wilson
Subject: FW: FB - High water bill

Pat, is this a water issue or utility billing?

Ann

From: Kelsey Koshinsky
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2015 2:50 PM
To: Ann Anderson
Subject: FB - High water bill

Hi Ann,

We've received the following public post on our Facebook page. Do we have anything to respond to her with? We've received quite a few posts like this in the last few weeks. Thanks!

Please explain my abnormally high May/June water bill DESPITE the fact I was actively reducing my water consumption. My lawn is brown, we reduced our toilet flushing, we re-wore some of our clothes, cut down our showering and I watered my plants with bath water. So why is this the highest bill to date??? And so far, just among my friends, it's looking like a trend??

Kelsey Koshinsky
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Communications Department

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