

The Villages®

Community Development Districts

District Utility Meter Reading Fact Sheet

The District has received several inquiries over the past months regarding District-Owned Utilities and our Meter Reading Program. Thank you to all residents who have contacted us for the facts or clarification.

True:

The District owns and operates numerous Utilities which serve the residents of The Villages:

- **Village Center Service Area** (Lake County and District 1 in Sumter County) is owned by Village Center Community Development District.
- **Little Sumter Service Area** (Districts 2, 3 in Sumter County and District 4 in Marion County) is owned by Village Center Community Development District. (EXCLUDES Dist. 4 Ph. IV Phillips Villas (M232) / Soulliere Villas (M233) / Chatham Acres (M839))
- **North Sumter Utility** (Districts 5, 6, 7, 8 and a small section of District 9 in Sumter County) is owned by North Sumter County Utility Dependent District.
- **Central Sumter Utility** Serving a majority of District 9, all of District 10 in Sumter County and District 11 in Lake County is owned by North Sumter County Utility Dependent District.
- **South Sumter Utility** (Districts 12, 13 and a portion of District 14) is owned by the Wildwood Utility Dependent District.

VCCDD Utilities Department is responsible for the operations and management of the water and wastewater treatment systems. The VCCDD Finance Department is responsible for the billing and collection of payment for those services. In total, there are more than 128,000 utility meters in use across all Utilities. Meters are “touch-read” each month by meter readers, and that data is transmitted to Utility Customer Service who reviews the data and processes it to customers through a monthly billing system. The District uses meters from several vendors, and all of the meters are certified and calibrated by the manufacturer to a very high degree of accuracy and reliability. Meters north of CR 466 only supply potable water (used for both residential use and irrigation).

False:

Meters often fail causing excessive use charges to the residents.

True:

The reality is that our meters are all extremely reliable with a very low failure rate and a life expectancy of 20 years. Of the more than 128,000 meters in use today, the actual average failure rate is less than .0003% (38 out of 128,000 in 2022). Meter failure can be caused by a number of factors including, but not limited to, meter age, external damage, lightning, individual component failure or battery failure. We proactively obtain accurate meter readings and we do monitor readings for excessive or high use. High use is demonstrated by 6,000 gallons of water above their previous reads, or 15,000 gallons of irrigation above their previous reads. We compare that use to their last 12 month of average usage. If there is true high use and no similar data points, the District places a high read work order to the meter reading team to re-verify the read. Once the read is confirmed, we'll then attempt to contact the homeowner by phone or by mail to help diagnose any possible issues. If the read was corrected by the

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work order, no high bill will go out and the corrected use will be shown, which would be completed prior to the billing cycle. Most high reads are initiated by Utility Customer Service as a result of proactively monitoring high usage. If a resident has concerns over a high read, they simply need to request further investigation by a phone call to 352-750-0000 or email to Utilities@districtgov.org. The District will then order a check for flow to determine if there is flow (a sign of a leak). If flow meets standards, testing is complete. Flow tests are performed 2-5 business days from the request date. If a resident is still contesting usage, the District will place a flow volume test. Depending on the results of the flow volume test, the meter could be replaced at no charge to the resident or a credit may be applied to the bill. On average, high-use reads account for less than 1% of the total meter reads on any given month and of that, the overwhelming majority of high meter readings are due to actual high water use by the residential household (both potable and irrigation).

False:

I don't believe my meter is accurate and The District won't test it or replace it.

True:

Residents in The Villages can have their meter tested for free once per year by contacting Utility Customer Service. This service is performed routinely and the overwhelming majority of meters test satisfactorily. If residents still believe their meter is bad after this testing, the resident can request that the meter be sent out for advanced diagnostic testing by an independent third-party meter testing company. A new meter is installed during the test period, and if the testing determines the meter is good, the resident must pay for the costs associated with test. If the meter is tested as bad, there is no cost to the customer. On average, more than 98% of the meters that go through the manufacturer diagnostic testing are tested with satisfactory results meeting the manufacture thresholds.

False:

There is nothing a resident can do if there is high usage on a utility bill.

True:

If residents suspect there are issues with the utility system or their bill, they should contact Utility Billing Customer Service line at 352-750-0000. Again, the overwhelming majority of high meter readings are due to actual usage. Other potential scenarios may include the meter being tampered with, damaged meters, or a water line leak in the home or underground. The District reviews abnormal use for all accounts that have 15,000 gallons over the monthly average, and re-verify the meter reading. To verify, the Jacobs team receives a "hi-read" work order from the District, in which the meter is visited, box lid opened, meter screen cleaned, and a visual read is entered into the digital work order along with a verification of the meter ID to confirm the correct account. The District staff will attempt to contact the homeowner by phone or by e-mail to help diagnose any possible issues. If a leak exceeds 150% of the highest usage for the previous 12 months, residents can also apply for a one-time leak credit to their bill. The adjustment will be based on the average monthly water usage for the previous 12 months using the normal rate schedule and remaining consumption at Tier 1.

False:

The meter readers could just estimate or manipulate the data by uncovering meter boxes and pulling out the wiring.

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True:

Meter readers are trained professionals using advanced meter reading equipment. Meter readings are typically captured both in the meter reading wand as well as digitally for redundancy of verification. The meter readers travel to every residence to read meters. The team member exits the golf car, walks to the meter box, and “scans” the Bluetooth meter touch pad. The information transmits from the Bluetooth wand into a cloud-based meter reader application on a cell phone device. The read data is then “synced” upon route completion and transferred via the cloud to the Utility Customer Service Billing team. If the meter does not generate a Bluetooth reading (signified by a notification sound on the cell phone), the reader will proceed to perform a manual read. In this case, the reader will remove the meter box lid to access the meter. The lid contains a touch pad sensor that is connected to the meter body with wires. The wires need to be shifted to the side to gain access to meter head. Then the reader will wipe the meter screen off and enter the manual read directly into the cell phone device. The meter reading system requires all manual entries to be accompanied with a photo taken by the cell phone device. This photo is uploaded with the read to the cloud-based meter database to ensure an accurate read and serve as a dual-integrity check of the actual meter reading.

False:

There are wide-spread failures of Utility Meters all over The Villages.

True:

The Villages, including the Utility Systems, are built to a high construction standard. Everything is designed, reviewed, and approved by licensed architects, professional engineers, structural engineers, mechanical engineers, and other professionals. All of the work is built to industry standards, local building codes and is permitted, inspected, and accepted by independent County inspectors who must certify that construction meets industry standards and federal, state and local building codes. We retain Vikus Water as our Utility Engineer and Jacobs as our Operations & Maintenance provider, who also provide meter reading services to the District. District Utility staff works closely with these integral partners to operate, maintain and invest into the Utility Infrastructure. Water and Wastewater utilities are designated as “critical infrastructure” to the United States, as they serve large members of our population and deliver critical basic services. As stated previously, the failure rate of meters is very small, and the meters are tested and certified by the manufacturer to be highly accurate.

False:

It is impossible to use the amount of water that the meter indicates I used.

True:

It is very possible. Water loss can be a hard problem to catch, and in some cases, leaks can go unnoticed and undetected for months. The average running toilet can run 21,600 gal/month, a dripping faucet can run 10,800 gal/month, a pool’s auto-fill valve can run 29,700 gal/month (or more depending on the size) and a running water hose can use 5,400 gal/day. Excess water use can start as simple as a toilet flapper not sealing properly. A dripping or broken irrigation head can run 43,200 gal/month. Running multiple irrigation zones on multiple schedules can also overwater your lawn and consume thousands of gallons of water without you being aware of it, especially if you are out of town and your system is set to run automatically. How can you lower water use? Visit TheVillagesWaterWisdom.com to view helpful tips on indoor and outdoor water conservation, workshops, classes and clinics, along with reports on all things water-related here in The Villages.

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False:

Turning the cut-off valve by the side of my house ensures I have no water usage or water loss.

True:

Cutoff valves are often not fully closed by residents, there can be leaks between the meter and the cutoff box. The Districts offers a shut-off program where you can call the District Utility Customer Service line at 352-750-0000 to request your water service be temporarily disconnected to stop usage for both potable and non-potable water. This is the only way to ensure that there is no usage or billing. Residents South of HWY 466 have separate potable and irrigation service, on two separate meters, with two separate cutoff valves. It is possible to turn one valve (potable or irrigation) and think you have cut off all water service, but both valves must be closed or you could still consume water via your irrigation system or within your residence.

False:

The Utility Provider is responsible for all the water lines which deliver water into my residence.

True:

The District is responsible for all the water lines which deliver water to your meter connection. Residents are responsible for everything after the meter connection, including everything in the house, all irrigation mains and zone lines, and all pipes (potable or irrigation) between the meter connection and the house. If residents suspect a water line break has occurred underground, contact Utility Customer Service or Community Watch (After Hours) and we will dispatch a Utility service team to investigate. If the repair is the responsibility of the District, we will perform the repairs. If the repair is the responsibility of the resident, you will be notified and must arrange for a plumbing or irrigation service to perform the repairs.

Information related to District Utilities is available at:

<https://www.districtgov.org/departments/Utilities/utilities.aspx>

When you read something or hear a rumor while enjoying this wonderful lifestyle, please take a moment to “fact check” before you become concerned or pass along misinformation. In a community this large, misinformation can be one of our biggest challenges. For additional information or clarification, please visit DistrictGov.org or contact Bruce Brown, Assistant District Manager at 352- 753-4022 or Bruce.Brown@districtgov.org.