

# UTILITY *Talk*

NATURAL GAS

WATER

WASTEWATER

STORMWATER

STREET LIGHTING

Winter 2011

Dwight C. Jones, Mayor

Building a Better Richmond



Para una copia de este boletín en español, visite la página [www.richmondgov.com/publicutilities/UtilityTalk.aspx](http://www.richmondgov.com/publicutilities/UtilityTalk.aspx) o llame a la Oficina de Enlace Hispano de la Ciudad de Richmond al 646-0145.

## Numerous Assistance Programs Available for Seniors, the Disabled and Low Income Households

The city of Richmond is committed to providing safe and reliable utility service to our customers, especially to our seniors!

We offer several programs specifically catered to address the unique needs of seniors, those struggling with managing their expenses, or property owners in our service area.



### SENIORCARE

**Winter Service Assurance** – This program suspends any shut-off orders between Dec. 1 and March 31 to ensure you stay warm all winter long, no matter what financial difficulty you might be in.

**No Senior Late Fees** – Customers whose accounts are marked with the distinction of “senior citizen” will not incur any late payment fees.

**Security Deposit Waiver Program** – In areas where deposits are normally required, such as transferring and restoring services for instance, the Department of Public Utilities will waive the normal deposit.

**Weatherization Kit Giveaway** – DPU coordinates a yearly event, normally in October, to distribute free weatherization kits to senior customers. Kits contain energy saving items such as insulating weather stripping, low flow shower heads, draft-stopping outlet covers and other useful items.

**Third Party Notification** – This permits a customer to designate a third party, for

instance a family member or trusted friend, to receive a copy of every bill originated from the utility for review. If the customer has a past due balance or if any questions arise, the third party can inquire on behalf of the customer.

For more information about these programs, call 646-7000 or send your name, address, telephone number, utility account number, and date of birth to City of Richmond, Department of Public Utilities, Customer Service Division, 730 E. Broad St., 5th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219. You can also visit the East District Initiative at 701 N. 25th Street; City Hall, 900 E. Broad Street, Room 102; or the Southside Community Center, 4100 Hull Street., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### TAX RELIEF FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

This program is administered by the city’s Finance Department. If you are eligible for this program, you will be exempt from solid waste and recycling fees on your utility bill. For more information about this program, call 646-5700 and press 3.

### LOW-INCOME ASSISTANCE

**MetroCare** is funded by DPU customers donations to assist families and individuals who are experiencing hardships and financial difficulty paying their heating bills. Applications for MetroCare assistance are taken at the Richmond Community Action Program (RCAP) at 1021 Oliver Hill Way, 788-0050; the East District Family Resource Center at 2405 Jefferson Avenue, 644-4496; or the Salvation Army Richmond Area



Command, 2 West Grace Street, 225-7470.

Applications are accepted December 15 through April 30. Those applying for MetroCare must have exhausted any available federal or state fuel assistance. The program pays one bill payment of last resort up to \$500 per heating season.

The Department of Social Services offers low-income households **fuel and cooling assistance**. Applications for fuel assistance are accepted from the second Tuesday in October through the second Friday in November through the Department of Social Services. Call 3-1-1 for more information, or visit one of the service centers at 701 N. 25th Street, 900 E. Marshall Street, or 4100 Hull Street Road.

Cooling assistance applications are accepted from June 15 to August 15, and those qualified can receive help purchasing a portable or installed fan, air conditioner, payment of an electric utility security deposit, or an electric bill.

### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Customer Service: 646-7000 TDD: 1-800-855-1155  
Streetlight Outages & Gas, Water & Sewer Emergencies: 646-7000  
TDD: 1-800-855-1155  
Miss Utility: (Before You Dig): 811



30901-1-0024

# A Sudden Increase in Your Water Bill Could Mean a Leak

If your water bill gets much higher for no apparent reason, you may have a leak somewhere inside your house.

A simple way to check for leaks is to locate your water meter and turn off all the water, inside and out. Then read your meter and write down the figures. Wait 20 minutes, then read it again. If the figures have changed, you have a leak somewhere in your household plumbing. (Don't forget to turn your water back on!)

The toilet is often the culprit and the easiest to check. A leaking toilet can waste 20 gallons of water per day.

Lift the top lid and add a few drops of food coloring to the tank. Do not flush. Wait a few minutes. If the color begins to appear in your bowl, water is leaking from the tank and there are a variety of simple repairs you can make yourself to the flush valves, flapper balls, guidewires, float arm, float valves, or ballcock assemblies inside the tank.

If you would like to receive a free Water Detection Kit, which includes



dye tablets and helpful tips about identifying and repairing simple toilet and faucet leaks, send your name and address to [dpuc@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpuc@richmondgov.com) or call 646-5224 during regular business hours.

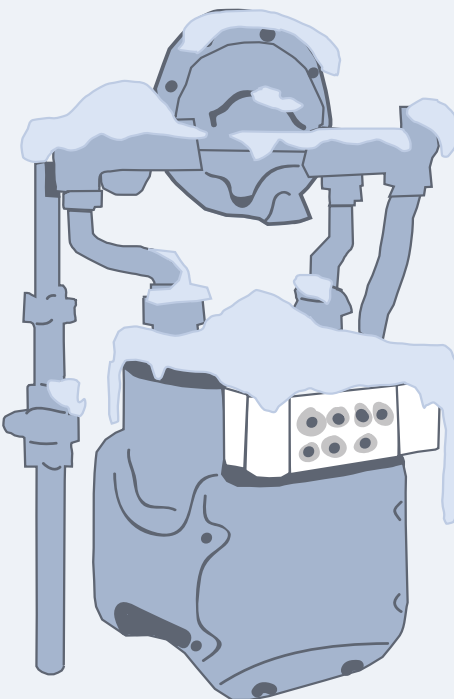
## Keep Meters Free of Ice and Snow

In the event of snow or ice storms this winter, it's important to remove excessive accumulation of snow and ice from the gas appliances at your home or business.

Removal of snow and ice from exhaust and combustion air vents ensures carbon monoxide does not build up in your home or place of business and will help prevent operational problems of your natural gas appliances.

Exercise caution when removing snow and ice by using a broom instead of a shovel to prevent damage to your natural gas meter, piping, regulators, propane tanks or gauges.

Leave your residence or office immediately if you smell natural gas, then contact the Department of Public Utilities at 646-7000 or call 911. If your natural gas appliances are not functioning correctly, call an appliance repair company and have the problem fixed.



## DID YOU KNOW...?

### Conserving Water Saves Energy and Saves Money

- The less water you send down the drain, the less money it requires to operate wastewater treatment plants to make it clean again.

- If the wastewater plant has less water to clean, it uses less power to treat that water, resulting in a lower overhead.

- If you use less water, your family, your school, and your community will have more money to spend on other necessary things.



- Learn more about how to conserve water at [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)

## Win a \$25 bill credit!

The Department of Public Utilities would like to see photos of *you* using natural gas products to share with the readers of *Utility Talk* and on our blog at [www.cordpu.blogspot.com](http://www.cordpu.blogspot.com)

Do you cook with natural gas, have a natural gas hot water heater or outdoor grill? Does your clothes dryer use natural gas? Send a digital photo (1-3 MB) to [dpuc@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpuc@richmondgov.com). If your photo is selected for the next *Utility Talk*, you'll win a \$25 credit on your gas bill!

This quarter's winner is Lisa and Woody Womack who have a natural gas heater in their attached garage, a natural gas water heater, a vent-free natural gas fireplace, and have just upgraded to a natural gas cooktop during a kitchen remodeling.



Woody Womack and his natural gas garage heater

"These appliances allow us to have hot water, heat, and the ability to cook even when the power is out! We love our new cooktop because of how fast it heats up and cools down," says Mr. Womack.