



Town of Westlake

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Westlake's Smart Water Meters

- **After my new meter is installed, how soon can I use the Beacon online program?**
It takes us several days to complete the setup process with Badger / Beacon and until the cellular endpoint has reported several days of readings, there is not much to see anyway.
- **Can my neighbors see my water usage? Can I see what my neighbors use?**
No! Your online account only shows what is reported by your water meter, and not any others. Town staff can see usage for any meter, but are obligated to respect everybody's privacy, as they do today.
- **When I use Beacon to look at my usage by the hour, it shows nothing or just one hour. Why?**
The default is "today". If your meter sent in readings any time before or just after midnight, there won't be any readings for today. Even if it sent readings at 2:30 AM, that would only be two hours to show. Click the left arrow to the left of "Today" to go back a day, and you should see all or most of a day's readings.
- **When does the cellular endpoint send its readings?**
Rather than having all the endpoints report at the same time (say, 1 AM), each endpoint has its own preferred reporting time (e.g. 10:47 PM, 2:18 AM, etc.). If it can't get through, it tries six hours then twelve hours later. The result is that you can see meter readings only up to the last time your endpoint reported. You can see the time your meter is set to report on your online account webpage. In the lower left corner, it shows when your meter last reported ("Meter Read") and its next schedule time ("Next Update").
- **Does this depend on what cell phone company I use?**
No. The cellular endpoints operate independently of your cell service. The endpoints we're installing use the cellular technology called CDMA, which is used by Verizon, Sprint, and US Cellular. AT&T and T-Mobile use what is called GSM; we may try some GSM endpoints if we have problems with the CDMA ones.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), continued

- **Can I still read my meter without using Beacon's online program?**

Yes. Even though there is not a remote display above ground, the grey unit (called an encoder or register) on top of the brass meter body has an LED display that shows the current reading. You will have to lift the meter lid (careful about the wires when you put it back); the encoder has a hinged cover that you may need to flip open.

- **Can this help me detect small leaks?**

Yes. The new high resolution encoder and cellular endpoint report the meter reading in units of 0.01 of a gallon. So, even a leak as small as one cup per hour gets reported. While this amount is not enough to make a noticeable difference in your water bill, it could be a serious problem if a leak is inside a wall or under a slab. To see a leak of this size, you will need to set a very low alert threshold. You may wish to download the data from your online account to have on hand for investigative purposes.

- **Can I expect my water bill to change as a result of the new meter?**

Possibly; our experience has shown as a meter ages, it tends to under report, particularly with a low flow so your bill could increase if your previous meter was under reporting your actual usage. You will be billed for the actual water used. At the same time your bill could decrease if your existing meter is sending out readings in excess of your usage. The new metering system ensures fairness and equality for all customers by measuring and billing residents and businesses accurately.

For further questions or concerns, please feel free to call Public works Director Jarrod Greenwood anytime on his cell at (817) 680-1422 or via email at jgreenwood@westlake-tx.org. Additionally, you may contact Utility Billing Coordinator Sherry Lewis at (817) 490-5732 or via email at slewis@westlake-tx.org.