



**NEWS RELEASE
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Metered Water Rates Start in Port Hueneme on August 1, 2009

PORT HUENEME, CA – The City of Port Hueneme will begin reading newly installed water meters on August 1 and charge residents for the cost of the water they use. Residents will begin receiving bills based on their water usage starting in September.

For the first time in the City's history, residents of the City of Port Hueneme will pay for the use of water based on the actual amount of water they use, beginning August 1. During its 60-year history, the residents of Port Hueneme were billed on a flat rate basis and could use as much water as they wanted without any penalty.

That practice ends on August 1 as the City completes the installation of 5,600 water meters as required by a California State law that requires all cities in the State to charge residents for the actual amount of water they use.

The City is phasing in usage-based rates over the next four years. Beginning August 1, 20% of a resident's bill will be based on metered usage, and 80% of

the bill will be a fixed charge. At the end of four years, 50% of bill will be based on metered usage and 50% of the bill will be a fixed charge.

“The transition to usage-based rates is going to force a lot of people to think about how they use water, and how they can lower their water bills by conserving water”, says City Manager Dave Norman, “and our Water Department is ready to assist residents and businesses with information on how they can reduce their water use.”

The installation of water meters began in November 2007 with a loan from the City’s General Fund and some grant funds. Since that time, the City has installed 5,600 water meters to the City’s residences and some small businesses that did not previously have water meters. The meters will all be read on July 31, 2009 to establish a baseline, and metered water usage will be determined from that base line.

The City Council approved new water rates on June 1, 2009 after sending notices and protest ballots to all residents and water customers. Of the 11,660 notices sent to 6,505 parcels, only 652 valid protest ballots were received. The rates will be adjusted each year over the next four years to account for the cost of raw water, the processing of the water, operations and system maintenance, and debt service.

The rate increase will affect users differently, depending on the amount of water they use. Very low residential water users will see a small decrease in their water bill the first year. Average residential water users will see a 17% increase the first year. Heavy residential water users will see a 34% increase in their water bill the first year.

For the past eight months, the City has been sending notices to those residents whose meters registered a potential leak. Some of these residents have repaired their toilets, faucets or water sprinkler systems, which will reduce their use of water, and reduce their water bills as a result. Some have not fixed their leaks and they will pay for the water escaping from their system. “The customer will pay for the water, whether it is for a shower, a leaky faucet, or a leaky sprinkler system. Any water running in a customer’s system is water that is running the water meter,” says Public Works Director Andy Santamaria. “We hope residents will take our notices seriously and not find out the hard way that water leaks can add up to real money.”

“It is important for people to understand that they will be billed in September for the water they use beginning August 1,” says Norman. “The time to start conserving water is now.”

For information on how to conserve water and reduce their water bills, Port Hueneme residents and businesses can call (805) 986-6563, and ask to speak with Heather Hinman-Navarro.

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DAVID J. NORMAN
CITY MANAGER

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