



TRAVIS COUNTY WATER CONTROL AND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT 17

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Dear Valued Customer,

It has come to my attention that some customers have grown concerned with their recent bill. I wanted to reach out to reiterate to you that WCID No.17's billing cycle runs on a monthly schedule where each months billing consists of a 28-35 day schedule.

This range in schedule is due to many factors: First, the District must comply with the Texas Administrative Code which requires that the due date of a bill may not be less than 16 days from the time the bill is postmarked. Secondly, the District must comply with the Texas Public Utility Commission which requires that for any customer issued a Disconnect Notice for non-payment of their utility bill, they must have at least 10 days to pay their overdue bill before the disconnect process takes place.

Beyond the two requirements cited above the District has a number of internal processes that combine to make a varying-day billing schedule necessary. Specifically, the District uses radio technology to drive by and obtain our customer's meter readings. This is a 3 day process that normally stretches from a Tuesday – Thursday. This allows the District the flexibility to address other issues that may arise during that work week such as missed readings, equipment issues etc. The read process is followed by a multiday review where all readings are verified and uploaded into our billing system. Once there, they are assessed for potential abnormal reads and the meter technicians are dispatched to investigate those potential discrepancies. Only when all discrepancies have been investigated does the actual billing process commence. This process involves both computer and staff review of all bills for potential issues; once complete, the bills are printed, stuffed and mailed from our facility on Eck Lane.

This process, when matched up to an annual calendar with holidays and weekends, prevents an even 30 day billing period. We do our best to ensure that the majority of billing months are consistently 28-29 days in length but in order to accomplish this in a 365 day year we do have 3 months that are 34 days in length and 1 that is 35 days in length.

While I understand the frustration you might have upon receiving a bill that is for a 25% longer billing period, (August billing was 28 days, while September was 35 days) I would point out that this longer billing period combined with multiple extremely dry months is expected to result in a much higher than normal bill, especially for those of us with irrigation on our lots.

The obvious solution to all of this is to change the billing cycle to better align with a more even 30 - 31 day cycle. While I agree that this would greatly reduce the swing in billable usage it just isn't something WCID No.17 is capable of at this time. In order to accomplish this, the District would have to move in one of two directions. The first would

be to enlarge our staff to the point where we could run multiple billings a month for different parts of the District. This is a process that some other water suppliers follow and we have reviewed their process. In order to accomplish this here, the increase in salary that would be required would be cost prohibitive. The second option would be for the District to modernize our meters and meter reading equipment to allow for instantaneous reads. While this is a very interesting option, and most likely the future of our industry, I can say that we have evaluated the changeover process and decided that the upfront \$6 million dollar investment is not one we are ready to make at this time. We are budgeting to be able to upgrade our systems in the future but the funds are not currently available.

In closing I will say that much of the reasoning for maintaining our current system is based on a desire to maintain your rates and taxes as low as possible. We are very cost conscious here at the District and we safeguard your investment in this public entity at all times. Careful money management has allowed us to avoid public debt whenever possible and as a result your taxes are some of the lowest around. Our District has four taxing jurisdictions and for the last three straight years we have been able to reduce taxes in two while maintaining taxes steady in the other two. Additionally, WCID No.17 is very proud of the fact that our water and waste water rates are some of the lowest in the area.

It is only through a consistent commitment to cost control that we are able to achieve this. While this may at times come with a small level of inconvenience, we always use every measure at our disposal to ensure your water and wastewater systems are equipped with the most modern equipment possible. This approach has allowed us to continue service to our customers through a wide range of environmental and weather events. Events that in the past have shutdown other providers entirely.

For anyone who so desires, the District will be happy to pull the electronic graphs from your meter to better show you the usage patterns at your property. These graphs are capable of showing the water usage at your property in hourly as well as in daily increments and are very useful when pinpointing irrigation issues and water leaks at a property. Also, any property owner that finds they have a leak can of course apply for a leak adjustment under the District's policy.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call our offices at 512-266-1111, or email me directly at jhoman@wcid17.org.

Sincerely,
Jason F. Homan
General Manager
Travis County WCID No. 17