



**Travis County WCID No. 17
PROJECT NOTICE-Updated 01/18/2023**

What is AMI? Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is an integrated system of smart meters, communication networks, and data management systems that enables two-way communication between utilities and their metering equipment. AMI Meters transmit readings over a private, secure wireless network.

Is Advanced Metering new technology? No. Approximately 50% of all meters in America are Advanced “Smart” meters. They have been around for more than 30 years. The District has had “smart” meters installed for the last 15 years. These new meters bring increased functionality and provide our customers with more information. These devices are an improvement over our current style of smart meter and will allow for a more accurate and faster collection of usage readings than our current method, improve safety concerns, and provide overall efficiency.

How does Advanced Metering benefit me? The new metering will allow Travis County WCID No. 17 to reduce the labor cost associated with reading the meters. The additional meter data will enable the Travis County WCID No. 17 to better communicate with the customer regarding their water consumption patterns, detect abnormal consumption due to leaks, faucets running, etc. and Travis County WCID No. 17 will be able to help the customer use water more efficiently.

Do AMI meters use radio frequency communications? Is it safe? Yes. They do use a radio frequency to send data from the meter to the utility billing department. All communication equipment used for the AMI system complies with federal licensing requirements and is considered safe. According to the California Council on Science and Technology, when installed properly and maintained, they result in much smaller levels of radio frequency exposure than many existing common household electronic devices, like cell phones and baby monitors. Radio Frequency (RF) fields from AMI meters have been studied and found to emit very low fields and then only intermittently. Any exposure to humans would be extremely small. There are no known adverse biological effects from these small fields. To provide some perspective, under typical operating conditions, an individual meter would transmit for approximately 45 minutes over a 20-year operating life. This should provide significantly less RF exposure than a single cellular phone call of the same length. The current meters we have had for the last 15 years have been using a radio frequency for communications to the District.

Why is Travis County WCID No. 17 installing new meters? The water meters used in Travis County WCID No.17 system need to be replaced. A decision to install AMI technology instead of Drive-By technology is consistent with what most utilities in America are doing. AMI network/meters represent a significant improvement over previous metering technology. These AMI meters will allow Travis County WCID No. 17 to have better billing and consumption data. The new meters are guaranteed to be 98.5% accurate for 20 years. They use ultra-sonic technology with no moving parts and nothing to break. American Water Works Association



(AWWA) has endorsed and authorized this meter for use nationwide. The current meters have a plastic wheel that allows for calcium, magnesium and other elements to build-up. This build-up, over time, can prevent the wheel from spinning freely and result in an inaccurate water read that doesn't record the full amount of water flowing through the meter. This potential inaccuracy is to the customers' benefit, as the meter may not reflect all the water that is flowing through it. The new meters will capture all water usage consistently over its lifecycle and therefore some customers may see an increase in their consumption.

When will the project begin and end? The project began in July 2022 and is projected to be completed by December of 2023. As new meters are changed out, the system will begin reading them using the two-way system.

Who will be doing the work associated with the meter change? Travis County WCID No.17 has contracted with HydroPro Solutions for materials and project management. The installation will be performed by Professional Meters, Inc. (PMI) who specializes in projects like this where there is a complete meter change out. All contracted employees will be in uniform and have marked vehicles.

Will you need to enter the property? Yes, but not your house. The water meter for your home or business will need to be replaced. These are most often found in the meter box located on your property.

How long should the meter replacement take to complete at my home? The installation of a residential water meter typically takes 15-30 minutes. Larger commercial meters can take longer.

Will my service be interrupted during installations? Yes, PMI and Travis County WCID No. 17 will make every effort to notify anyone at home during the installation that service will be interrupted.

Are you going to invoice me for the new meters? No, we are not. The cost to replace meters is paid by Travis County WCID No. 17.

How secure will the new meters be? The meter display is visible so customers to be able to check their consumption, just like the old ones. All other information and data stored in the meter is secure and the meter is sealed. Data stored inside the meter is usage and location data only. No personal information (i.e., Customer's information) is stored inside a meter. Data transmitted from the meter through the AMI system is encrypted throughout the entire process.

Will a meter reader still need to visit to read the meter? Travis County WCID No. 17 staff will not be on-site to read meters monthly but will continue to need access to the meter for periodic safety and quality assurance testing as well as inspections and maintenance.



Will this affect meter reader jobs? No, not for existing personnel. Our meter readers are being retrained to be meter technicians and will continue to be a vital part of our Customer Service & Billing Department. The AMI project has allowed the District to maintain existing staff levels even with the growth in meters over the last 5 years and will continue to help defer or delay the need to add staff.

Will I continue to be billed the same way? The monthly utility bill will look the same. The consumption period will reflect the same utility bill schedule, mid-month to mid-month.

Will the electronic meter interfere with other electronic equipment in my home or business? No. Radio transmission operates in compliance with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC Regulations) to avoid interference with other electronic devices and your previous meter has been using radio transmission for years.

What is a Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) and why do I have to have one? As a District customer, our Rules and Policies require you to have a PRV installed at your home to help protect it from system pressure fluctuations. These are mechanical devices that are designed to control water pressure coming into the home at a value that the homeowner sets. This can be accomplished by adjusting your PRV to achieve the home water pressure you are comfortable with (Normally 50 – 65 psi). As they are mechanical devices, they will wear out over time, so manufacturers recommend that the PRV be replaced every 3 to 5 years. The cost of a solid body brass or bronze PRV is around \$150 and up in addition, they can be purchased at any home improvement store.

What happens if I have a problem after my new meter is installed? If you have a water leak or low water pressure after installation, or at any other time, you will call 512-266-1111 extension 110 to report your concern. Please note that because your water will have been turned off temporarily during the meter replacement process, you may experience air bubbles or discolored water shortly afterwards. In most cases briefly running your cold water will resolve this.

My consumption seems to be abnormally high, are the numbers accurate? As mentioned previously, these new AMI meters are rated to be 98.5% accurate. If you had an older meter, it is probable that some water use was not registered on your meter or billed to your account due age/wear on the older meter. With the new meter installed, it is likely that some customers will see an increase in their billed consumption. Some customers who previously had smaller 5/8th inch meters combined with a home irrigation system will see an increase in measured water consumption during irrigation cycles. This is due to the fact that these older and smaller meters were not designed to measure under high flow conditions that occur with the use of irrigation systems.

If I have questions about AMI, how do I get those answered? You can stop by our office at 3812 Eck Lane or give us a call at 512-266-1111 ext. 110. We would be happy to visit with you about the meter change out. Also, project information and updates can be found on our website www.wcid17.org/ami/.

