



For more information:
Rick Jackson
Rick.Jackson@bwwb.org

BIRMINGHAM WATER WORKS SHARES UPDATE ON CUSTOMER BILLING, RELEASES REVIEW SYSTEM IS NOW CURRENT WITH 98% OF CUSTOMERS RECEIVING TIMELY BILLS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (October 26, 2022) – The Birmingham Water Works (BWW) today shared an update on its progress in resolving billing issues that have affected a large number of the system’s customers for several months. The Board reports the system is now current with 98% of all customers receiving a timely bill.

In late December 2021, Birmingham Water Works management became aware of a staffing shortage of meter readers who were not able to report to work due to COVID protocols, in addition to several vacant positions in meter reading. As a result, the utility fell eight to ten days behind in meter reading. BWW reads approximately 10,000 meters each day, and the problem quickly ramped up to 100,000 unread meters that had to be caught up along with normal administrative processing. A shortage of bill editing personnel further complicated resolution.

An external review and analysis identified these and other issues that also included a lack of adequate training for newer staff in the billing process as well as underutilized system reporting capabilities. However, the review found that the BWW’s current operating system is billing correctly for meters that are read in their regular monthly intervals.

“We apologize, first of all, to every Birmingham Water Works customer who has experienced any inconvenience in their billing, and we understand and take very seriously that frustration,” said Birmingham Water Works General Manager Michael Johnson. “Our commitment is to provide the nation’s highest quality water at the lowest possible price, and our customers deserve timely and accurate billing.

“I want to thank the dedicated customer service employees who have dealt with the backlog of bills requiring manual intervention. We salute these and all of our team members who are dedicated to making it right for our customers. We are also committed to the training required to make our staff successful in their customer service responsibilities. Our entire management team has been committed to an ‘all hands on deck’ mentality in making sure the remnants of the issues are fully resolved as soon as possible and working to minimize any chances of having these issues again,” he said.

“In all cases where any customer has difficulty paying their water bill, we have made and continue to make available payment plans that allow the extension of payments up to 12

months. We also have a newly designed monthly bill format that more clearly shows the charges on your bill and draws the distinction between water usage fees and the fees charged by the Jefferson County Sewer System. Your sewer fees also appear on your monthly water bill. The responsibility for all billing lies with us, and we commit to making it right,” Johnson said.

The Birmingham Water Works customer care line is (205) 244-4000.

ABOUT BIRMINGHAM WATER WORKS BOARD: Founded in 1951, the Birmingham Water Works Board serves 770,000 people in Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, St. Clair, and Walker counties. The BWWB operates four filtration plants, a certified testing laboratory, and has more than 4,000 miles of pipe in its distribution network. For more information about the Birmingham Water Works Board, media inquiries, or tours of our museum, please call 205-244-4225 or visit www.bwwb.org.

Media Contact: publicrelations@bwwb.org | 205-244-4225

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