



The City of Brockville Water Meter Replacement Program

What is it?

The City of Brockville is undertaking a water meter replacement program. The intent of the program is to update Brockville's water meters and meter reading technologies. The new system will improve the efficiency of the meter reading process through the installation of new radio frequency meters. When the installation process is complete, customers will be relieved of the responsibility of reading their own meter or the need for the Water Meter Reading staff to enter homes/businesses to read the meter. Depending on the age of the meter and / or consumption on the meter, some meters will be retrofit or replaced with a new meter.

In order to complete the Meter Replacement Program as efficiently as possible, areas of the City will be targeted. When an area is substantially complete, the program will move on to the next area, and so on, until the entire City has been converted.

Water meters are an important component of Brockville's Municipal Drinking Water System. Every residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional customer is equipped with a water meter to track consumption. This ensures that each individual customer is being billed for only the water they consume. There are 8,500 water meters within the city, of which, 8,300 are residential water meters. The [Water Division](#) is responsible for replacing, installing, and testing water meters throughout the city.

What Homeowners can expect

City of Brockville staff will be canvassing the City to replace the meters. You will receive a knock at your door by a City employee with proper identification who will ask if it is a convenient time to change the meter. If it is not or you are not home, you will be left a card with the information needed to schedule an appointment. You may also receive a call from us to schedule an appointment. A typical meter replacement should take approximately 60 minutes, but may vary, depending on the circumstances. City staff will be driving clearly marked vehicles and be accompanied with photo identification. The

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meter being installed will have an electronic radio transmitter (ERT) attached to it that will enable the meter reader to get reads without the need to access your premises.

What is Expected of Homeowners?

Homeowners are obligated to provide clear and unobstructed access to the water meter. If there are any boxes or stored items in the way the City asks that these be cleared prior to the arrival of the meter installer. If, for any reason, the water meter has been covered by drywall or paneling it is the homeowners responsibility to ensure that access to the meter be created. The water meter is property of the City of Brockville and clear and free access to it must be provided.

Homeowners should ensure that your inside water shut-off valve is in good working order. To do so, locate the water meter inside your house. It's important to know where the water meter is located so you know where to turn the water off. The meter is generally found at the front of the premises closest to the street. There may be two valves near your meter, the one below the meter or closest to the pipe coming out of the floor or wall, is the water shut-off valve. The valve should turn off easily. If the valve is not operating, it would be wise to have it repaired.



The valve on the right in this photo is the main shutoff; the valve on the left is the house-side main shutoff. In newer homes, these will probably be ball valves.

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The main shutoff valve in your house probably has one of two designs:

- **Gate valve:** Gate valves are very reliable and last for years, but they become difficult to turn after not being turned for years. If you haven't closed the main shutoff valve since you moved into your house, do it now. Better to find out that you can't turn it with your bare hands now than to wait until you're standing in 6 inches of water.
- **Ball valve:** Houses with plastic or copper main water pipes leading into the house may have a full-flow ball valve. This valve is open when the handle is aligned with the pipe.



- To close it, turn the handle clockwise that it's at a right angle to the pipe.

1/4 turn so

The main valve is the one to stop most plumbing catastrophes, such as a burst pipe. Make sure that everyone in the household knows where this valve is located and knows how to turn it off. Turning the handle clockwise closes the valve. You need to turn the handle several turns to fully close a gate valve.

After you've closed and opened the valve, it may start to leak a bit around the valve stem. The stem of the valve is held in place with a [packing](#) nut. Tighten this nut just enough to stop the leak. Don't over tighten it or the valve is difficult to turn again. (If you need a cheat sheet to remember which way to turn the control, use a label or tag with the simple reminder: "Right off" with an arrow pointing right, for example.)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is my water meter being replaced?

In an effort to gain efficiency, the City of Brockville has decided to convert to water meters with radio transmitters. The radio transmitters will allow the City's Meter Readers to drive or walk by a property in order to obtain the reading for each water meter thus saving time.

Water meters are mechanical devices and like all mechanical devices wear with age. For this reason, some meters will be replaced so that the City can ensure that the water meters are providing accurate measurements as possible while other newer meters will only require a radio transmitter retrofit kit be installed.

When will my water meter be replaced?

The water meter replacement project will commence in January 2013.

We will advise you by letter prior to the time when your area of the city is scheduled to be completed. The letter will be included with your water bill prior to the meter replacement.

Staff will focus their efforts on replacing meters in areas where access to the house is required in order to read the meter. The replacement project may take years to complete as the replacements will be completed by staff as time and budgets allow.

How will this affect my service?

A City employee will come to your premise and replace the water meter. Water will be temporarily shut off while the water meter is being replaced. The interruption due to this process will last approximately 60 minutes. The new meter will allow the meter reader to get their regular reads via radio signal and will no longer require access to your premise. This will not only save you the trouble of letting a meter reader into your home to read the meter, or phone in the reading yourself, but will also save you from having many estimated bills for all those time the meter reader was unable to gain access.

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How long will it take?

In most cases it is a simple procedure and should not require more than 60 minutes from start to finish.

How do I know who is authorized to do the work?

The only people who are authorized to replace, install, or work on water meters are City employees. All employees replacing the water meters will be accompanied with City identification and will be traveling in clearly marked vehicles. In some instances, the City employee at your door may be working in a team and, therefore, the vehicle may be down the street and not exactly outside of your house.

Do they need to come inside my house?

Yes. All water meters in the City of Brockville are located inside our customer's premises. *Please ensure that the area is accessible.*

Where is a water meter installed?

A water meter is installed just above the main water shut-off valve in your home. This is usually in the basement and is located on a pipe that comes out of your basement floor. Locate the main water shut-off valve in your basement. It usually has a coloured, round or straight handle. **Please clear the area around this valve so installers have full access.**

If the water pipe is not exposed, the installer will need to expose the pipe in order to complete the work. The installer will offer options to finish the installation.

What about the plumbing from the meter to my house?

The customer is responsible for the repair of defective plumbing or valves on their property. When such conditions prevent the meter replacement, the customer will be advised of the repairs needed. Once the repairs are completed, the homeowner can contact City Hall to make an appointment to change the water meter. The City owns the meter and is responsible for its maintenance and replacement when required.

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Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?

Yes, there will be a temporary interruption while the meter is being replaced – this typically takes about 60 minutes.

Do I have to be home to have the water meter replaced?

Meter change outs must occur while the resident or a friend or relative is home. We require that an adult be present during the installation. The installer will not enter your home unless authorized to do so by someone 18 years or older. The installer will not enter your home if your children are alone. A city employee does not have the authority to enter a household without someone home.

Does my meter have to be changed?

Yes, the new meter is required for future billing.

What if I don't want my meter changed?

This is not an option; all meters will be changed.

How much will the new meter cost me?

There is no charge to individual customers for the meter replacement. The new meters are an investment in our infrastructure that will improve billing efficiency and customer service.

Will I be able to read my own meter?

Yes, the new meters will have a digital display so meters can be read manually.

How does the system work?

The key to the system is a device called an ERT – *Encoder-Receiver-Transmitter*. This device is connected directly to a special electronic register on the water meter. Normally, the ERT does nothing – it “sleeps,” waiting for the meter reader to approach.

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The meter reader's handheld or truck-mounted reading device sends out a "wake up" signal. When an ERT receives the wake up signal, it checks the reading on the meter register, encodes it into a digital signal, and begins transmitting its identification number and the current reading. After a few minutes, the ERT stops transmitting and goes back "to sleep," waiting for the next time we need a meter reading.

The handheld device or truck-mounted computer system matches the ERT identification number with each property and records the reading. At the end of the day, the meter reader unloads the information to our billing system.

What if I am a tenant and do not own this property?

If you are a tenant, you will be asked to provide the installer with access to the meter. We also ask that you notify the owner of the property about the notification letter you received.

I am an owner and have tenants, but I do not reside at the property. What should I do?

If you have tenants but do not reside on your property, you are responsible for calling the installer for an appointment and for providing access to the meter.

Is there any special care or maintenance that I need to do to my new water meter?

No. The water meter does not require any maintenance by the homeowner. The City is responsible for all maintenance; however, you should be careful not to damage the water meter by bumping into it or pushing boxes against it.

As well, homeowners have the responsibility to ensure that clear, unobstructed access is provided to the meter in the event that future maintenance needs to be performed.

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Also -- as these meters are converted, it is necessary to close both valves on either side of the meter in order to remove the meter. These valves were purchased and installed by the owner of the house or building and must be maintained by the owner. These valves should not leak when they are closed or opened. If the valves have not been operated (opened and closed) in years, you probably should have them replaced or at least have the packing replaced in them because they may leak when we come in to convert the meter. The City is responsible for only our meters, not the valves on either side of the meter. If a leak should occur, it is the responsibility of the owner to repair the valve(s).

Are the new meters the same as the ones being replaced?

No, the new meters will be installed with equipment that transmits meter readings to computer equipment when Meter Readers walk or drive by your home by way of radio frequency. These automated meters eliminate the need to obtain readings directly from the meter and therefore improve the efficiency and lower the cost of the meter reading program. With no moving parts, the meters will accurately measure water flow for the 20 year life of the meter.

What if we have a leak after the meter is installed?

When your meter is installed, you will receive a phone number to call if there are any concerns or emergencies regarding the meter.

What powers the radio transmitter?

The radio is a battery powered device. The expected life of the battery is 20 years which coincides with the expected life of the new meter.

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Will the radio transmitter interfere with my television, cordless phone, garage doors or pacemaker?

No, the radio transmissions occur on a frequency different from those used by television signals, cordless phones, garage doors and pacemakers. In addition, the transmissions last less than one second.

How do I know that you have my reading and not someone else's?

Each radio frequency device has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique identification number is compared to your account record to ensure that there is a match.

Are there any hazards that could result from having the radio transmitter near my home or business?

No, this type of equipment is regulated by the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission and transmits with extremely low power (less than 1/100th of a watt). Each radio transmission lasts less than one second.

Can I phone and schedule my water meter replacement before I am contacted?

We would prefer to complete an area before moving on to the next area. Please wait for us to contact you.

Questions or comments? Need more information?

For more information regarding the Water Meter Replacement Program please phone or e-mail your questions/comments to:

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