



# Customer Service *Connections*

A publication of Saint Paul Regional Water Services

Winter 2011

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(As of Jan. 1, 2011)

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## Online payment system coming soon

Account access, electronic bills, part of *Infinity Link*

Coming this spring, we are bringing you the ability to pay your bills and check your account online.

Called *Infinity Link*, this online billing option will let you do more than simply pay your bill.

If you sign in and register as a customer, you will be able to:

- pay your bill
- check your account
- see and compare your water usage over time
- see a breakdown of your bill
- view each account, if you have more than one service address
- elect to have only electronic, or ebills, rather than paper bills, made available to you



*This example of a Maplewood residential bill shows how the components of the bill are broken down in Infinity Link.*

If you simply want to go in and make a one-time payment without registering, you will be able to do that, too.

Keep an eye on your water bill statement and our website at [www.stpaul.gov/water](http://www.stpaul.gov/water) for upcoming announcements about *Infinity Link*.

## New water rates effective Jan. 1, 2011

Increase amounts to less than 3 cents a day

Saint Paul Regional Water Services is committed to its mission of providing safe, quality drinking water and services to our customers at a reasonable price.

Continuing to provide reliable, uninterrupted delivery of safe water now and into the future requires regular investments to replace and renew infrastructure as well as funding to cover daily operational and maintenance costs.

These costs have resulted in a water rate increase of 5.45 percent for this

year. Despite this slight increase, water rates continue to be much lower and cost less than any other utility service you need, such as sewer and garbage service. Water is considerably less expensive than gas, electric, cell phones, or cable.

When determining the budget, we estimate, based on average usage in our service area, that a family of four will use 16,456 gallons or 22 units of water a quarter. The rate increase will cost the average family 2.9 cents a day or 88 cents more a month or \$10.56 a year.

*Rates continued on page 2*

**Our mission is to provide reliable, quality water and services at a reasonable cost.**

## To Serve You Better

To make a credit card payment, or to get information on your account status, call (651) 266-6350, 24 hours a day.

To talk to a Customer Service Representative call Customer Service at (651) 266-6350 and press "0" between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Bills may be paid in the following ways:

### Credit Card

Over the telephone, 24 hours a day, or in person at McCarrons Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1900 Rice St., Maplewood. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express credit/debit cards.

### Money Order or Check

In person, by return mail with your bill stub, or in one of our drop boxes:

**For next-day processing**, at McCarrons Center. The drop box is located in the visitor parking area; available 24 hours a day.

**For 48-hour processing**, located at Saint Paul City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd., West. Doors are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and visitors must pass through security.

### Cash

In person only, at McCarrons Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### Direct Payment Plan

Have your payment deducted electronically from your checking or savings account. You'll still receive a statement; it will indicate which date the payment will be deducted from your account.

## Why is my water cloudy?

*Cloudy or milky looking water appears largely in the winter months. It is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water. It is harmless.*

*To remove the air bubbles, simply let the water sit in an open container until the bubbles naturally disappear.*

*Most of our water comes from surface sources—the Mississippi River and a chain of lakes. In the winter, this water is cold, and cold water contains more oxygen than warm water. Water is carried to your home in pipes, which are also cold. When you let the water out of your faucet, the oxygen can finally escape from the cold water into the warmer room, and tiny air bubbles appear, making your water look milky or cloudy.*

## 2011 proposed budget approved by Board of Water Commissioners

*Rates continued from page 1*

The majority of our customers receive a quarterly billing statement, so the difference will be about \$2.64 a quarter. That means the average family in our system will pay about \$51 each quarter for the water that they use or about \$17 a month.

This does not include sewer charges, which are established separately by each community that we serve.

Public hearings were held by the Board of Water Commissioners on Sept. 14 and by the Saint Paul city council on Nov. 3. The new water rates and the water utility budget were approved by the city council at their Dec. 15 meeting and took effect on Jan. 1, 2011.

The 2011 budget includes an increase of \$1.3 million in funding for water main replacements, bringing our total investment for 2011 to \$4.6 million. We are also replacing the Dale Street Reservoir after more than 90 years of service. We began replacing all 94,000 water meters in our service area last year, and will continue to replace those 25-year-old meters until all customers have new meters, by early 2013.

These investments in our infrastructure will help us continue to provide you with reliable, quality drinking water delivered effectively and efficiently straight to your faucet for years to come.

## Prevent your pipes from freezing

### Keep basements warmer by sealing leaks, insulating

Every winter hundreds of water meters and pipes freeze in area homes. You can take easy and inexpensive steps to prevent the damage, expense, and inconvenience associated with freezing pipes and water meters.

Water meters typically sit several inches off the floor in the basements of most homes.

If the meter is in a pit in your home, make sure that the cover fits properly. The pipes, valves, and water meter in the pit should not touch the concrete walls, where it is colder.

In addition:

- Check along the foundation and crawl spaces for cold-air leaks
- Close off crawl space vents
- Replace or repair broken or cracked basement windows
- Make sure that basement doors and windows close tightly

- Seal or caulk cracks in walls
- Insulate pipes
- Make sure the valves on either side of the water meter work and can be turned off if the meter freezes or the pipe bursts.

If your water meter freezes, the bottom plate will crack. **Do not try to repair the meter yourself; call us.**

*It is unlawful for anyone other than a water utility employee to remove a water meter except in cases of an emergency or with a permit by a plumber.*

If we need to replace a damaged meter, including damage caused by freezing, the homeowner will be charged for the meter. Replacing a new meter can cost \$300 or more.

If you suspect damaged or frozen water pipes or water meter, call the SPRWS 24-hour dispatch office at 651-266-6868.