

Frequently Asked Questions – AMR Project

What is an AMR Project?

The AMR Project really means Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) and Meter Replacement Program. This city wide project will replace/retrofit old meters with new, state of the art meters with radio frequency (RF) devices that will allow the City of Kendallville to obtain meter readings without coming to your property. The RF device will eliminate the future need for us to come into your property to read your water meter.

Where is my water meter?

In most cases, your meter is located inside your home in a basement, closet, garage or utility room. In rare cases, your water meter may be located outside in a meter pit near the sidewalk, curb, or alley.

Why do I need a new meter?

Many of the water meters are over 25 years old. Older meters are less accurate and more costly to maintain, and require a meter reader to enter your property to read the meter.

My meter works fine; does it have to be upgraded?

Yes. In order to take advantage of the new technology, efficiencies, and cost-savings that the AMR system will provide, all water meters in the City must be changed out or retrofitted with the automated meter reading technology.

How does the new meter reading system work?

Most meter readings will be taken by a vehicle driving through your neighborhood. In some cases, a meter reader may still walk the meter reading route. When the vehicle or meter reader gets near your meter, the meter transmits its meter reading by radio. The readings are collected by devices in the vehicle or held by the meter reader.

Will the timing of my water bills change?

At this time, there is no plan to change to your monthly billing period.

Will my water bill go up?

Older meters tend to run slower and therefore do not measure all the water going through them. The new water meter will accurately measure the water that you use. All new meters are tested at the factory to ensure that they register properly. If you see a higher bill, it is usually not because your new meter is reading too high; it is because the old meter was running slow. The City will not back bill customers because their old meter was running slow, but all customers with new meters will now pay for their actual usage.

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.

How do you know that my reading is accurate?

The new meters are tested before installation. These state of the art water meters have electronic registers, which verifies the meter reading before it is sent to the transmitting unit. This reading is deemed more accurate than visually reading the meter.

How do I know if higher usage may be a result of a leak in my plumbing system?

A new, more accurate meter may detect small leaks that the older meter missed. Check faucets for small drips. Also check your toilet tank for small leaks in the toilet bowl. You may want to place a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank. If the water in the bowl changes to the color of dye used in the tank, you have a leak. Seek assistance from your local home improvement center or plumbing professional to fix all such leaks.

How long will the process take?

The City has approximately 3,600 meters to visit. We will be aggressively installing the system and will get faster with time. As more meters are read by radio, operators will gain time to install at a faster rate. We will try to be completely finished with two years.

Since the meters will be read faster, what will the employees fill that time with?

We currently use all five Distribution Operators and the Superintendent to read the meters. The six man team can take anywhere from two to four days to complete this task. It largely depends on weather conditions and work load. Some months we are called away from the reading to take care of other emergencies or even daily tasks. When the radio read system is fully installed, we will be able to use the time to better maintain the distribution system.

We have recently begun a valve exercising program. When main line valves are exercised, they work for many years and are usable when an emergency requires the valve to work. Most valves in our city are in poor condition due to age and many of them can be revitalized by automatic exercising. When valves work, we don't have to use expensive means of water stoppage costing up to \$8,000 per occasion.

We have approximately 600 main line valves and 300 fire hydrant valves. Hiring this work out would cost approximately \$54,000 each year. By freeing up time, we can do this task ourselves.

We also have started a hydrant painting program involving sandblasting and painting fire hydrants. This is another task that many cities hire out and could cost the department up to

\$80,000. We currently visit each hydrant at least once per year and as often as 4 times per year for flushing, greasing and repair. Proper maintenance of these fire hydrants will result in more dependable fire hydrants for our firemen to utilize.

We have also begun testing our own meters, saving the city another \$20,000 per year. This allows us to quickly test a meter instead of waiting for a company to come and do it for us. That waiting period can slow down the diagnosis of the problem. If the meter is reading properly, a person may have a bad leak to find.

These cost savings require time and will quickly pay for the automatic reading system and raise the quality of the 60 miles of water main, nearly 900 valves, 600 fire hydrants and service to 3600 accounts.

Do I have to be home for the process?

If your meter is in your home, as most of them are, we will need to contact you and discuss the best time for us to come. If we can not reach you by telephone, we will leave a card on your door. The card will give you the proper contact information. If the meter is located outside in a meter pit near the street or alley, you do not need to be home for this work to be completed.

How long will the meter installation take?

Under normal circumstances, the installation will take 30 minutes or less. The water will have to be turned off for about 5 to 10 minutes if the meter needs changed. Please be advised that there may be some trapped air or slight discoloration in the water line. This will clear up after running your water for a few moments. You may hear some noise as the air exits spigots and fixtures. This is normal.

How will I know your installer works for you?

Each installer will have a picture ID badge. If you are unsure about the installer's identity, call the Water Utility service office at 260-347-2452 for confirmation.

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

The City of Kendallville will make every effort to dispatch service personnel as quickly as possible to determine the cause of the leak and to take appropriate action. You may call the Water Utility service office at 260-347-2452 during normal working hours (8:00AM – 4:00 PM Monday thru Friday) or after hours emergency 260-347-0654.

Once the AMR system is installed are there any problems that can happen?

The new system will identify any problems that may have occurred during installation. If a problem occurs, the Water Utility service office will respond to correct the problem. If other damage occurs to the unit, such as the wire between the water meter and the reading unit is

cut or the register is taken off, the reading unit will signal that tampering has occurred. Only deliberate tampering will incur a service fee. Any other problems caused by the meter or installation of it will be covered by the Water Department.

The radio registers are powered by a 20 year battery. In rare cases, the battery may need changed. The City of Kendallville will assume all costs associated with routine maintenance and replacement of the meter and radio register components.