



# PSC Water Currents

The water conservation and efficiency newsletter of the  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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## PSC Approves AMI Opt-Out Policy for Madison Water Utility

Madison Water Utility (MWU) is currently upgrading all customer meters to a wireless technology network that will read and transmit water consumption on a daily basis. This Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system will enable customers to track their own consumption and be alerted to costly leaks. In addition, the new meters will facilitate the utility's change from billing every 6 months to every month. The more accurate consumption data gathered through the AMI and new billing systems will aid in system-wide leak detection and help the utility operate its system more efficiently. MWU's standard location for the new Electronic Reading Transmitter (ERT) portion of a water meter is on a basement ceiling joist directly above the water meter. Some MWU customers expressed concern over having AMI technology installed inside their homes and requested the ability to opt out of the utility's AMI program. The PSC does not require a utility to offer its customers an opt-out policy but does allow a utility to choose do so, provided they allocate fully the costs of owning, maintaining, reading and processing bills associated with a non-standard meter and confirm that an opt-out policy will not be detrimental to the goals of their meter program.

On October 24, 2012, the PSC approved an opt-out policy for MWU that offers customers two options. Option 1 allows a customer to request that the ERT portion of a meter be mounted on the outside of a residence/building instead of the standard inside mount installation. In all other aspects, the meter will be identical to the utility's standard meters. The one-time, non-standard meter charge for this service will be \$50.69 for the duration of the AMI project installation phase, which utility staff anticipates lasting into the summer of 2013. After the installation phase is complete, customers choosing Option 1 will be charged actual costs for an outside ERT installation. Option 2 allows customers to opt out of having an ERT installed anywhere on the property. These customers will have their non-standard meters read on a quarterly basis, but they will be billed monthly based on estimated reads. The monthly charge for this service will be \$7.78. Details of the utility's AMI opt-out policy can be found on MWU's website at: [Madison Water Utility AMI Op-Out Policy](#)

## **Wisconsin's Kohler Co. Named WaterSense Manufacturer Partner of the Year**

A well-known leader in the kitchen and bath industry, Wisconsin-based Kohler Co. once again received the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense Manufacturer Partner of the Year Award for 2012 in recognition of its efforts surrounding the education and awareness of water issues. In 2008, Kohler was the first company to earn EPA's WaterSense Manufacturer Partner of the Year Award. The company received the Partner of the Year award again in 2009 and was lauded with Excellence Awards in 2010 and 2011.

One of Kohler's initiatives noted by the WaterSense program this year was the "Wasting Water is Weird" public service announcement campaign that Kohler planned, sponsored and executed with several other organizations in the industry. This campaign, which included a large social media and web component, was a bold and humorous way to reach consumers with the water conservation message. In addition, Kohler used product placement in several high-profile projects and locations to promote water conservation. These projects included ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition; Yellowstone National Park; The House in Innoventions at Epcot, Disney World, PUNCHouse, Lisa Ling's personal home focused on sustainable living; and the World Trade Center museum restrooms.

Another initiative highlighted by WaterSense was Kohler's introduction of the Numi toilet, Kohler's most water-efficient, dual-flush toilet that proves water efficiency can be integrated into luxury products without sacrificing performance or design. In addition, Kohler increased its WaterSense labeled showerhead offering by more than double, providing a multitude of new water saving designs to consumers. To learn more about EPA's 2012 WaterSense Partners of the Year, see [WaterSense Partners of the Year](#).

## **PSC, DNR Involved in Drought Planning Efforts**

In response to the drought that gripped much of the state this past summer, Governor Scott Walker declared a state of emergency in the affected counties and directed that all state agencies assist in the response (Executive Order #75). Following the Governor's directive, state agencies adopted measures to help minimize the drought's impact on Wisconsin residents. PSC staff was directed to facilitate, in accordance with state law, utility construction and emergency interconnections necessary to alleviate water shortages. However, due largely to proactive conservation practices and drought-specific measures that managed demand this summer, the state's water utilities were able to both protect customers from service problems and avoid the need for emergency construction and interconnection projects. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was also involved in drought response activities this summer, adopting an expedited review process for emergency requests for high capacity well and surface water withdrawal for agricultural purposes and providing advice to owners whose private wells were running dry.

In response to lessons learned this summer, Wisconsin Emergency Management is leading an interagency group to develop a drought annex to Wisconsin's Emergency Response Plan. The working group includes representatives from the PSC, along with the departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Health Services, and Natural Resources. The purpose of the annex is to provide perspective and guidance to state agencies in recognizing and responding to drought and minimizing its impacts on the state. The final annex is expected either late this year or early next year. Given the persistence into mid-November of abnormally dry or worse conditions in our state (see [Drought Conditions Persist](#)), the annex should prove to be a useful tool for coordinating drought response activities between state agencies.

## **EPA Releases "WaterSense at Work"**

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, commercial and institutional facilities such as stores, hospitals, schools, hotels and office buildings use 17 percent of the nation's public water supplies. To help the commercial and institutional sector reduce water use, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency created WaterSense at Work: Best Management Practices for Commercial and Institutional Facilities. The document is a compilation of water-saving tips and recommendations and includes ideas to help organizations of all sizes save water, energy, and operational costs by incorporating water-efficient products and practices. Visit the WaterSense website to access the guide, sector-specific fact sheets, case studies, and other useful resources: [WaterSense at Work](#).

### **About this newsletter**

Water Currents is published by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to provide information about water conservation-related news and events in Wisconsin. The newsletter is compiled and edited by Denise Schmidt, PSC Water Conservation Coordinator, (608) 266-1282.



To submit information for consideration in future newsletters, send an email to [Denise Schmidt](mailto:Denise.Schmidt@psc.wisconsin.gov). Include your name, organization, and contact information in the body of the message.

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