

Summer 2012

Peak Use Charge 101

## Prepared for the Peak

Now that summer is here, some of you may be wondering about the peak use charge and how it affects you. First, a little bit of background. Fairfax Water produces an average of 167 million gallons a day to meet the demand for water. But during hot summers we've had to produce up to 259 million gallons a day to meet the demand. Efforts by our customers to conserve water during our highest demand periods do help offset the need for additional capacity. Nonetheless we need to make sure that our treatment plants and storage capacity can meet this peak demand.



The peak use charge helps to recover the costs of ensuring that our treatment facilities can meet the peak demand. Only those customers whose water-use patterns place a peak demand on the water system are subject to the peak use charge. In specific terms, peak use charges apply only if your water consumption in the summer is greater than 1.3 times the amount of water you used during the winter quarter billing periods, or is 6,000 gallons more than your winter quarter water use.

Only two of your four quarterly bills are subject to peak use charges, those bills based on meter readings taken from June through November. *(cont. on page 3)*

2012 Annual Report on Your Water Quality

## Raise Your Glass

Have you ever wondered about the quality of the water you drink? If so, you're in luck. Fairfax Water has published the *2012 Annual Report on Your Water Quality*, which provides extensive information about your water.

The report was included with the inserts in *The Washington Post* on Sunday, June 3, and was mailed to customers who don't subscribe to the Post. If you did not receive a copy, you can see the entire report on our Web site at [www.fairfaxwater.org/water/water.htm](http://www.fairfaxwater.org/water/water.htm) or call 703-289-6019, TTY 711, to request a copy.

The report is provided by law as required under the right-to-know provisions of the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. But we go beyond what the law requires with both our report and our water quality testing.

In addition to the water quality data we must provide, you'll see that in 2011 our laboratory gathered 13,000 samples of water and tested for 350 parameters. You'll also notice that we did not violate any state or federal water quality regulations and we actually surpassed many of them.

How do we go the extra mile with the report? We add lots of information to make it easier for you to access our services. In the 2012 report, you can find out how

to get emergency information, keep your drains free of bacteria, and get information about your account at 3 a.m.

Reading about your water quality just might make you want to raise your glass - filled with ice water, of course!



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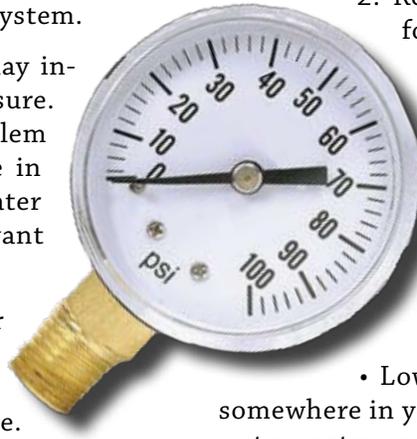
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# Talk About Pressure!

Water pressure seems to be a hot topic when it comes to our customers. Based on Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Water Works Regulations, Fairfax Water provides each customer with a minimum of 20 pounds per square inch (psi) of water pressure as measured at the water main in the street. Our distribution operators work around the clock to maintain pressure throughout the system.

Sometimes a water main break or a leak may interfere temporarily with your water pressure. If you have an ongoing water pressure problem (more than a full day), the culprit may be in your home. If you are experiencing low water pressure, here are some things you might want to check:

- If the pressure is low throughout your house, check that the master shut-off valve is fully open. This valve is usually near where the water service line enters the house.
- If your home has a pressure reducing valve (PRV), that can cause low pressure throughout the house. Most PRVs are bell-shaped devices installed in the water service line near the master shutoff valve. PRVs should be adjusted by a licensed plumber.
- If your home has a whole-house filter, it may be clogged.



• A sure sign that the problem is inside the house is that you have normal pressure in at least one location in the house. Typical things to check at fixtures include:

1. For sinks and toilets, make sure the supply-line valves are fully open.
2. Remove and inspect aerators in sink faucets for clogging.
3. Remove and inspect showerheads and flow restrictors for clogging.
4. Check toilet-fill valves for proper operation.
5. If only hot water is affected, make sure the water heater shutoff valve is fully open. If your water heater has a filter, make sure that it is not clogged.

• Low pressure also can be caused by a water leak somewhere in your home or in the service line between the water meter and your house. You can use your water meter to check for leaks. For information about finding leaks, visit [www.fairfaxwater.org/customer/detect.htm](http://www.fairfaxwater.org/customer/detect.htm) or call us at 703-698-5800, TTY 711.

If none of these culprits is causing your water pressure problems, call Customer Service at 703-698-5800, TTY 711, for help. ♦

## TapIt™ and Save

Beginning in June, you can take advantage of TapIt™ in Fairfax County and save time, money, and the environment. What is TapIt? It is a network of cafés and eateries that let you fill your reusable water bottle with great tasting tap water for free when you are away from your home or office. Fairfax Water is partnering with the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (MWCOG) and the TapIt organization to provide this service to our customers.

TapIt was founded in 2008 in New York City as a way to help keep plastic bottles out of landfills and streets by making tap water more available when we're on the go. The TapIt network now spans 22 states and includes more than 750 locations.



In June, businesses in Fairfax County will begin joining the TapIt network. By this fall, it is anticipated that 125 business locations will be offering to fill your water bottle for free. You can find these locations by using the search and mapping features at [www.tapitwater.com](http://www.tapitwater.com) on your computer or Smartphone or by downloading 'TapIt Water' from the iPhone App Store. If you have limited access to technology, you can download and print one of the TapIt city maps or simply look for the TapIt sticker on the windows of your favorite cafes. ♦

### We're Number 1 - Unfortunately

According to Back2Tap, the U.S. ranks first in bottled-water consumption despite having one of the most reliable public water systems in the world. Here are some other interesting facts about bottled water:

- Americans drink 140 million bottles of water a day and spend more than 11 billion dollars a year on bottled water.
- Bottled water costs more per gallon than gasoline.
- It takes 36 ounces of water to produce one 12-ounce plastic water bottle.
- Fifty percent of bottled water is repackaged tap water.
- It takes up to 2,000 times more energy to produce a bottle of water than to run a faucet.

## Nature's Sprinkler

We often hear from customers who are interested in setting up rain barrels in their yards. We applaud their efforts to be good stewards of our natural resources. Water captured in rain barrels can be used to water your lawn and keep your landscaping green. Before you install a rain barrel, however, be sure to learn more about how to prevent mosquitoes from breeding, how to determine if the rain barrel water is safe to use on your garden, and how to secure your rain barrel to protect young children and animals.

Two local organizations can provide information about rain barrels. The first organization is the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD). The NVSWCD's goal is to promote clean streams and protect natural resources. You can visit their Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/rainbarrels.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/rainbarrels.htm) or call 703-324-1460, TTY 711, for information about their rain barrel workshops.



The second resource for rain barrel information is the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB). The ICPRB's mission is to enhance, protect, and conserve the water and associated land resources of the Potomac River and its tributaries. They have food-grade rain barrels available for purchase and offer free workshops on using

your rain barrel safely and effectively. Find more information on the ICPRB Web site at [www.potomacriver.org/2012/rain-barrels](http://www.potomacriver.org/2012/rain-barrels) or call 301-984-1908 (ext. 109), TTY 711. 💧

## Prepared for the Peak (cont. from page 1)

Peak use is billed at a rate of \$3.20 per 1,000 gallons. This is in addition to the water usage charge of \$2.16 per 1,000 gallons that applies to all water consumption.

Your winter quarter consumption, or winter water use, serves as the basis for calculating the peak use charge. The winter quarter consumption is based on water use during the quarterly billing period ending in February, March, or April of each year. Your winter quarter consumption is updated annually on June 1. You can find your winter quarter consumption on each of your bills on the right-hand side just below the due date. If you are a new customer, the peak use charge will be applied to your bill only after you have established your first winter quarter consumption.

As you know, your water bill includes your sewer usage charges as billed by the Fairfax County Division of Wastewater Management. Your sewer usage fee is based on water use during the current billing period or the preceding winter quarter billing period, whichever is lower. This prevents you from being charged sewer rates on water used outdoors during the warmer months because this water flows into the ground or the storm-drains and is not treated by Wastewater Management.

If you have questions about the peak use charge, call us at 703-698-5800, TTY 711. For more information about your sewer usage charges, call the Fairfax County Division of Wastewater Management at 703-324-5015, TTY 711, or visit the Fairfax County Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/waste/water/sewerrate.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/waste/water/sewerrate.htm). 💧

## Glad You Asked!

**Q** . I received my water bill the last week of February. Enclosed was the winter issue of your newsletter, *Straight From The Tap*. On the back page was the feature "Mark Your Calendar" with eight events listed. Five of the events had transpired by the time I received my bill with the newsletter in it.

**A** . Confusion about the timing of our newsletter is understandable. We're happy to have the chance to explain.

In order to save on postage costs, the newsletter is sent with your bill instead of being mailed separately. Because we bill on a quarterly basis, each issue is distributed over a period of three months. For example, the winter issue begins distribution the first week in December and continues through the end of February.



While this is the most economical way to provide the newsletter, as you can imagine it presents a challenge in terms of timing. For this reason, we always include dates up to six months out in our calendar. Even so, some of the dates on the calendar will have passed by the time

those on the end of the billing cycle receive the newsletter.

We post the newsletter on our Web site as soon as it begins distribution with the bills. If you receive your bill later in the billing cycle and would like to see the newsletter earlier, each issue is posted on our Web site at [www.fairfaxwater.org](http://www.fairfaxwater.org), usually by the 6<sup>th</sup> of December., March, June, and September. Click on *News to Know* in the left-hand column – links to all issues of the newsletter are at the bottom of the *News to Know* page. 💧

*If you have a question, concern, or compliment, contact us at [pr@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:pr@fairfaxwater.org) or call 703-698-5600, TTY 711.*



**We Want to Know . . .**

If you have comments or suggestions about this publication, please e-mail us at [pr@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:pr@fairfaxwater.org), call us at 703-698-5600, or write to the address below:

*Straight From the Tap* Editor  
Fairfax Water  
8570 Executive Park Ave.  
Fairfax, VA 22031

**Important Numbers**

**Fairfax Water Services**

Questions about water service:  
703-698-5800

After Hours/Emergencies:  
703-698-5613

To report a water main break:  
703-698-5613 or send an e-mail to [watermainbreak@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:watermainbreak@fairfaxwater.org).

Questions about billing:  
703-698-5800

All other Fairfax Water departments: 703-698-5600

**Fairfax County Services**

24-hour trouble-response center for sewer back-ups or sluggish flow in a sink, toilet, or tub: 703-323-1211

Sanitary sewer back-ups and line maintenance: 703-250-2003

**Dig with C.A.R.E.**

Miss Utility at 1-800-552-7001 or 811

Use TTY 711 (*Virginia Relay*) for all numbers unless otherwise stated.

**KIDS' CORNER**

**HOW MUCH WATER?**

Draw a line matching each activity with the amount of water it requires.

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Taking a shower                             | A. 30 gallons     |
| 2. Watering the lawn                           | B. 180 gallons    |
| 3. Washing the dishes                          | C. 4-7 gallons    |
| 4. Washing clothes                             | D. ½ gallon       |
| 5. Flushing the toilet                         | E. 39,090 gallons |
| 6. Brushing teeth                              | F. 62,200 gallons |
| 7. Drinking                                    | G. 15-30 gallons  |
| 8. Producing one ton of steel                  | H. 9.3 gallons    |
| 9. Processing one can of fruit or vegetables   | I. 1 gallon       |
| 10. Manufacturing a new car and its four tires | J. 9-20 gallons   |



The Science Guy

Source: [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater)

Answers: 1-G, 2-B, 3-J, 4-A, 5-C, 6-I, 7-D, 8-F, 9-H, 10-E

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**June - Nov.**

Farmer's Market/Plant Clinics  
Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets) or call 703-642-0128, TTY 711, for complete schedule

**Wed., July 4**

Fairfax Water offices closed for Independence Day

**Sept. 1 - Oct. 31**

2012 Virginia Waterways Cleanup  
Find more information at [www.longwood.edu/cleanva/iccva.htm](http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva/iccva.htm)

**Mon., Sept. 3**

Fairfax Water offices closed for Labor Day

**Mon., Oct. 8**

Fairfax Water offices closed for Columbus Day

**Mon., Nov. 12**

Fairfax Water office closed for Veterans Day

**Thurs. and Fri., Nov. 22 & 23**

Fairfax Water office closed for Thanksgiving

**Mon., Dec. 24**

Fairfax Water offices closed at noon for Christmas holiday

**Tues., Dec. 25**

Fairfax Water offices closed for Christmas Day



Fairfax Water is a public, non-profit water authority serving nearly 1.7 million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Fort Belvoir, Herndon, Dulles, and Alexandria.



**Water-Saving Tip**

If your children want to cool off this summer, set up the sprinkler in an area where your lawn most needs watering. For more information and tips on saving water, visit [www.wateruseitwisely.com](http://www.wateruseitwisely.com).