

Frankston East meter exchange and trial 2018

Questions and answers

Why is South East Water exchanging my meter?

We're continuing our trials of new meter technologies in the Frankston East region. The new meters we're trialling will be able to record and send information wirelessly through a telecommunications network on a daily basis. This differs to your current meter that was installed for our previous trial, which can only transmit data a short distance by radio signal.

If you were part of our previous trial that commenced in October 2016 to explore the network benefits from digital meters, thank you. The trial gave us valuable information about leaks in the water network and at customer properties, allowing us to complete works to reduce water loss in our network and work with customers so they could take timely action to repair leaks.

At one property, a leaking toilet cistern was losing 80 litres of water per hour, which is equivalent to approximately an extra \$700 on a quarterly bill. We were able to detect this thanks to the regular water usage readings the digital meter provided. With an analogue meter, the leak may only have been noticed once a manual meter read took place and the customer received a letter warning them their bill looks significantly higher than normal. Unfortunately, by then the leak could have been going for 3 months.

We also detected and repaired a 60 litre per minute leak in one of our water mains, meaning this water is no longer being wasted and there is no longer damage being caused under the road.

We're continuing our trials to test the full capabilities of an end-to-end solution so that in future we may be able to provide customers with timely information about their water use, and to help us manage our water network even more sustainably.

How will digital water meters benefit me in the future?

Because digital meters can collect and relay information, they have the potential to provide you with more timely information about:

- your water usage, enabling you to be more aware of how much water you're using in near real-time
- potential leak alerts, so you can fix the leak quickly, saving you water and saving on your bill.

Our customer research has found most customers believe that more timely information about their water usage will help them manage their consumption and lead to a more sustainable future.

What is the benefit of doing these trials?

Melbourne's three water utilities are exploring digital meter technology because we believe there are benefits for customers, the community, the environment and our business.

These include:

- Identifying potential water leaks for customer's at their properties
- Identifying water leaks in the water network (on our side of the water meter)
- Improved efficiency from being able to repair leaks and fix pipe failures or damage before they can affect customers
- Reducing costs associated with pipe repairs and damage to property
- Reducing the pressure on Melbourne's water supplies and helping save water loss so there is more water available for customers and the environment.

How long will the program run for?

The program is expected to run for twelve to eighteen months. Because meter technology is rapidly changing, we aim to continue to test new equipment to better understand emerging opportunities.

Will this affect my bill?

There won't be any difference to your bill or your service as a result of the meter exchange. Your normal quarterly billing process will remain, which will mean once every three months a meter reader will take a manual reading from the water meter on your property.

Why has this area been chosen? Is this happening across the network?

This trial is a continuation of the existing network balance trial area in Frankston East, which commenced in October 2016. This area was chosen due to its easily definable boundaries, and the availability of the telecommunication technology required.

What is a digital meter?

A digital water meter operates in the same way to current mechanical meters, the main difference is they are battery powered and able to transmit data when supported with a telecommunications network, whereas mechanical meters require a manual reading.

Why does the ability to transmit data help?

The ability to transmit water meter data means access to more readings, more frequently.

This would offer greater insight and timely information about water use and water loss in the water network and at customers' properties – enabling us and customers to take action and repair leaks. In recent trials of meter technology, access to regular water usage data enabled us to identify a water leak at a customer's property of 80 litres per hour, which is equivalent to approximately an extra \$700 on a quarterly bill. Without the regular water use data, this customer may have only realised there may have been a problem when they received their quarterly bill.

How is the data transmitted?

Digital water meters communicate information through low level radiofrequency waves, a form of electromagnetic energy present all around us from natural and man-made sources.

During our trial, the digital meters will only transmit data once a day for around 80 seconds. The meters are estimated to emit approximately 0.2 watts compared to a mobile phone which can emit up to 6 watts.

The meters and communications technologies we're trialling are also likely to produce less than a twentieth of the radiofrequency power measured from a digital electricity smart meter, and transmit information at much lower energy levels (e.g. 200mw compared to 1,000mw).

The digital meters we're trialling meet the necessary standards and have the required approvals for use in Australia.

What kind of data are you collecting?

The data is a number (in litres) that is read from your water meter. It tells us the volume of water going through the water meter. This data is read and logged by your meter every 30 minutes, but the digital meters will only transmit this data once a day for around 80 seconds.

How do you store the data securely?

We adopt the highest standards to safeguard your information. Anything we collect we make sure that, as per our usual practice, it's collected, used, handled and stored in accordance with our privacy policy, which strictly complies with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. More information is available in our privacy charter on our website southeastwater.com.au

Will my private details and usage information be safe?

We take your privacy very seriously. We manage your information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. No personal information is stored on the digital metering device.

I only had my meter exchanged a couple of years ago. What's wrong with it?

Meter technology is rapidly changing, so we're continuing to test new equipment to better understand emerging opportunities. These new meters will be able to record and send information wirelessly through a telecommunications network on a daily basis. This differs to your current meter, which can only transmit data a short distance by radio signal. Although your meter will change, there will be no change to your current billing schedule, how we read your meter or how you receive your bill.

Do the new digital meters meet health and safety guidelines?

We're trialling digital meters and communications technologies that are well within the Australian safety standards for electromagnetic emissions from radio based devices. These are regulated by the Australian Media and Communication Authority. During the trial, the digital meters will only transmit data once a day for around 80 seconds. The meters are estimated to emit approximately 0.2 watts compared to a mobile phone which can emit up to 6 watts.

Will my water quality be affected by the digital meter?

No. A water meter has no bearing on water quality.

Will I be alerted if there is a leak on my property?

If the meter reading data received from your property indicates a potential leak, we will inform you so you can investigate it further. We'll also step you through some checks you can perform to help identify what may be the cause of the potential leak.

I'm a tenant, do I need to ask my landlord/the property owner before you exchange the meter?

As your home's water meter is the property of South East Water, your landlord's permission is not required for us to exchange it.

If you have further questions or would like to discuss the trial with a team member, please contact us on 9552 3401 between 9.00 am – 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday or email support@sew.com.au.