THE CITY OF COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

utility update

Summer 2024

Utility Meter Replacement Project Continues

In January 2023, the Department of Public Utilities kicked off the water and power meter replacement project, covering several neighborhoods: the University District, Milo-Grogan, Grandview Heights, parts of Upper Arlington, and sections of Near East, East, and North Central Columbus. So far, we've replaced about 20,000 of our 300,000 water meters. In 2024, the focus is on the southern part of Upper Arlington and Grandview Heights for water meter replacements and to also expand into the Greater Hilltop Area, Franklinton, and continue in the Near East. Additionally, we plan to start replacing our 17,000 city power meters by the end of 2024.

Why the need? Columbus' meters are aged and parts were becoming obsolete. The upgraded meters will provide many benefits including enhanced customer service, improved operational efficiency, and increased meter accuracy. After a new customer portal is completed, consumers will have options like signing up for alert notifications. Such features can help customers save resources and money by flagging continuous consumption and help identify potential issues in need of repair. Other features will allow customers to track daily usage patterns to help with conservation practices, potentially also lowering your bills. The upgraded meters will allow for faster city power restoration, with immediate outage notifications to be sent to the city.

The department has contracted with Utility Metering Solutions (UMS) to perform the work. When the contractors will be coming to your neighborhood, you will receive information in the mail.

Water meter replacements will require an appointment to be made within two weeks of

Enhanced Meter Project
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notification. Scheduling can be done online or by phone. City power meter replacements will not require an appointment; however, customers will still be notified.

Contractors will be in marked vehicles and carry Columbus contractor identification.

Participation by every Columbus water and power customer is required. The installations will be performed at no additional cost to customers.

To learn more about the project, please visit columbusemp.org. For any questions, please call 833-232-3202. For updates, please follow us on social media (see below).

Please follow us on Instagram (columbuspublicutilities), Facebook (Columbus Public Utilities), Twitter/X (@CDPU) and visit columbus.gov/Services/Public-Utilities

Frequently Asked Questions about Sewer Overflows

What are CSOs and SSOs?
Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are discharges of wastewater and stormwater from the combined sewer system that serves the downtown and surrounding older areas. Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) are discharges of wastewater from the sanitary sewer system. Sewer overflows can occur at various discharge points along waterways when volume temporarily exceeds capacity, typically during wet weather.

Why do sewer overflows exist?
Many years ago, prior to the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Clean Water Act, it was common design for such relief points to exist in a sewer system to prevent backups into homes during wet weather and major rain events.

Are overflows an issue in other cities?
Yes. Solving wet-weather issues is the biggest challenge facing most sewer districts today.

What is Columbus doing about it?
The Department of Public Utilities developed a Wet Weather Management Plan in 2005, identifying an estimated $2.5 billion in capital improvements over 40 years on the combined and sanitary sewer collection systems and at the two wastewater treatment plants. To specifically target SSOs, Blueprint Columbus was developed to address overflows by lining home sewer laterals, preventing stormwater infiltration. That stormwater is then redirected through new downspouts and sump pumps to green infrastructure before filtering into our rivers and streams. Please see columbus.gov/utilities/clean-rivers and columbus.gov/blueprint for more information.

BLUE PRINT COLUMBUS
Cleaner streams.
Stronger neighborhoods.

How will central Ohio residents benefit?
Anything that improves our environment benefits our community. Solving wet weather issues also reduces sewer backups into basements. If you live in a Blueprint neighborhood, you may be eligible for roof water redirection, lateral lining, and sump pump installation at no direct cost to you.

How are sewer improvements financed?
Sanitary sewer rate revenue and low-interest loan programs, such as the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund through the Ohio EPA, finance these infrastructure improvements. The Clean River surcharge on your Columbus sewer bill is used to repay the debt incurred on the projects. An affordability analysis was conducted to determine the community's ability to finance the plan, and revenue needs are reviewed annually.

Where are the overflow points located?
Discharge locations are along the Olentangy River from Worthington to First Avenue, on the Scioto River from around Neil Avenue to S.R. 104, and on Alum Creek from Main Street to I-70. The locations are marked with signage.

How often do they overflow?
Frequency and volume depend on the amount of rainfall and other factors. Visit columbus.gov/csosso for more information.

Should residents report overflows and backups?
Yes, please report any suspected overflows or basement backups in Columbus immediately to the 24-hour Sewer Maintenance Operations Center at 614-645-7102 or through 311. Reporting a basement sewer backup promptly is also the first step necessary to determine eligibility for the Project Dry Basement backflow prevention program for single and two-family homes in Columbus. If your home is determined to be eligible, an application will be mailed, or find it online: columbus.gov/PDB.

If I see an overflow sign, is it safe to swim near it?
No. First, be aware that swimming in local waters is prohibited by city code and is considered a drowning risk in some locations due to lowhead dams and utility crossings. To avoid possible negative health effects, always avoid water contact (including boating, wading, fishing, and swimming) near a sewer overflow location, especially following periods of heavy rain. For more information on possible health and environmental effects, please visit: epa.gov/npdes/2004-npdes-cso-report-congress.

Can residents help prevent overflows?
Yes. Please check your downspouts and foundation drains to confirm they are not connected to the sanitary sewer. These outdated connections, common in homes built before 1963, add excess water to the system during rain events and contribute to overflows/basement backups. For instructions on how to disconnect downspouts, please visit the sewer publications in our document library at columbus.gov/utilities. If your foundation drain is connected to the sanitary sewer, you may need a sump pump to direct it into the stormwater system.

Properly disposing of grease also helps prevent sewer blockages. Place grease in the trash in a sealed container such as a coffee can; do not pour down the drain. Never flush disposable wipes, even those labeled "flushable" because they do not disintegrate and can cause clogs. Additionally, please attend to any needed repairs on your home sewer line to prevent excess water from entering the system through cracks (often caused by tree roots).