

The Pipeline



Issue 28

Keeping Lakewood Water District Customers Informed

Spring, 2002

"SERVING THIS COMMUNITY SINCE 1943"

From Your Commissioners

Customer Advisory Poll on Fluoridation of our Water Supply

Dear Lakewood Water District Customer,

Your Board of Commissioners is seeking your opinion on what course of action we should take regarding the fluoridation of our community's water supply.

Currently, Lakewood Water District, like most other water systems in Pierce County, does not add fluoride to its water supply. The Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health has expressed a desire to see fluoride added to all public water supplies in Pierce County. The Health Board wants to deal with the high rate of tooth decay-related cavities in the teeth of children, many of whose families require public assistance. They are planning to issue a mandate that will require area utilities to fluoridate.

We have studied the Health Board proposal and determined that it will cost Lakewood Water District over \$880,000 in capital costs the first year and approximately \$125,000 in maintenance and operational costs each year thereafter to fluoridate our water. Our engineers also have cautioned us that adding fluoride may alter the corrosivity (measured as pH) of our water enough to require that corrosion control chemicals be added to our water supply as well. This may add up to another \$2,250,000 in first year costs as well as additional annual operation and maintenance costs to the Lakewood Water District. In terms of what this would mean on your individual water bill, each \$35,000 in added costs works out to about a 1 percent increase in rates. Fluoridation would result in an increase in your water bill of approximately 7 to 25 percent. The spread is so large because we would have to sell bonds to pay the upfront costs, and both the need for corrosion control and the interest rates on the bonds would be variable factors.

Obviously, we're talking about a significant amount of money. There are alternative ways to provide fluoride protection to children in our community at far lower cost, such as free fluoride drops and free toothbrush/toothpaste kits to those in need. These supplies could be provided for a tiny fraction of the cost of fluoridating the water supply. It would probably work out to about a 1 percent rate increase.

Our attorneys don't think the Board of Health has the legal authority to order fluoridation, but the order would have to be tested in court.

However, before we decide upon any course of action, we wanted to ask you, our ratepayers, what you would like to see us do regarding fluoridation. Please answer the attached survey form, cut it out, and return it with your water payment. Thank you for your assistance and we look forward to hearing your opinion.

From Your Commissioners

PLEASE CUT OUT AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR PAYMENT

Lakewood Water District Customer Advisory Poll on Fluoridation of our Water Supply

YES, I would like to see fluoride added to the Lakewood water system.

NO, I would not like to see fluoride added to the Lakewood water system.

UNDECIDED. I would like to have more information before I form an opinion.

Comments: _____

SPOTLIGHT:



Ronda joined the District January 2001 as a customer service representative. She is responsible for starting our Automatic Payment Program and assists with the District's backflow program. Ronda enjoys implementing new procedures that better serve our customers.

Ronda was raised in the Tacoma area, graduated from Foss High School, and now lives in the Puyallup area with her husband and three children.

Zac Smith has been a water utility worker with the District since April 2001. His duties include a variety of jobs such as maintenance and repair on valves & hydrants. He also assists with the District's annual flushing program. Zac enjoys helping our customers with any problems they may have.



Zac graduated from Eatonville High School and participates in a variety of outdoor activities such as snow skiing and football. Zac is 25, single, likes to eat a lot of ice cream and has a robotic dog named Harold.

GET READY FOR SPRING

Does your lawn have a drinking problem? Healthy lawns in this area require a maximum of less than 30 inches of water during the growing season. This is equivalent to about an inch every week, including natural rainfall.

Over-watering is the most common problem underlying numerous plant problems. Too much water is not only wasteful, but also increases fertilizer needs and the likelihood of lawn and garden insect and disease infestations.

Remember:

- Water just 1" per week
- Water before 10am or after 9pm

New Rates in Effect April 1st

In January, the Board of Commissioners voted to enact a 10.0% rate increase effective April 1, 2002. The increase translates to an additional \$1.14 on a basic bill, moving from \$11.51 to a new rate of \$12.65. Those customers using over 800 cubic feet of water will pay slightly more. Even with this increase, the rates Lakewood Water District customers pay will remain less than half the regional average and continue to be the lowest rates in our area.

The additional revenue generated will be used to offset the increased power costs required to pump water throughout the system and the costs of inflation. The District will also continue its commitment to our ongoing program of water main replacements and service upgrades. We are now moving into sections of the District built during the post-WWII boom that ran throughout most of 1950's – but which are now 50 years old. Because of these upgrades, we have seen dramatically increased improvement in our "fire-flow" capacity.

WEBSITE:

For those of you with Internet access, look for us at:



www.lakewood-water-dist.org

We have valuable information for our customers. You'll find tips on water conservation, answers to many of your questions, information on current legislative issues that may have an impact on our customers and other important topics. We have our automatic payment (EFT) form available for our customers to sign-up for this easy method to pay your water bill. We have an employment page with current job openings and related information. Please contact David Logan in our personnel department at 588-4423 for additional job information or questions.

We look forward to seeing you in cyberspace and hope you will give us feedback on how we are doing.

IMPORTANT BACKFLOW NEWS:

Installing an Underground Sprinkler System This Summer?

If you are planning on installing an underground sprinkler system in your yard this summer, there are some important things to keep in mind - whether you do the job yourself or hire a contractor.

All underground irrigation systems are required by law to have the appropriate backflow assemblies installed on these systems. A permit must be obtained at the Lakewood Water District office.

Most backflow assemblies are required to be tested by a state certified backflow assembly tester upon installation and every year thereafter. The Lakewood Water District also must visually inspect the assembly upon installation.

For do-it-yourselfers, we recommend that you contact the District before starting your project. We will be happy to assist you in planning.

For those of you hiring contractors, let them know that you expect them to obtain the permit, contact the District, and arrange for the backflow test with a certified tester. If your contractor is unable to do so, we can provide a list of certified testers that you may contact.

Not obtaining a permit or testing is a violation of the law and could result in problems for your system.

If you have any questions, please contact Miles Landon at 588-4423 or e-mail Miles at mlandon@lakewood-water-dist.org.

Published by Lakewood Water District

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

President: Larry Ghilarducci

Vice President: William Philip

Secretary: Mark Hullinger

Manager: Randy Black

The Board of Commissioners meets the 3rd Monday of each month at the District office - 3:30 pm.

Public Welcome

