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Independence Day 2018

In observance of Independence Day, our office will be closed Wednesday, July 4, 2018. While our office may not be open, we are always there for you. If you experience an outage, trouble with your service, or would like to pay your bill by phone, please contact us at (888) 774-8272.

Upcoming board meetings

June 13 | July 11 | August 8

The Vera Water and Power board of directors meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the District office. Meeting agendas and minutes are posted at verawaterandpower.com. You are welcome to attend.

Protect power poles from weed whackers

Please do what you can to avoid damaging power poles with your line trimmers. Every year, these gouges cause untold damage requiring the costly replacement of power poles earlier than necessary.

Take your time when using your weed eater. Many line trimmers let you throttle down the power and take a slower approach. Angle the tool down toward the ground to cut the weeds at ground level. This reduces the chances of hitting the power pole. Avoiding the power pole means your string will last longer, too. The best method is to simply trim around the power pole by hand.

Weed whacker gouges cause untold damage requiring the costly replacement of power poles earlier than necessary.



Take a bite out of summer water demand

ADDRESSES WITH ODD NUMBERS ASKED TO START SPRINKLERS AT 2 A.M.

In the wee hours of the morning on a hot summer day last July, there was a time when every well in our district was pumping water at the same time.

This meant there wasn't a pump station in reserve in the event of a large fire or a mechanical breakdown.

Every summer, just like clockwork — **between 3:30 a.m. and 4 a.m.** — the amount of pumped water quadruples from 7,000 gallons per minute to 25,000-30,000 gallons per minute when everyone's sprinklers automatically kick-on.

By 6:30 a.m., as the sprinklers turn off, demand for water drops low enough that one of the water pumps can be shut down. By 8 a.m., the demand for water is back down to half of the peak demand.

It is clear automatic sprinkler systems cause this peak for water pumping. Many experts recommend starting your system at 4 a.m. for the optimum watering results. While this may be true, it causes system-wide problems delivering water to everyone at the same time.

There are two solutions to the problem, (1) we could increase our pumping capacity, or (2) we could spread out the peak, so we can meet demand with our existing pumps.

The first option is easiest; however, it is *very expensive* and requires construction of new equipment which could cost between two and four million dollars. This cost would eventually increase your rates.

The second option is much less expensive but requires the cooperation of many of our customers.

We are asking customers who have an address ending with an odd number to move the start time of their irrigation system to 2 a.m. This could spread out the peak and delay expensive construction by many years.

HELP KEEP YOUR RATES LOW. If your address ends with an odd number, please consider starting your sprinkler system at 2 a.m.

This is a 100 percent voluntary program. We won't be policing or monitoring any one's individual water use. We aren't asking you to reduce the amount of time you are watering, **just the time you are starting your sprinklers.**

Thank you for your help. We will know soon if this makes a change. For updates, please check verawaterandpower.com.

Vera absorbs BPA surcharge costs for fish passage

On June 1, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which supplies 92 percent of our power raised their rates to cover the cost of additional water being spilled over the dams in compliance with a federal court order. The cost of this additional spill is approximately \$40,000,000 for the four-month period of June through September. This cost is from the loss of power generation that would have resulted had the water run through the dams instead spilled over the top.

NO CHANGE TO VERA CUSTOMERS' ELECTRIC BILLS

If this cost had to be passed on to you, it would have resulted in a surcharge of about 6 percent on your electric bill for these four months. This would have been in addition to the almost 20 percent of your monthly bill that currently supports fish and wildlife programs. Fortunately, **there won't be a surcharge for the cost of the spill** on your electric bill.

BPA was able to find cost savings in other fish and wildlife programs that reduced BPA's overall expense of the spill to just over \$10,000,000. When Vera's portion of this cost was calculated, it left an increase of about 1.5

percent to our rates. Through tight budgeting and good financial performance, we were able to absorb this cost without substantial impact to the District's financial position.

Another spill has been ordered for next spring. It is too early to be able to predict how much that future spill will cost or what kinds of savings could offset those expenses. For now, we are pleased this summer's increase in our power supply cost, which is our largest expense, will not result in a surcharge on your electric bill.



Snake River Sockeye photo courtesy of BPA

Sprinkler tune-up season

It doesn't take much to prepare your sprinkler system for warm weather watering. Sprucing up is simple with these four steps:

1. Inspect sprinkler heads for clogs or damage. If you aren't sure what to look for, contact an irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program to audit your system for leaks.
2. Connect sprinkler heads to pipes and hoses securely to avoid water loss. If you notice any pooling of water in your landscaping, there may be a leak in your system.
3. Direct sprinklers toward your landscaping and avoid spraying sidewalks and driveways.
4. Select a WaterSense labeled weather-based irrigation controller to make sprinkler scheduling a no-brainer. By telling your system when and how much to water based on local weather conditions, a controller can help eliminate outdoor water waste.

By taking a little time to perform maintenance on your sprinkler system, your landscape and your wallet will thank you.



More water-saving ideas can be found at verawaterandpower.com

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



For the first time in decades, we are asking for your voluntary help with a water system peaking issue. There is an issue meeting the demand for water when all of the

automatic sprinkler systems simultaneously come on at 4 a.m. This is a good time to water because it cuts down on losses to evaporation and helps prevent mold. However, by spreading out the starting times for watering, we have the potential to save millions of dollars, or at the very least, delay the expenses by many years without impacts to your watering goals.

Please read the article and consider joining the effort. If you have an odd address and you experience difficulty changing the start time, please call us or check our website for information. Although we are not sprinkler experts, we have a couple of dozen controllers on our system and are willing to try to help you with the time change. Our website has links to some sprinkler system controller manufacturers' directions.

If 500 customers switch to an earlier start time — about one in five of you with odd addresses — we can keep the equivalent of our largest well in reserve during the peak period. Thanks for considering being part of this solution.

We are pleased to announce we will not be raising rates due to the BPA spill. It is strange to announce we are *not doing something*, especially since this issue had the potential to be a significant expense to you. Fortunately, this was mitigated at many levels.

The BPA article (top left) explains the causes and costs of the spill. When we discussed the surcharge with our board and presented our mid-year budget performance and success in meeting our annual financial goals, the board decided to absorb these new costs into our existing rates. This was a positive reflection of the financial condition of the system.

Thanks for your continued support in the efforts to supply you with the best possible service at a reasonable price. In this instance, the truly neighborhood nature of our system has the potential to save us all a lot of money and continue to meet our service goals.

Kevin Wells | General Manager