



## It's time to test your irrigation or sprinkler backflow

Don't forget to schedule your annual backflow device test with an approved backflow assembly tester. **Forms can be found on our website by searching for "backflow" at [verawaterandpower.com](http://verawaterandpower.com).**

## Look for leaks in your sprinkler system

When your water system's running, look for obvious problems: areas getting too much or too little water, leaks, broken sprinkler heads, or a leaking water meter. If the sprinkler system isn't working properly, now's the time to make those repairs.

Some repairs are simple and can be done yourself. Others may need to be done by a pro. While Vera doesn't provide those services, there are many resources available in the community.

If your water meter is leaking, give us a jingle at 888-774-8272 or shoot us an email at [info@verawaterandpower.com](mailto:info@verawaterandpower.com).

While checking your system for leaks, also consider purchasing sprinkler system backflow prevention devices. These devices connect to your sprinkler system and serve as safety mechanisms to prevent contaminants from entering the water supply.



## CAN YOU DIG IT?

Even if you have previously had underground utilities marked, utilities can shift. So, it's best to call before starting each and every new project. **CALL 8-1-1 BEFORE YOU DIG.**



**A LOT OF FACTORS CAN ACCOUNT FOR A HIGHER-THAN-EXPECTED BILL FROM VERA WATER AND POWER. TYPICALLY, HIGHER ENERGY USE IS THE CULPRIT, BUT IT'S NOT ALWAYS THE ONLY CAUSE.**

## Navigating your Vera Water and Power statement

**WITH LOWER THAN NORMAL TEMPERATURES THIS WINTER, ENERGY USE JUMPED. BUT THERE MAY BE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR A HIGHER BILL.**

This winter was one for the record books. During February, the average temperature was 11 degrees colder than normal making it the coldest February in 100 years. So, it makes sense your energy bill may have increased. Heaters had to work harder to keep our houses warm. Add the extreme cold to the fact that you could receive your power bill up to 45 days after you have used the power, a higher than expected bill can be a surprise—especially once weather has warmed up.

A higher-than-expected bill could be the result of factors other than extra energy used to heat your home. For instance:

- **Was there a "balance due" from the previous month?** The "amount due" is the balance of this month's charges plus any unpaid charges from the previous month. This may be why the balance due is higher than expected.
- **Is your "balance due" for charges other than electricity?** Sometimes, especially in late fall or early winter, you may see a charge for annual water use. Check that your bill is just for an "electric" charge and not other charges.
- **Are there fees or late charges?** A late fee or other charges not related to energy use may be included on your bill. These will impact the amount due, but are not related to the amount of energy used.
- **Consider the number of billing days.** Your current bill may reflect a longer billing period. More days of energy use, especially when it is colder, will impact your bill.
- **Was your electric meter reading estimated?** When inclement weather

conditions make it difficult or impossible for us to safely read your meter, we may estimate your electric consumption based on historical data. If the estimate was low, we will true-up your energy use and your next monthly bill may be higher than usual. Or if the estimate was high, we will true-up your energy use and your next monthly bill may be lower than usual.

- **Is your consumption comparable to last year's use at this time?** Your bill statement shows an energy consumption history chart that compares the previous year's consumption to your current consumption. Is the year-to-year comparison similar? If not, has anything changed from this year to last year? For a list of questions to help identify significant changes in your energy use or lifestyle, check out [verawaterandpower.com/consumptioninventory](http://verawaterandpower.com/consumptioninventory).

Visit our website for helpful tips to control your energy use and be sure to sign up for Vera's monthly e-newsletter with energy conservation articles and tools.

## Vera is governed by your neighbors

### Have you considered serving on the Vera Water and Power board of directors?

As a community-owned utility, we are governed by a five-person board of directors. These five people are Vera customers who own property in the district. They give of their time to direct the policies for our utility. They are elected to serve staggered, three-year terms. An election is held on the second Tuesday in December each year. If you've ever thought about joining the board or know of someone who would be an excellent candidate, a declaration of candidacy and petition for nomination must be filed by 5:00 p.m. on the first Monday in November. Of course, if only one candidate files for office, no election is held, and the single candidate is declared elected.

To learn more about how your district works, how your board functions and how to participate, all our policies are available on our website. You are always welcome to attend the monthly board meetings.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

We are a not-for-profit, publicly-owned utility. Our board of directors—made up of Vera Water and Power customers—meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the district office. Meeting dates, times, and agendas are posted on our website, Facebook, and Twitter.

## Snail mail can be slow

### Mail sent locally could take longer than expected to arrive at Vera Water and Power



We have had reports over the past year that some local mail has taken up to 10 days to reach us.

This came to our attention because several customers asked us if we had held their payments before posting them to their Vera accounts. The answer was no. We always post payments immediately upon receipt.

Our best guess is that occasionally it is taking mail longer to be delivered to us than in the past.

In response to your concerns, we contacted the U.S. Postal Service to see if anything has changed in mail service in Spokane Valley. The regional postmaster's customer service representative told us that mail sent from Spokane Valley is processed at the Spokane distribution center on Spotted Road (near the Spokane airport).

USPS tracks delivery times and assured us mail should be delivered in about two business days. They were surprised to learn that some mail was taking so long to arrive and are continuing to investigate the issue.

In the meantime, please remember that your Vera Water and Power bill is due upon receipt. If you are paying by mail and worried about the timing of the U.S. Postal Service's delivery, consider paying your bill online, in person, or in the dropbox at our office.

## Skip the post office, and pay online

You can use online services to set up one-time or recurring payments to pay your monthly bill, such as our online payment system or your bank's online bill pay service. Visit [verawaterandpower.com](http://verawaterandpower.com) to sign up for our online payment service.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



As our late winter turns to spring, the last of the big winter bills will be hitting your accounts. Even though the weather looks great, the bill you are receiving now started accumulating power usage as much as 45 days ago.

It was a little colder back then, so energy usage was higher. Our bill for wholesale electricity from BPA was about 30 percent higher than the one before, so we know our customers were really using more power.

If this last winter bill is extraordinarily high, and you need some extra time to pay the bill, call our credit experts immediately. We may have tools to help you through this late winter surge. However, these tools work best before the 30-day payment period expires.

This year, we are preparing for a significant number of new homes and apartments to be built in the district, continuing the trend of previous years. In our continuing efforts to improve Vera's electric system reliability, we plan to complete the next phase of rebuilding the power line on Sprague Avenue between Evergreen and Adams Roads. When you see our trucks, please give them a break.

To address our continuing water system demands, we have completed the design phase and have begun material acquisition to upgrade one of our pump stations to increase output from 4,500 gallons per minute (gpm) to 7,000 gpm. This work should start next winter, so we will have one more watering season when we ask for your cooperation in adjusting the start times of your sprinkler systems. Watering time reminders will be sent to customers prior to watering season.

In upcoming newsletters, we will include information regarding our board of directors, the board election process and the district organization. We exist for only one reason — to provide service to our customers. Vera has no shareholders or other stakeholders. Sometimes, this is easy, and sometimes it becomes very difficult, but our purpose remains the same.

Representatives of the people we serve, these board members are elected from customers of the district. Board members are charged with balancing the immediate needs of customers with the duty to create and maintain an organization that will stand the test of time. So far, with 111 years under our belts, board members have balanced these issues with a great degree of success. Please pass along your congratulations to your board members while discussing the difficult issues of the day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. S. O.' or similar, written in a cursive style.