

MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



THE FLOW N' GO

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✓ YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM TO SAVE AND

If you have an irrigation system to water your yard and plants, early spring is the best time to perform an annual inspection and maintenance to make sure that everything is in working order. It is far better to discover any leaks before you start watering than after you have received a high water bill.

Just a few simple steps will go a long way towards saving water, money and preventing a mid-summer landscape catastrophe.

First, make sure that spring has actually arrived. Use a screw driver or other implement to confirm that the soil is frost-free to a depth of at least 12 inches. Starting your sprinkler system while the ground is still frozen can cause damage to the underground pipes.

Next, do a spring cleaning of the sprinkler controls and programmer. Dust away any cobwebs and check the timer and settings. Replace the back-up battery every six months.



Check the sprinkler heads for any dirt, rocks or other debris that may block their operation.

Inspect the sprinkler heads, nozzles, valves and pipes for any damage and replace those that are chipped, worn or cracked. These parts are no match for lawn mowers, snow plows and the neighbor's dog.

When you are confident that there are no leaks and that everything will work properly, you can open the main water valve to your irrigation system—but do so slowly. The initial high-pressure surge that results from turning on the water too quickly can result in damaged valves and burst pipes.

Even easier: have your irrigation company check and open your sprinkler for the season.

(It's a good idea to periodically read your meter, keeping an eye out for any unusual increases in usage that could be an indication of a leak.)

You are now all set for summer watering. But is your irrigation system in compliance with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection regulations?

The Mass DEP Cross Connection Control Program 310CMR22.22 (9) **requires** that all in-ground irrigation systems have a backflow prevention device installed.

Approved devices include a testable pressure vacuum breaker or a reduced pressure zone backflow prevention device. Double-check valve backflow prevention devices are *not* approved by the DEP.

If you have any questions concerning the required backflow devices, please contact the Water and Sewer Commission office at the telephone number to the right.

SOAKER HOSES: THE POOR MAN'S IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Can't afford to have an irrigation system installed? A soaker hose is your next best bet for your flower and vegetable gardens.

Soaker hoses are made from recycled rubber and plastic and are designed to let water weep through the porous walls of the hose and onto the soil surface. The hose is laid around flowers and plants so that the water goes directly to the plants' roots and doesn't evaporate.

But don't let it run all day or all night or it will be costly. Forty-five to 60 total minutes each week should suffice.

As for green grass, you may have to resort to hand watering with a hose or using a sprinkler. This can also be costly and wasteful. The next Flow n' Go will have water-saving tips.

TIP OF THE QUARTER

If your water and sewer bill is seriously overdue and you have been given notice that your payment must be made by a certain date, we suggest that you make the payment in person at the Water and Sewer Commission office.

Payments that are mailed may not arrive by the stipulated due date. Payments made through some banks' on-line system can take a week or more before we receive it.

(Never mail cash or put cash in a drop box.)

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WATER AND SEWER ON-LINE PAYMENTS ARE NOT AUTOMATIC TRANSFERS

Over a year ago readers of *The Flow N' Go* were informed that they could register on the Marblehead Website to pay their water and sewer bills on-line. Since then dozens of our customers have joined the ranks of those enjoying the convenience of on-line payment.

However, some people when they sign up are under the mistaken impression that their payment is automatically deducted from their bank account.

This is not the case. The Water and Sewer Commission will *never* automatically withdraw from your account. The customer must physically log onto their on-line water and sewer account and initiate the payment each quarter.

This has caused some confusion for customers who assumed that once they registered, their on-line payment would just happen every time a bill is issued.

Some customers have told us that we

are the only business they still have to bother to actually make a payment; every other vendor is "customer friendly" and takes their payment automatically.

But it is with good reason that water and sewer payments are not automatically deducted from customers' accounts.

If a customer were to have had, unbeknown to them, a broken water pipe in their house or an underground sprinkler line that had burst, their bill could be in the thousands of dollars range. Now just think of the ramifications for the customer if we were to take, say, \$2,500 out of their account automatically.

They could be looking at some hefty overdraft charges and returned check fees—not to mention angry payees.

(The water department only reads your meter every three months and a lot can happen between readings. That's why it is wise to take a meter reading

yourself every few weeks so that any excessive usage can be detected and corrected as soon as possible.)

We hope that you will agree that it would not be a good idea to have automatic withdrawals for payment of water and sewer bills. That small bit of convenience is not worth the risk of a whole lot of inconvenience—and costs.

So what, you may ask, is the advantage of signing up to pay your water and sewer bills online? It is much quicker to click on the 'Make Payment' button than it is to find your check book, write out the check and envelope, lick a stamp and find a mail box.

In addition, those who select to have an email notification will receive a message when a new bill has been issued.

To register for on-line payments, go to www.marblehead.org and click on 'On-line Payment Water and Sewer Bills.'

PROTECT REMOTE READER FROM DAMAGE

Have you ever noticed a hard-plastic box attached to the outside of your house, similar to the one shown here, and wondered what it is for?



Many people think that this is their water meter. It isn't. If your water meter were located outside of your house, it would freeze during the colder months. But they are on the right track.

This box is actually a remote read module that allows for water department meter readers to take a reading of your water meter using a hand-held device. Gone are the days when a person had to enter your basement to manually read the meter and record it in a book.

The remote reader is the property of the water department. If you or a contractor doing work on your house damages or removes the reader, the homeowner will be responsible for the cost of a replacement.

And, no, this does not mean that you won't have to pay for water used while the reader isn't working; your meter is still recording the usage.

Please use caution when working around the remote reader. Otherwise, it may cost you.

Kids' Corner

Water Word Scramble

Below are water-related words with their letters all mixed up. Unscramble the letters to spell the words.

1. ratwe _____
2. sootcavrienn _____
3. cageirl _____
4. krnid _____
5. harmdelbae _____
6. kale _____
7. teannosdicon _____
8. nira _____
9. sirveroer _____
10. duliq _____
11. seho _____
12. klipresnr _____
13. teapnivaoro _____

Answers: water, reservoir, rain, condensation, glacier, drink, lake, evaporation, liquid, hose, sprinkler, conservation, glacier, drink, lake, evaporation