



BEACON HILL
WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT
1121 West Side Highway
Kelso, WA 98626
(360) 636-3860
(360) 575-9375 FAX
www.bhwsd.org

Tips to Prevent Winter Plumbing Problems

When temperatures drop plumbing problems are very common. There are many things that homeowners can do to prevent these problems. Here are some tips to keep homeowners and their families warm as winter temperatures take over.

- Avoid frozen pipes. Wrap exposed pipes with insulation. Watch your water pressure because the first sign of a frozen pipe is restricted water flow.
- On the coldest nights, let cold water trickle from your faucets. This helps prevent freezing as moving water does not freeze.
- Garden hoses can cause major damage if not disconnected. During freezing weather, if a garden hose is left connected, ice will form and pressure will build up in the water lines inside your home. Once this occurs, a water line leak or break is common. Disconnect garden hoses and drain outdoor pipes to prevent damage during the winter.
- After disconnecting hoses, you should install an exterior, insulated faucet jacket. This will protect your outdoor faucets, as well as the connecting lines running into the home, from freezing temperatures.
- Circulating warm air helps keep pipes in the walls from freezing. Keep your house temperature above 55 degrees to prevent pipes from freezing and open cabinet doors under sinks and faucets and near exterior walls to help circulate warm air and keep pipes warmer.
- Close crawl space vents and garage doors, especially if your water heater is in the garage.
- Check to be sure that snow is not restricting your water drainage. Watch the area around your sump pump discharge line used to avoid flooding indoors, as this line drains from a basement to an outside area. If the drainage area is blocked by snow or flowing into a puddle, freezing could occur as well as water backing-up into the house.



BEACON HILL
WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

Water/Sewer CONNECTION

Things to Look For

Winter 2014-15

BHWSD BILLING PROGRAMS

1. Auto-Pay

Did you know that you could have your payment electronically debited from a Visa, MasterCard, Discover or a checking or savings account? To sign up with a credit/debit card, go to www.bhwsd.org to register. To sign up with a checking or savings account, contact our office to request an authorization form.

2. Senior Discount

If you are a homeowner receiving a discount on your property taxes through Cowlitz County, you will qualify for a 15% discount on your water base rate and 15% on sewer (if applicable). Contact our office to request the form.

3. Long Vacancy

If you will be gone for a month or more, it may make sense to have your water meter locked and pay \$5.00 per month for water and \$5.00 per month for sewer (if applicable). There is a \$30.00 water reconnection fee when you return. Contact our office for more details or to request a vacancy form.

Commissioner Meetings

Commissioner meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month and the public is always welcome to voice comments or concerns.

Meetings are held at 5:15 pm in the upstairs meeting room, 1121 West Side Highway, Kelso, Washington

For more information, or accessibility concerns please contact the office at 636-3860.

Payment Drop Box



For your convenience we have installed a Drop Box so that you may drop off your water and/or sewer utility bill at any time, even in the evenings or weekends when our office is closed. The area is well lit and you don't have to exit your car, making for a safe and quick drop. The area is also monitored by video camera. The Drop Box is located on the left side near the bottom of our driveway as you enter.

Watch out for Water Service Line Insurance Scams

Some of our customers have received mailings that sell water service line insurance. While leaks can be very costly and insurance of this type would be handy in the case of a leak, your homeowners insurance may already cover similar types of losses. If not, you can often add it to your insurance for a lower cost than what these insurance ads charge. Talk to your homeowners insurance agent to find out details.

Utility Accounts in Property Owners Name Only

As of January 2013, the District no longer requires you to fill out Billing Authorization Forms for each renter. Instead, we leave the bill in the property owners name and, at your request, will send a copy to "Resident" at your rental address. This allows you to continue having your renter pay the bill if you wish and will hopefully reduce confusion about who's responsible when a renter leaves without clearing current or past due charges. By law, this amount has always been the responsibility of the property owner. If you have questions about this, please call the office.

CONTACT US:

If you have any questions about your water or sewer service, please feel free to contact us. We are here to serve you. BHWSD prides itself on being local government that "works WITHOUT taxes".

BHWSD Office

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District Manager

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Billing Questions

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Water Quality

Some customers have expressed concerns about the quality of the water coming from the City of Longview. While varying from customer to customer, the concerns include complaints about silica and water hardness, black slime, and chlorine odor. While the water coming out of the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is of good quality and meets the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, there are some changes in the chemistry of the water that are allowing some pipe scale to release back into the water. This is most noticeable to customers experiencing any discoloration issues. Based on testing, the pipe scale is finding equilibrium and the discoloration issues should lessen over time. Regarding chlorine, the City has made a number of adjustments to the chlorine levels leaving the WTP in an effort to best meet the disinfection needs in the distribution system and is in the process of designing a post-chlorination system. We have added a chlorine booster station in the Ostrander/Woodbrook area to improve the chlorine residuals in this area. Other areas are being monitored to determine if additional chlorination or flushing is required to improve the residual levels.

Some customers are concerned that the water from the Mint Farm wells is contaminated. Please note that well over 25,000 analytical tests of the water have been performed in the feasibility stage, during design, pre and post construction of the WTP. The City went way beyond the Washington State Drinking Water requirements to test for unregulated contaminants, emerging contaminants, and contaminants specific to local industry. Silica was also included in that testing, but it is unregulated and other utilities deal with the same (City of Vancouver ~56 mg/L, Nob Hill Water District ~73 mg/L, City of Kelso ~19.5 mg/L) without the level of customer concern we have had at ~58 mg/L. There is no health concern from the Washington State Department of Health.

Nevertheless, due to customer concern, the City of Longview has elected to take a new look at the feasibility of returning to the Cowlitz River and other sources for water supply. As a 14.5% partner in the water supply, Beacon Hill Water and Sewer District has been actively involved in the consultant selection and will be involved with this review. For the original Mint Farm project decision, the City had considered every variation of every option they could think up, including reconstructing the existing water treatment plant, constructing Ranney collectors on the river, moving the intake upstream or to the Columbia River, etc. If after a consumer survey, City Council decides to move forward with the Water Supply Review, they will also consider new options – Aquifer Storage & Recovery, well optimization with packer tests to identify strata with higher mineral deposits, taking a second look at Ranney's (Cowlitz and Columbia), mixing options, etc. Depending on the treatment option considered, treatment alone for silica was previously estimated to cost between \$37 million to \$81 million but these estimates were budgetary and may have been conservatively high. Rehab of the existing plant, depending on the intake system designed, was estimated in 2008 to cost between \$52 million to \$72 million. This review is in the preliminary stages with results not expected until about April 2015. If it is decided to pursue returning to the Cowlitz River or some other source option, the costs will be significant and will directly affect each customer's water rates. It is too early to tell at this point what the individual effect on rates will be, but this information will be presented in the final report when it is complete.

Utility Rates

BHWSO has contracted with the FCS Group to perform a rate study. This study will evaluate the Operations and Maintenance costs and planned capital improvements for water and sewer to determine what our water and sewer rates should be. We will also be looking at ways to simplify the rate structure to make it easier to understand for customers.

With the City of Longview considering a new feasibility study to look at alternative water sources, we don't know at this time what effect this could have on rates. In the coming months, as we have more information on where this study is going, and how the rates would be affected, we will provide that information to you. In the mean time, we will do everything we can to minimize any rate increases.

New BHWSO Boundary

Beacon Hill Water and Sewer District (BHWSO) has a new election boundary. Historically, the District used to be only Beacon Hill Sewer District. However, around 2008, the District started the process of transferring to District ownership the water systems managed by the Cowlitz PUD. The former PUD water system customers used to have a say in water system management by who they voted for as PUD Commissioners. Now, the combined water and sewer systems make up what is called Beacon Hill Water and Sewer District (BHWSO). As part of this transition to new ownership, BHWSO applied for and was approved by the Boundary Review Board to define a new election boundary which now includes the majority of water and sewer customers. Therefore, water customers now have a say in who represents them as a BHWSO Commissioner. The next election for a Commissioner will be November of 2015.

Water Tips

Hot Water Heaters

Did you know that most hot water heater manufacturers recommend flushing your hot water heater every six months? Over time, sediments, including scale from pipes can settle in the bottom of your hot water heater. If they build up around your heating element, you may likely burn out your lower element more quickly or it may speed up the corrosion of the bottom of your water heater, which often results in leaks or provides a breeding ground for iron bacteria or other growth. Some customers have developed a black slime from a build up of iron and manganese. If your water heater is susceptible to this, you may want to flush more regularly. In most cases, if you have kept up regular flushing, you only need to flush out a few gallons. Steps for flushing include: Turn off the electric breaker to your water heater. Hook up a garden hose to the spigot at the bottom of your water heater and run it outside to a lower elevation. Shut off the cold water supply to your water heater. Carefully open the pressure relief valve to allow air in while the water and any material drains out. Run until the water is clear. If you are inexperienced or uncomfortable with this process, contact your local plumber to assist you.

Water Leaks

Checking for a leaky toilet:

1. **Remove the tank lid.** Don't worry, this water is clean until it enters the bowl.
2. **Add some food coloring** to turn the water a different color. (Free dye tablets are available at the BHWSO office). Put the tank lid back on.
3. **After about 30 minutes, look in the bowl.** If you see colored water, you have a leak.

If you do have a leak, there are a number of possible causes. If you remove the tank lid and can easily identify the cause, correct the problem and try your leak test again. Consider that "fixes" such as bending the float back to shape, or adjusting how the rubber flapper falls, often end up failing soon afterward. In most cases, you will simply want to replace the toilet flapper (the rubber device at the bottom of the tank that keeps water in the tank) and/or the filling mechanism. These are available at hardware stores and home centers for about \$8 each.

