



# IWA PIPELINE



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## YOU ASKED, WE LISTENED

Over the years, some of our members have commented about the varying number of days in our billing cycles and the resulting impact on their water bills. Typically, our billing cycles were ranging from 26 to 36 days. The negative comments were in reference to the longer billing cycles since our water rates are structured in tiers to encourage



water conservation. The concern was that the longer billing cycles were causing higher than normal water usage and the cost per thousand gallons was therefore higher.

Now that the meters are read electronically, we asked Scott, our meter reader, to devise a new schedule to eliminate the longer billing cycles. Taking into account weekends and holidays, Scott was able to rework our meter reading schedule so the billing cycles will now range from 28 to 32 days. There will still be a long billing cycle in December due to our accounting system requiring that all the meters be read and billed before the end of the year. Hopefully, our IWA members will see more consistency in their water bills due to less variation in the number of days in our billing cycles.

## SEDA CONFERENCE AT SOUTH SEAS RESORT

In June 2014, the Southeast Desalting Association again held its Spring Membrane Symposium on Captiva Island. The mission of SEDA is to service and promote membrane treatment operations. The Island Water Association hosted many of the "hands-on" training sessions at our reverse

osmosis plant. In addition, IWA received the SEDA President's Recognition Award for our continued "support and involvement with the Southeast Desalting Association."

The symposium facilitates advancing membrane treatment technologies through instructional talks, case studies, and "hands-on" training. Demonstrations on membrane construction and autopsies, high pressure pumps, cartridge filtration, and membrane loading were given. Other topics covered were chemical storage, feed/dosing systems, and membrane cleaning. The "hands-on" sessions for visiting water treatment operators were well received. Desalinating, treating, and distributing potable water is indeed a complex process that involves a lot of technology and knowledge. We are happy to be part of the exchange of ideas, sharing of experience, training, and knowledge relating to membrane use in water treatment facilities.



**SEDA President's Recognition Award**



**SEDA participants taking the IWA tour**

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## BACK FLOW PREVENTERS

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Have you ever wondered what those less than beautiful plumbing devices are that stick up above the ground near your water meter? They are called backflow prevention devices. The purpose of backflow preventers is to prevent water from “flowing back” into the water distribution system due to back-siphonage or backpressure. Such a “backflow” could cause serious contamination of our water system and cause a public health hazard. While they are not installed on every meter on the islands, backflow devices are required by law to be installed on any residential property that has a hazard such as an irrigation system, pool, or well. The devices are also required on all new residential construction or remodeling, and on all commercial and multi-family property, new and pre-existing. The job of a backflow device is to prevent



*“Reduced Pressure Zone” Backflow Preventer*

water (for example, from a well or pool) from traveling back into the water system if a loss of pressure occurs in the distribution system.

IWA has a backflow testing program for testing the devices (which the IWA member actually owns) on a recurring basis at no charge to our members. If the device fails the testing, we send the homeowner a letter informing them that a licensed plumber needs to be called to repair the backflow device. Once we receive notice that the work is completed, we will make another inspection to ensure the device is working correctly. Our technicians are certified in the testing of backflow devices, and they are recertified every two years to keep current on standards. **The exception to our testing program involves backflows connected to commercial fire suppression systems. These devices must be tested and tagged by a professional certified in fire suppression system inspections.**

As is the case with our water meters, we ask that you avoid placing plants too close to the back-

flow devices. Our technicians need access to test them (and in the case of water meters, to service them, if in need). If the appearance of the backflow device is questionable, we suggest painting the pipe and supports with black or green paint. The backflow preventers will be less noticeable and the paint will even help protect the plastic fittings from the sun’s rays.

If you would like more information on Cross Connection Control and Backflow Prevention, you may visit the Florida Department of Environmental Protection website at [http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/drinkingwater/bfp.htm#backflow\\_preventer](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/drinkingwater/bfp.htm#backflow_preventer)

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## STORM SEASON UPDATE

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It has been a very mild storm season so far this year for Florida. Back in May, NOAA predicted that there would be 8-13 named storms, with 3-6 becoming hurricanes, and 1-2 of those becoming



major hurricanes. As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, there have only been 4 named storms, 3 of them hurricanes, and the latest, Dolly, a tropical storm. Arthur scraped by the Outer Banks of North Carolina as a Category 2 storm on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, but Bertha and Cristobal were no threat to the US mainland as they headed north in the Atlantic; Bertha in early August, and Cristobal in late August. TS Dolly formed in the southern Gulf and headed west into Mexico late September 2<sup>nd</sup>. By no means does this suggest you should lower your guard for the rest of the season. Always be prepared while we are in the

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*2014 Storm Tracks Through August*

hurricane season, which runs through November 30<sup>th</sup>. It only takes one storm to cause a disaster.

Island Water storm preparations begin in May with a review and update of our Emergency Response Plan, which includes storm preparation and response after the storm. We check all of our equipment that we dedicate to storm response, such as chainsaws, flashlights, rain gear, and extra fuel. We rotate out our emergency food supplies, test run, under load, our four 125KVA generators, and test our two satellite phones. The last thing we do before an approaching storm is install our 50+ Lexan storm shutters. You will notice to date our shutters are still stored safely away. Hopefully they will stay that way this season. The shutters were put to the test during Hurricane Charley, and they performed flawlessly.

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### HIGH USAGE BILLING RELIEF POLICY

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Almost every month, we deal with 80 to 100 member accounts with significantly higher than normal water usage and resulting bills. Our Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system computer alerts us when usage looks high relative to the last couple of months and the same period the previous year. We attempt to contact the involved members by phone or by letter if the phone option doesn't work.

In cases of very high **accidental** usage, we do have a policy to provide some billing relief, which reduces the amount the member has to pay. The policy only applies to water bills which are in excess of \$200.00 in any one month. The details of the policy are too complex to explain here, but basically reduces the cost of all water used in excess of four times the Member's average monthly consumption rate over the previous 12 months. Although the cost reduction can be significant, the remaining bill can still be quite large, since water in excess of the limit is less expensive, but still not free.

Most of our members who experience accidental high water usage are grateful for what billing relief we are able to give them. They get the problem repaired and take steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again. Frequently, members with high water bills will ask us to help them determine what happened and where the water went. We can now get a profile of your usage by the hour with our AMR system. The services of a licensed contractor will be required to determine the cause of the excessive usage and **always** to repair it. While we are glad to help when we can, it is important to remember that we have no control over water once it passes through the water meter into our mem-

ber's private water system. That is the member's responsibility. In the vast majority of cases, we will not be able to tell a Member where the water went. Unfortunately, with our porous, sandy soils, leaks often leave few, if any, telltale signs. Therefore, finding them can often be a challenge, even for a good plumber. In extreme cases some of our members have had success locating leaks by utilizing the services of a leak detection company.

There are two other possibilities which could cause a high water bill for our members. First, we could have read your meter wrong, but our AMR system has virtually eliminated these errors. We normally catch incorrect readings before the bills are mailed, but not always. If a member contacts us about a higher than normal bill, we will reread the meter and make any necessary corrections immediately. The second possibility is that the meter itself is faulty and reading high. If requested, we will remove the meter and bring it back to our facilities for an accuracy test, which the involved member is welcome to witness. The test is free if the meter reads outside the accepted accuracy range (high or low). If the meter is reading correctly, the test costs the member \$50. However, it is important to realize that when meters fail, they almost always (or always) fail in a way that makes them read low, not high.

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### INJECTION WELL MIT

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***Crane with Bore Camera for Visual Inspection of the 3200' Deep Well as Part of our Injection Well 5 Year MIT***

Beginning Monday, August 11, we conducted a Mechanical Integrity Test (MIT) of our Deep Injection Well. The well is used for disposal of our RO Plant brine waste and is also shared by the City of Sanibel for disposal of their excess treated effluent. Every five years, we are required by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to run an extensive (and expensive ... \$20,000!) series of tests on the well to make abso-

lutely certain that the injected fluids are staying where we put them and that the well casing is intact, with no holes. The tests include a video survey of the well to its total depth of over 3,200 feet, a pressure test of the 12 inch diameter, 2,500 foot deep fiberglass casing, and radioactive tracer tests to ensure that the concrete grout surrounding the casing is still intact.

This is the third MIT performed on our well since it was drilled in 1999. We used an outside Hydro Geologist and Professional Engineer this time around, since our resident PE/General Manager, Roger Blind, retired back in 2007. Under a consulting agreement, Roger also signed off on our 2009 MIT. This year the tests all confirmed that our well remains in great shape. The report on the test results was prepared and submitted to FDEP, who approved it without comment.

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## SEASONAL MAILING ADDRESS CHANGES

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As summer comes to a close, we here at IWA are starting to see address change requests from our seasonal winter residents. We strongly advise changing your billing address for your IWA bill to your Sanibel address for the winter months directly with us. It's easy and there are many ways to change your billing address. There is a form on our website under the Customer Service tab. There is an address change form on the back of your payment stub, or you can pick up the phone and call us. A real live person answers our phone so you will never be stuck in a phone tree or be forced to listen to option after option before you can talk to someone.

Changing your address with our office alleviates any delays or confusion in receiving your water bill. We have noticed that when a change of address is made at the post office, IWA gets a

postcard from the post office requesting us to change your address, which we do. Occasionally, the homeowner inadvertently leaves the yellow following sticker on the payment stub and we then change the address to the Sanibel address. Many of our customers don't realize that the billing address has been changed and during the summer months, when they are not here, the water bills are still mailed to the Sanibel address. The result can be not getting your water bill at all. Water problems can arise when no one is in residence, so it is especially important to get your water bill every month, even when you are not in residence to monitor your water usage. So pick up the phone and call us. We will gladly change your billing address. We look forward to seeing all of our winter friends soon.

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## CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT

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The 2013 edition of IWA's Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, also known as a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), is available at [www.islandwater.com/wp-content/waterReports/CCR2013.pdf](http://www.islandwater.com/wp-content/waterReports/CCR2013.pdf). New Florida Department of Environmental Protection rules state that as long as we post a direct URL on our website, a direct URL is posted in our quarterly Newsletter at least twice during the year, and a hard copy is available in our lobby, we are not required to direct mail the CCR. We will be happy to mail a copy of our CCR to anyone who requests it by calling 239-472-1502. The EPA-required annual report covers our water quality for 2013.

Please read over this information, and if you have any further water quality-related questions, just give our Production Manager, Pat Henry, a call on (239) 472-2113 (extension 122), or stop in to our office anytime from 8:00AM-4:30PM, M-F.



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