	DIVISION VI FINANCIAL MATTERS	<i>EFFECTIVE DATE:</i> 12/22/2014
	<i>POLICY TITLE:</i> HYDRANT METER ACCOUNTS	<i>STARTING SECTION:</i> § 44204
		<i>OWNER:</i> Astrid Nelson


§ 44204. Hydrant Meter Accounts.

1. Hydrant Meter Programs

- a) This policy outlines a Hydrant Meter Program that balances protection of the community's water supply and access to that supply. It is essential to ensure our water system has a reliable flow for fire suppression while still protecting against water theft, misuse and abuse, and intentional contamination. Fire hydrants are vulnerable points in a water system due to the ease in which they can be accessed and the quantity which can be used.
- b) The Hydrant Meter Program is administered by the Customer Service (CS) Department under the Finance Division. Inspections and on-site meter readings are performed by the Field Services Department under the Finance Division at Authority headquarters.

2. Allowable and Unallowable Use of Fire Hydrants


- a) The primary purpose of hydrants is to provide fire protection. Hydrant meter permits shall be issued at the Authority's discretion and shall only be issued for temporary connections, where permanent service is not available. Permits shall only be issued for use during construction activity, temporary landscaping, filling water trucks or tanks, and emergency purposes (as declared by the Virginia Department of Health and with prior written approval from the County Health Department and the Authority). Water obtained from a hydrant is considered non potable (not suitable for drinking) and shall not be used for such purposes.
- b) An Operator must be on-site at all times while the meter is connected to a fire hydrant or an Authority issued contact tag must be attached to the meter specifying an on-site contact name and phone number, who can be reached immediately to confirm hydrant use and intent.
- c) Hydrant meters shall not be used:
 - as a permanent connection, such as a connection to an irrigation system or to a water distribution system;
 - to temporarily connect to an irrigation system without a Prince William County approved backflow prevention device;
 - to temporarily connect, under emergency circumstances, to a water distribution system without written approval from the Director of Operations and Maintenance and the Prince William County Health Department and without a Prince William County approved backflow prevention device;
 - to connect directly to a home or business;
 - when resulting effluent requires discharge into the public sanitary sewer system;
 - by homeowners for nonemergency or ongoing activities such as filling pools or seasonal irrigation. Homeowners have the option of hiring a service provider independent of the Authority to provide for these needs.
 - for fundraising activities.
- d) The Authority may restrict the length of a permit based on the purpose of use.

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- e) A temporary connection is defined as a connection for temporary use using an above ground piping from the hydrant meter, (e.g. initial irrigation in a new development). Temporary connections must be approved by the Customer Service Department. The Customer Service Department shall obtain written approval from the Director or Deputy Director of Operations and Maintenance (O&M). Customers will be issued a temporary ring by the Customer Service Department to place on the approved hydrant when in use. Access to a water supply for a permanent purpose must be achieved through the certification process (permanent connection and meter) or groundwater well. A temporary connection may not be used to circumvent the certification process. Temporary connections may not exceed six consecutive months without written approval by the Director of Finance. The Director of Finance shall obtain written approval from the Director of Engineering and Director of Operations and Maintenance prior to considering approval of a temporary connection extending beyond six months.
- f) Within water distribution systems, points of cross-connection exist where non-potable water can be connected to potable sources. These cross-connection points can be a source of backflow or back siphonage. The most common cross-connections are from irrigation systems, fire systems, garden/wash down hoses, and boilers. Unintentional cross-connections can occur through illegal and unprotected taps and raise potential health risks, system risks, and security concerns. Any cross-connection issues must be reported to the Authority immediately. All Authority issued hydrant meters have a built-in check valve; however, it is the responsibility of the permit holder to provide proper back flow prevention in accordance with the Commonwealth of Virginia, State Board of Health, Waterworks Regulations.
- g) Permit holders must use an Authority issued hydrant meter to access water from a hydrant and must follow the operating instructions outlined below in section 7. *Operating Instructions*. Authority issued meters may not be used in other jurisdictions and meters from other jurisdictions may not be used in Prince William County. Tampering with a meter device or diverting service through an unauthorized connection is prohibited under Virginia Law. Tampering with an issued meter or unauthorized use is grounds for confiscation of the meter, penalties, deposit forfeiture, permit revocation, and legal action.

3. Fire Hydrant Restrictions

- a) Hydrants are designated to minimize the effects that large withdrawals can have on the system as well as neighborhood disruptions and safety hazards that fill-ups can cause. The hydrant permit indicates which hydrants in the Authority’s service area are available for use by permit holders. Designated hydrants are identified by the Operations and Maintenance (O & M) Division. This list shall be reviewed and updated by O & M as needed. Hydrants available for use by permit holders are tagged with Authority hydrant rings. An address list and map will be provided to all permit holders. Updates can be obtained on-line or requested from the CS Department.
- b) In addition to hydrants designated for hydrant meter use, as described in paragraph 3a, any hydrant that has not yet been accepted by the Authority is available for use by permit holders. Hydrants that have not yet been accepted by the Authority are designated with a silver painted top (bonnet).
- c) Customers may request through the Customer Service Department that a specific hydrant be added to the list of designated hydrants or may request temporary use of a hydrant not designated under the program. Customer

	DIVISION VI FINANCIAL MATTERS	<i>EFFECTIVE DATE:</i> 12/22/2014
	<i>POLICY TITLE:</i> HYDRANT METER ACCOUNTS	<i>STARTING SECTION:</i> § 44204
		<i>OWNER: Astrid Nelson</i>

Service Department shall obtain written approval from the Director or Deputy Director of Operations and Maintenance (O&M). Customers will be issued a temporary ring by the Customer Service Department for approved temporary use of a hydrant not designated under the program.


- d) In order to protect the water supply in times of emergency, permits shall be temporarily suspended when the County Administrator declares a Drought Warning or Emergency or when the Authority's General Manager declares a heightened alert. Such communications shall be effective upon public notice and/or direct mailing. The Authority reserves the right to suspend or revoke permits at anytime. No water withdrawals from hydrants are permitted during these times, except by the Fire Department for fire suppression. Continued usage, is prohibited by law (*Class 2 Misdemeanor under Section 18.2 – 162.1 of the Code of Virginia*).

4. Hydrant Meter Permit Overview

- a) Fire hydrants opened by an individual other than an employee of the Authority or Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue must have a hydrant meter attached. The Authority has two types of meters available for use under an approved permit. A deposit shall be required to cover any costs resulting from damage to the hydrant meter, its attachments, other equipment or facilities damaged by the permit holder, as well as unpaid account balances. The deposit shall be refunded when the hydrant meter and hydrant wrench are returned and payment is made on all outstanding charges or damages.
- b) The permit holder shall be responsible for utilizing the proper equipment and tools to operate the hydrant and meter safely and without damage. The permit holder is responsible for any damage to the fire hydrant, the hydrant meter, and the adjacent areas resulting from unauthorized or improper use. Permit holders must use an Authority issued hydrant meter and hydrant wrench to access water from a hydrant and must follow the Operating Instructions in Section 7. *Operating Instructions*. All hydrant meters must be returned to Authority headquarters as requested for reading or inspection.

5. Billing

- a) The Hydrant Meter Program is administered by the CS Department. A Permit Fee shall be charged at the issuance of a permit. The charge for water obtained through a hydrant meter shall be per 1,000 gallons used with a 5,000 gallon minimum charge per month.
- b) Those who keep hydrant meters for more than one month must fax, use the Automated Hydrant Meter Reading System or email meter readings to the CS Department on a monthly basis. Readings shall be due by the date stated in the permit. On-site readings by Authority personnel shall be required at least once during each year, as requested by the Authority. The permit holder may also make an appointment with the CS Department to physically bring the meter to be read on-site by Authority personnel. If the reading is not reported, a penalty shall be assessed per occurrence. Failure to report reads consecutively for two months shall result in deposit forfeiture and permit revocation.

	DIVISION VI FINANCIAL MATTERS	<i>EFFECTIVE DATE:</i> 12/22/2014
	<i>POLICY TITLE:</i> HYDRANT METER ACCOUNTS	<i>STARTING SECTION:</i> § 44204
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- c) Any person opening a fire hydrant, excluding Authority and firefighting personnel, without a valid hydrant meter permit, inspection tag, or metering device shall be subject to an Unauthorized Use Charge. See Violation of Terms and Conditions below.
- d) Current rates are disclosed in a published rates and fees booklet that is available through the Customer Service Department, as well as on-line at www.pwcsa.org. Rates and fees are subject to change.

6. Issuance of Hydrant Meter Permits

- a) Applicants wishing to obtain a hydrant permit and meter must appear at the CS Department located at Authority headquarters. The applicant must provide a valid Virginia business license and Federal Tax ID Number. The CS Representative shall contact the employer to verify the business address as well as the employment of and authorization of the individual to act on behalf of the company. A check for the deposit in the name of the company shall act as authorization. The applicant shall read the Hydrant Meter Permit Policy as well as the Hydrant Meter Permit and indicate agreement by signing the permit. The permit shall be reviewed by the CS Department and if accepted signed by CS management. The CS Department shall retain all active permits and copies of identification papers on file for the life of the permit.

7. Operating Instructions

- a) Meter-hydrant connections must be made according to the operating instructions listed below:
 - The customer is responsible to flush the fire hydrant prior to connecting or installing the hydrant meter. Flushing prevents damage by removing any grit or sediment in the hydrant. A hydrant should be flushed until the water runs clear but in no case longer than five minutes. If after five minutes the water does not run clear the customer must report the issue to the Customer Service Department and move to another approved hydrant. The Customer Service Department shall convey such information to the O&M Division.
 - Hydrant meters must be connected directly to a hydrant using the standard swivel couplings which are part of the hydrant meter assembly.
 - An Operator must be on-site at all times while the meter is connected to a fire hydrant or a 'Contact Tag' must be attached to the meter specifying an onsite contact name and phone number, who will be available to return to the meter as needed.
 - All public and private property must be protected while the hydrant is in use.
 - Meters must be protected from freezing and thus cannot be used when the temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - The main valve located in the street is not to be operated without the express permission of the Authority.
 - An issued hydrant wrench must be used to open and close the hydrant valve. All hydrants and valves must be opened and closed slowly to prevent damage.
 - The hydrant valve must be in the full open position when in use. A separate valve on the hose must be used to control the flow of the water.
 - Permit Holder is responsible for ensuring that water usage is registering on the hydrant meter; meters that are not registering should be returned to PWCSA immediately for inspection.
- b) Users must not alter the meters in any way. Lost or stolen meters, as well as any damage to a fire hydrant or equipment, must be reported immediately to the Authority. Failure to comply with any of the operating instructions may result in confiscation of the meter, penalties, deposit forfeiture, and/or revocation of the permit.

	DIVISION VI FINANCIAL MATTERS	<i>EFFECTIVE DATE:</i> 12/22/2014
	<i>POLICY TITLE:</i> HYDRANT METER ACCOUNTS	<i>STARTING SECTION:</i> § 44204
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8. Meter Inspections

- a) Meters are inspected by the Field Services Department at Authority Headquarters. Meters shall be inspected prior to issuance, during a customer’s possession of the meter, and prior to closing an account to determine final balances due and any applicable deposit refund. While in a customer’s possession, meters must be inspected at least annually. Notification of on-site read and inspection schedules shall be mailed to the permit holder by the Customer Service Department.
- b) The Field Services Department shall secure a current inspection tag to each meter. This tag must not be removed from the meter or tampered with. Removal of this tag equates to meter tampering. Failure to comply with inspection requests shall result in immediate forfeiture of the deposit, revocation of the permit, confiscation of the meter, and account closure.
- c) Broken or damaged meters must be reported and returned to the Authority immediately. The permit holder will be charged for any necessary repairs to the meter based on labor and materials.

9. Violations of Terms and Conditions

- a) Any violation of the terms and conditions of the permit shall result in the forfeiture of the deposit or revocation of the permit without notice. Meters must be immediately surrendered to the Customer Service Department at Authority Headquarters. The Authority reserves the right to not reissue a hydrant meter to any permit holder who has violated any of the terms or conditions of the permit.
- b) The enforceable state code regarding the theft of water is Virginia Code Section 18.2-162,163 which states “The act of diverting or wasting public water, tampering with a metering device, damaging or intentionally destroying water facilities is illegal”.