

WHAT IS WATER SUB-METERING?

By Robert Anaya

Sub-metering is the installation of individual meters behind the city master meter. These meters are installed on each water line servicing the individual units; installed after the unit's water shut-off valve. The water that each unit uses passes through the meter and is tracked for consumption.

WHY SHOULD YOUR COMMUNITY SUB-METER?

Many Associations are feeling the frustrations of managing water expenses. Continuously rising water rates, combined with water wasting leaks and homeowners' excessive usage are causing an uncontrollable and expensive situation. Why is this happening? When homeowners are not receiving a water bill, personal water usage is not a concern. The amount of water used in a 20 minute shower is significantly more than a 5 minute shower. If a homeowner is not paying for the water, there is no motivation to monitor personal water usage. Homeowners are also less likely to repair water leaks. One leaky toilet can waste up to 140,000 gallons of water per month; literally money being flushed down the toilet.

Water expenses are a huge factor in Association budgets, which are reflected in the Homeowner dues. Managing the residential water and sewer costs by passing them on to the homeowners will bring a huge relief to the Associations expenses. This will keep the budget under control and the homeowners' dues low. When operating costs and homeowner dues are low, property value increases.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Does your community meet the pre-requisites for water sub-metering? In order for a community to be able to sub-meter, each unit must have its'

own individual hot water heater and individual water shut off valve.

Do the CC&Rs, or other Association legal documents, allow for water sub-metering? The Board must review the Associations CC&Rs to determine if homeowners can be billed for their individual usage. It can be stated within the CC&Rs that water is a common expense that is included in homeowner dues. In this case, the CC&Rs will need to be amended to allow for water sub-metering. Contact legal counsel if in doubt of the CC&Rs regulations, or for instruction on how to amend the CC&Rs to allow water sub-metering.

Contact a water sub-metering company. A representative of the company will be able to determine the best type of meter to use, appropriate placement, and cost of all meters and accessories. Have the representative attend a Board meeting. This will allow him or her to explain the entire sub-metering process, offer information about the company's services, and answer any questions. Also, con-

tact a licensed plumber that is familiar with sub-metering. The plumber will decide on the best plumbing configuration and give an estimate to install the sub-meters.

If the Board is in agreement to proceed, determine a plan of action. The water sub-metering representative, the plumber, and the Board will meet and establish a step-by-step process for the installation of the water sub-metering system.


AFTER INSTALLATION: THE READING AND BILLING PROCESS

Once the water sub-meters are all installed on each unit, the water sub-meter company will begin the reading and billing. The sub-meter company will read all the meters on a set date. Once the meters are read, each homeowner will receive a water bill, from the sub-metering company, for each unit's exact usage. The homeowner will be charged at the same exact water and sewer rates that the city is charging the community. The sub-metering company will collect all monies from the homeowners and hand it directly over to the property management company. The terms of reimbursement will vary depending on the water sub-metering company. The association will still receive a master water bill from the city or public water agency, which must be paid by the association.

Water sub-metering is a fair and equitable solution for managing water expenses. It promotes water conservation, creates homeowner accountability for water usage, and increases property values.

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