

This is a letter to the editor so it must be very short. This is WAY TOO LONG and it reads like an excuse. Also too complicated.

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I don't have the time but you or Paul need to simply cite that there have apparently been several customers hit... reasons...

- potential difficult to read meters and why

- audit

- rate increases

- record use last summer which affects estimates

All affecting bills or estimates...

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Several Indianapolis Water customers recently contacted us with questions about estimated billing processes.

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Indianapolis Water (IW) is scheduled to read meters every other month and estimate usage on the "off" months. These estimates are calculated based on a rolling average of the customer's most recent 12 months of usage or the average of the past two months, whichever is higher. This IURC-approved methodology is built into the utility rate structure and has been employed for the past 7 years.

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Our staff reads more than 160,000 meters per month and diligently works to complete all read attempts, however, there are times when an additional estimate may occur.

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Unlike many other utility meters, most water meters are located in an underground pit. Snow cover, temperatures harmful to our meter readers or weather that jeopardizes the closing of the pit can prevent us from reading the meter. Other times, we cannot access the meter because of dogs, parked cars or other obstructions on top of the pit.

In December, to make our reading process more efficient, we conducted an internal audit validating field data. This step resulted in a shift of labor away from some scheduled meter reads. Some of these same accounts, primarily in the city's northwest and northeast quadrants, may also have had their regular February read date impacted by snow and weather, leading to an extended period of estimates. This one-time project will not impact future read schedules.

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Customers comparing their '08 winter bills to the same period last year also are seeing significant changes. Sewer bills are based on water usage and the Indianapolis Department of Public Works raised rates in January this year and in '07 to pay for infrastructure improvements. There also was a water rate increase in May that will fund system upgrades, enhance water quality, system reliability and water supply, and invest in safety and security. shorten

Last year's extremely hot, dry summer extended the watering season resulting in record water consumption by customers of 55 billion gallons (what period? The whole year?) treated and pumped - 55% more water than typically used during summer months. Since billing is based on a rolling average, higher usage also impacted recent estimates. We are reviewing the method with the IURC to determine if there is a better way to estimate bills, for example, comparing customers' seasonal usage (i.e. winter to winter) to prepare estimates rather than averaging the whole year. Do you really want to say this highlighted sentence above?

*I'd not use above in yellow... and deleted a bunch as we seem to overly apologetic. Sounds like we're doing all sorts of operational improvements b/c of these incorrect bills.*

Additional meter readers have been added and other employees are working overtime to complete regular read schedules by the end of this month. We appreciate the understanding of the few customers who have been impacted. As always, customers whose usage was overestimated will receive an account credit.

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Deleted: We understand the questions customers have regarding their accounts and are taking a number of other steps to improve our operation. Additional meter readers have been added to staff and others are working overtime to complete meter reads as efficiently as possible. We anticipate regular read schedules will be completed this month. As always, customers whose usage was overestimated will receive an account credit.

Our customers are valuable and we are making a sincere effort to communicate in a more timely fashion, and to provide the information necessary to understand our policies and our commitment to customer service.

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