

## Budget and Rate Setting

by Commissioner Margaret Wiggins



It is that time of year again; budgets and rate-setting. This process usually goes unnoticed until the bill with the higher rates comes out. This year will not be any different, but let me tell you what you will get for the increase.

Our operations are nearly invisible. Everything works smoothly as a utility should run. You get a team of professional staff that cares about our customers. The Board regularly sees the letters of appreciation from our customers for prompt and professional services.

Our utility is also in a position to take advantage of the dramatic drop in construction costs. This is because our staff has always done a good job managing our finances. Even as the government in Olympia is making devastating cuts to meet the budget shortfall, our District still has reserves to replace old equipment and pipes at very deeply discounted prices. We are also extending the sewage collection system into areas with failing septic systems and share the costs with the homeowners so they don't get locked out of their houses by the Department of Health.

Like other companies that are faced with less income

from sources we counted on during the booming housing market, we are making hard decisions to reduce our manpower and our payroll budget. It hurts to let members of our work family go, but it also hurts when our customers can't pay their bills and face shut-offs. Unfortunately, we can't make King County reduce their costs for sewage treatment or make Seattle reduce their costs for water supply, but we are doing everything possible to reduce our in-house costs.

On behalf of the District, I regularly attend meetings with both the King County Wastewater Treatment Division and the Seattle Public Utility staff members. Quite often, they refer to their rate increases as "just pennies" and that excuse is getting old. Those pennies add up, and I am there to remind them that unless those pennies actually help us keep things flowing, and don't get spent on some catch phrases like "study" of water reuse or conservation in our wet climate area, then they need to rethink the program. There are ways to plan for the future that don't require millions of dollars a year.

I think about what it would be like if we had to haul water from a creek or well, and dig outhouses in the yard. Our pioneers lived without long hot showers and tolerated the smell. Right now these are affordable luxuries, and I would like to keep it that way. ♣

## Important Contact Numbers

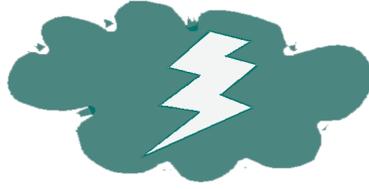


Northshore Utility District - Water & Sewer Services	
Finance, Operations & Emergency After Hours .....	425-398-4400
City of Kenmore .....	425-398-8900
Flooding/Storm Drainage After Hours.....	206-296-8100
Puget Sound Energy - Electricity, Gas & Street Lighting	
Outage and Repair.....	1-888-225-5773
King County Animal Control .....	206-296-PETS
Garbage Services .....	206-646-2492



# Are You Prepared?

The winter storms are here, the time to prepare is now before more snow falls and the ice forms. Here are a few helpful suggestions.



## Preparing for Winter

- If you have a kerosene or propane heater, refuel your heater outside and remember to keep it at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Make sure your fireplace functions properly.
- Have rock salt and sand on hand for traction on ice.
- Keep your gas tank half full during the winter months.

## During a Winter Storm

- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Wear mittens rather than gloves.
- Do not drive unnecessarily.
- Reduce the temperature in your home to conserve fuel.
- Heat only the areas of your home you are using. Close doors and curtains or cover windows and doors with blankets.
- Use alternative heat methods safely. Never use a gas or charcoal grill, hibachi or portable kerosene or propane

heater to cook indoors or heat your home.

- Never use a generator indoors or in a garage or carport.

- Bring dogs and cats inside during cold weather.

## If in your Vehicle

- Make sure someone knows where you are going. Stay on the main roads.
- If you must stop, remain inside the vehicle. Use a bright distress flag or your hazard lights to draw attention to your vehicle.
- If trapped in a blizzard, clear your tail pipe and run your engine and heater for 10 minutes every hour. Open your window slightly.
- During night hours, keep the dome light on in the car so rescue crews can see your vehicle.
- Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle. Include a three-day supply of water and non-perishable food that can be eaten without being cooked. Include a blanket or sleeping bag for each passenger, a flashlight, cell phone, shovel, sack of sand or kitty litter, booster cables, flare, coffee can with lid, and toilet paper. ♣

## Hints for Thawing

### Frozen Pipes & Meters

It looks like we are in for a very cold winter, something that we are not that used to here in the Pacific Northwest.

Frozen pipes may be thawed by wrapping them with rags and repeatedly pouring hot water over the rags. Once the pipes are thawed, remove the rags and rewrap pipes with dry insulation material to help prevent additional freezing. If this method is not successful, call a plumber. **NEVER USE AN OPEN FLAME OR ELECTRICAL DEVICE TO THAW FROZEN PIPES.** Using these methods can cause fire or electric shock. ♣

## A Simpler Look

In an effort to make our billing statement more user friendly, we have redesigned portions of the front and back of the statement. We have removed several of the customer service options that were on the back of the remittance portion of the bill in order to make it easier to read. Ratepayers are now directed to phone our office or access our website for more complex customer service needs.

Look for the improved changes coming soon on your bill, and, as always, please let us know what you think of the new format. ♣



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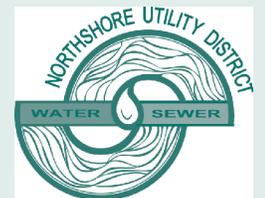
Bruce Gardiner  
Commissioner

Margaret Wiggins  
Commissioner

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Board of  
Commissioner  
Meetings  
are held at the  
District Office  
on the  
first and third  
Monday of each  
month at 5:30 p.m.,  
except Holidays.

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District Office

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