Bedford County Public Service Authority

Customer Service FAQs

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are divided up into three subject areas. If you cannot find the information you are looking for, please call us at 540-586-7679 option 4; we will be happy to assist you.

Billing

1. Why is my bill so high?

   Leaks are often the culprit, and toilet leaks are the most common type. A single "running" toilet can quietly waste over 1,000 gallons of water in a single day and may not even be heard. Fortunately, repairing toilet leaks is usually easy and inexpensive. Checking for leaks elsewhere in your plumbing system might reveal other sources of water loss.

   In many cases, high bills are a result of increased water use. Changes in outdoor water use, such as watering a new lawn or using a new sprinkler system are usually responsible for large increases. Reading your water meter before and after watering can help you identify how much you are using.

   When your water use is high, your sewer use bill will also be high; they are directly proportionate to each other. Therefore, when you have a leak in your private water system, you will also be billed for the sewer.

   Although we read our meters with a high degree of accuracy, sometimes we make mistakes. If you suspect that we have misread the meter, please contact our Customer Service department at (540) 586-7679 option 4 or customerservice@bcpsa.com . We will gladly check the reading and make any necessary billing corrections.

2. Is there any relief from high bills caused by leaks?

   We offer an adjustment one time every 5 years for unusually high water charges caused by leaks. The adjustments are only applicable for leaks between your water meter and your home. To apply for an adjustment, send the following information to Bedford County Public Service Authority, 1723 Falling Creek Rd, Bedford, VA 24523, Attn: Customer Service:

   - Your name, address, account number and daytime telephone number
   - A description of the type and exact location of the leak(s)
   - Proof of repair, such as a copy of a plumber's bill or a receipt for parts
   - The date the repair was made

   You should receive a response to your request within two weeks. Only leaks between the water meter and your house are eligible for adjustment. Leaky toilets do not qualify for adjustments.

3. How often do you bill?

   - Our customers are billed every two months, at this time.

4. Can I receive my statement electronically instead of paper?

   We offer electronic statements. You can download an authorization form from www.bcpsa.com and fill it out and email it to customerservice@bcpsa.com and you will start receiving an email when your statement is ready for you to review.

5. What payment options are available?

   Payments can be made through mail or at out office with checks, money orders or cash. You can also pay your bill through your bank's online bill payment system. We also offer automatic debits to your checking or saving account, or you can pay your bill with a credit card, debit card or e-check either through our website – www.bcpsa.com and choose the "Credit Card Payments" option or call 1-877-260-7801.

   The automatic debiting authorization form can be obtained from our web site: www.bcpsa.com

6. What is your payment address?

   Bedford County Public Service Authority
   1723 Falling Creek Road
   Bedford, VA 24523

Water Service

1. Why is my water off?

   Although service interruptions are rare, they can be caused by water main breaks, nonpayment of bills, and, during extended periods of sub-freezing temperatures, frozen water meters. Please call our Customer Service department at (540) 586-7679 option 4 if you are without water. Our afterhours emergency number is (540) 586-7679 and listen to the prompts.

2. How much notice do you need to set up water service?

   One business day, as long as the meter setting is already installed onsite. When a new meter setting needs to be installed, it can take up to 4 weeks to schedule and perform the work.

3. Can you help me determine if I have a leak?

   Yes, we will try to help. If after following these simple steps you still have questions regarding a leak, you can call our Customer Service department at (540) 586-7679 option 4.

   a) Read the water meter, noting the position of the clock-style hand that records individual gallons. Should you have a meter with a digital read out you may need a flashlight to have enough light on the meter to activate the photocell.
   b) Wait at least 15 minutes without using water.
   c) Look at the meter again to see if the hand moved, or numbers changed if digital meter. If it did not, there are probably no leaks. Waiting longer between meter readings (overnight, for instance) might help you detect slow or intermittent leaks.
   d) If the meter hand moved or digital numbers changed, check all of your faucets for visible leaks.
   e) Check the toilets for leaks by adding food coloring to the water in the tank. Do not flush. Wait 15 minutes to see if the colored water appears in the toilet bowl. If it does, there is a leak.

Repairing toilet leaks is normally inexpensive and easy to do. Replacement part kits are available at most hardware stores.

f) If there appear to be no leaks inside your home, check for underground leaks. Turn off your main valve inside, and then open a faucet to verify that the valve is working—the water flow should stop completely. Go back outside to the meter to see if it continues to change with the main valve off. If it does, there is a leak somewhere in your plumbing between the meter and the valve.

g) After making repairs, repeat the meter reading procedure to verify that there are no more leaks.

4. Can you recommend a plumber?

   We do not endorse or keep an "approved list" of plumbers. We recommend that you carefully select a plumber by checking references, comparing prices, and using information available from consumer affairs organizations.

Water Quality

1. How "hard" is our water?

   Typically, our water is fairly neutral (90 - 100 grains per gallon) depending on the area you are in.

2. Is the fluoride in my drinking water safe?

   In correct amounts, added and naturally occurring fluoride has improved the dental health of American consumers. The Bedford County Public Service Authority does not add fluoride to our water.

3. I live in an apartment and my water bill is included in my rent. How can I receive information concerning my tap water?

   Talk to your apartment manager and ask that any included information be posted for everyone to read. In addition, The Bedford County Public Service Authority's Annual Water Quality Report is sent to all the customers within our distribution system and the report is posted to our website: http://www.bcpsa.com/WaterQual/default.htm

4. Is it safe to drink water from a garden hose?

   Substances used in common vinyl garden hoses to keep them flexible can get into the water as it passes through the hose. These substances are not good for you or your pets. There are hoses made with "food–grade" plastic that will not contaminate the water. Check your local hardware store for this type of hose.

5. Can water straight from the tap be used in home kidney dialysis machines?

   Tap water must go through further treatment in order to be used in a dialysis machine. Because the water comes into close contact with a patient's blood, several substances like aluminum, fluoride, and chloramines must be removed from the water before it can be used.

6. Is the amount of chemicals found in the drinking water harmful?

   Minerals may also be beneficial and many chemicals have no adverse effects on public health.

7. Is water with chlorine in it safe to drink?

   Testing has proven that the amount of chlorinated disinfectants found in drinking water is safe to drink.

8. I sometimes get a pink stain on my bathroom fixtures, and in my pet's water bowl. What is it and how do I get rid of it?

   The pink stain (sometimes slimy in the way it feels) is generally a mixture of non-pathogenic bacteria. These bacteria are believed to be airborne and multiply in damp environments. Commercial cleansers containing bleach are effective in killing the bacteria and getting rid of the stain.

9. All of the strainers in my faucets are clogging with white particles. What could this be?

   These white particles are very likely to be pieces of the dip tube from your water heater. Several brands of water heaters manufactured in the 1980's were made using a faulty dip tube that disintegrates over time. The dip tube carries the cold water from the top of the water heater to the bottom, where the cold water is heated. Over time, the dip tube disintegrates and the white dip tube particles are carried through the household pipes. If the particles are large enough they are caught in the strainers of the sink faucets or showerheads. Since it is only a hot water concern, these particles will only be found in places where hot water travels; so the toilet bowls, tanks and automatic ice maker will not contain these particles if indeed they are from the dip tube. If you are experiencing a problem of this nature, call the manufacturer of your water heater for further information.

10. Who makes the rules and regulations for drinking water?

    Regulations are made by both federal and state agencies. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) passed by Congress in 1974 and amended in 1986 and 1996 is governed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) http://www.epa.gov/safewater/standards.html

    Within the EPA, the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water administers the drinking water program under the Public Water Supply Supervision Program. Their functions include:
    - Setting the maximum contaminant levels (MCL's) for contaminants in drinking water and setting other requirements to ensure that drinking water is safe.
    - Delegating primary enforcement responsibilities to the states. Monitoring state activities to ensure that regulations are being met.
    - Operating the program in states that have not accepted primary enforcement responsibility.
    - Providing for continued research on drinking water contaminants.
    - Providing technical assistance to the states.
    - Provided for in the SDWA, is the intent that states accept primary responsibility for enforcement of the states drinking water program (primacy). Under these provisions, each state must establish requirements for public water systems at least as stringent as those set by the EPA. In Virginia, the agency is the Virginia Department of Health.

    In addition to the SDWA, the EPA has promulgated several specific rules to address various types of water contaminant problems. Some of these rules are: Surface Water Treatment Rule, Total Coliform Rule, and the Lead and Copper Rule.

11. Why does tap water sometimes look milky or opaque?

    During the time of year when the water coming into the house is colder than the temperature inside the house, this phenomenon can occur. Cold water holds more oxygen than warm water does, consequently when the cold water from the water mains outside come inside our warm homes, and the water begins to warm, the oxygen has to escape. It does so by bubbling out in air bubbles which makes the water look milky. A visual example of this is to run water into a clear container and observe for a short time. If the water clears from the bottom to the top of the container then the phenomenon described is occurring. The air bubbles are moving from the bottom to the top of the container to escape into the open atmosphere.

12. Can I store drinking water indefinitely and it does it continue to be safe to drink?

    The disinfectant in drinking water will eventually dissipate even in a closed container. If that container housed bacteria prior to filling up with the tap water the bacteria may continue to grow once the disinfectant has dissipated. Some experts believe that water could be stored up to six months before needing to be replaced. Refrigeration will help slow the bacterial growth.

13. Is it okay to use water from the hot water tap for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula?

    Hot water generally comes from a water heater that may contain impurities that should not be ingested. Some of these impurities might be metals from household plumbing that are concentrated in the heating process. Additionally, these impurities from the household plumbing dissolve more rapidly in hot water than cold water causing the amount of impurities to be higher in hot water.

14. Sometimes ice cubes made from the tap water, or the melted water from ice cubes contains white particles. What are these particles and where do they come from?

    Ice cubes freeze from the outside in. Ice is formed from pure water (hydrogen and oxygen) therefore the minerals such as calcium and magnesium normally found in the water sometimes end up as visible particulates in the core of the ice cube. The white particles are not toxic.

15. What is the white residue sometimes found on items such as coffee pots, irons, shower doors, glassware, and cookware?

    The white residues are minerals that are found in the water such as calcium. Overtime and repeated water use there may be a build-up of the minerals on any item the water comes in contact with. There are commercial products that can be purchased to rid the surface of mineral build-up.