



AQUARION
Water Company

Stewards of the Environment

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Aquarion offers amnesty for illegal water use

Aquarion Water Company is enacting a moratorium on fines and other charges it usually assesses for illegal water connections, and it is granting amnesty to anyone who requests a legal connection between now and Dec. 31, 2011.

“We understand that desperate times can force some people into desperate measures,” said Jean Dyer, Customer Service Director. “Someone who was out of work for a while might have resorted to bypassing the meter for relief from a bill. It’s still theft, but at this point we would rather restore these customers to good standing than pursue penalties.

“We will send our field technicians out to any home or business that needs a meter connection, no questions asked,” Dyer said. “We also encourage our customers to report any instances of theft they may discover, as these can affect water quality and water pressure in surrounding neighborhoods. We feel this also ensures fairness in everyone paying for what they use.”

In the most common type of water theft, a truck driver pulls up to a fire hydrant, connects a hose from the hydrant to a tank on the back of his truck and, in a short time, drives off with the tank full of water, leaving area residents wondering why their water is suddenly discolored.

Other types of water theft include individuals who connect to a water line without a meter in place, and others who bypass the meter so their consumption doesn’t register.

Theft of service costs everyone money, and Aquarion has penalties in place for people who access water illegally. These can range from a warning, to a \$500 theft-of-service fine and a back-bill charge.

In the case of someone stealing water from a hydrant, the sudden change in water pressure could dislodge naturally occurring minerals in the water main, discoloring



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customers' water. In addition, depending on what was in the truck's tank beforehand, there is a risk of contamination if the tank doesn't have a proper backflow device.

Taking a chance

People who risk taking water from a hydrant or bypassing a meter assume there is minimal chance they will be caught. However, passersby and homeowners often call the police or Aquarion to report illegal hydrant use, and neighbors or acquaintances are known to report people who boast about using public water for free. In addition, field technicians know their territories well enough to recognize when a building has access to water without a meter. And the billing department can track instances when similar homes with similar lawns in the same neighborhood are paying disproportionate amounts on their water bills.

“We guard our water quality carefully and are committed to keeping rates low,” said Dyer, “and this type of monitoring is another way to ensure that we accomplish these goals.”

To report an illegal connection or to renew legal service, call 203-330-2325 or send an e-mail to cip@aquarionwater.com.

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