



THE NEW DAY PROJECT

Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative

March 12, 2019

Michael L. Thurmond, CEO



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Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative

- **New Day Project**
Michael L. Thurmond, CEO
- **Water Meter Manufacturer Legal Settlement**
Viviane Ernstes, County Attorney
- **Water Meter Replacement Program**
Reginald Wells, Watershed Management Director
- **Water Meter Replacement Customer Service**
Antrameka Knight, Interim Deputy Director, Utility Customers Operations
- **Communications Strategy**
Suzanne Forte, Public Information Officer, CEO Office of Communications
- **Questions and Answers**



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Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative

New Day Project

Presented by: Michael Thurmond, CEO



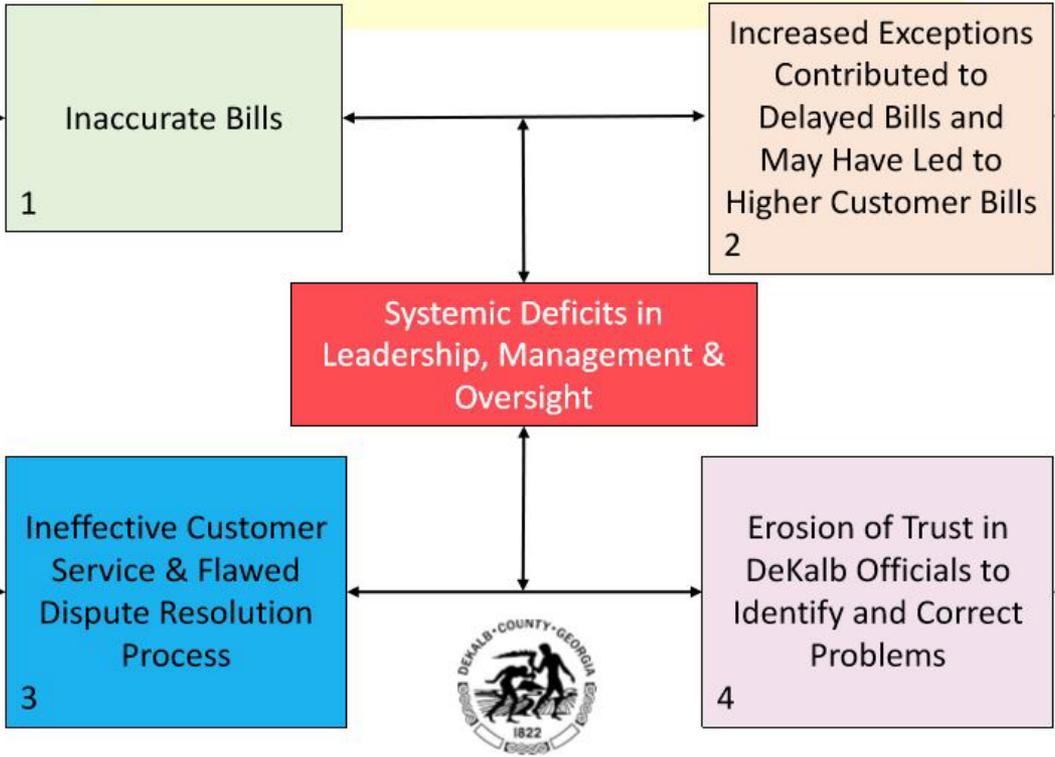
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- 1A. Some meters not properly installed in field or billing system; incorrect multipliers; lost meters
- 1B. Pre-2014 Sensus iPerl Meters may have been installed with manufacturing defect
- 1C. Newly installed meters are more accurate than replaced meters; incorrect manual reads; aggregated bills; over-reliance on estimating bills
- 1D. Meter readers are understaffed, underpaid, and curbing
- 1E. 2010 early retirement plan resulted in lack of institutional knowledge
- 3A. Customer Service Reps understaffed, underpaid, improperly trained
- 3B. Field technicians dispatched to "verify" 184,000 meters; not physically able to complete
- 3C. Overcomplicated/duplicated efforts to resolve issues
- 3D. No 3rd party hearing officers as intended

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Water Meter/Billing Issues Flow Chart

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on this solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask. For once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than 5 minutes"-- Albert Einstein



- 2A. Reorganization incomplete; department understaffed and improperly trained
- 2B. Exception threshold lowered; increase in number of exceptions
- 2C. Billing & Watershed departments not properly aligned
- 2D. Multi-cycled billing led to increased bills
- 2E. Bureaucratic turf guarding; lack of cooperation and communication
- 2F. Political interference in day-to-day operations
- 4A. Rate increases not well publicized; impact of water restrictions
- 4B. Systems not integrated; no internal chain of custody for meters
- 4C. Many customers expressed dissatisfaction with Sensus iPerl meters
- 4D. Inaccurate data distributed to customers



Michael L. Thurmond, Chief Executive Officer – February 23, 2017

Phase One: Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative

- Approximately 37,000 held water bills were released
- All 194,000 water billing customers have returned to normal billing cycle
- Additional improvements:
 - Increased call center and field service staffing
 - Reduced average customer service wait times
 - Added verification process to independently review accounts
- First-In-Line went live August 2018
 - Implementing enQuesta, new state-of-the-art billing system



Phase Two: Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative

How Did We Get Here?

- **County failed to follow water meter replacement plan**
 - **Water meters should be replaced every 15 years**
 - **Meters often lose accuracy as they age**
- **County began replacement program in 2011**
 - **Issues that impacted initial program**
 - **Failure to plan long-term**
 - **Contract disputes**
 - **Lack of political consensus**
 - **Lack of resource and vendor capacity**
 - **October 2016 installation moratorium**
- **Old technology and out of lifecycle water meters**
 - **Inaccurate meter reading and billing**
- **Mid-2016 potential manufacturing defect of water meters confirmed**

New Strategy to Replace Potentially Defective Water Meters

Timeline

- **2011- 2015:** County purchased and installed approximately 50,000 iPerl water meters, manufactured prior to 2014.
- **Fall 2016:** County became aware of potential manufacturing defect.
 - Sensus agrees to replace potentially defective meters as they fail.
 - Approximately 4,000 meters replaced.
 - Governing Authority suspends further installation of pre-2014 iPerl meters.
- **Summer 2017:** County investigates a potential product liability claim.
- **August 2018:** County negotiates settlement to replace 47,500 pre-2014 iPerl meters.
- **April 2019:** County launches Water Meter Exchange and Upgrade Initiative.

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Water Meter Manufacturer Legal Settlement

Presented by: Viviane Ernstes, County Attorney



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Water Meter Manufacturer Legal Settlement

- In August 2018, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners approved a legal settlement to replace 47,500 water meters with a manufacturing defect.
- The total value of the negotiated settlement amounts to approximately \$8.64 million in equipment, installation and reprogramming services that includes:
 - Delivery and installation of 47,500 new meters: \$4.75 million
 - Delivery and installation of 30,000 radio transmitters: \$1.43 million
 - Reprogramming 17,400 previously installed radio transmitters: \$2.46 million

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Water Meter Replacement Program

Presented by: Reginald Wells,
Watershed Management Director



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Water Meter Replacement Initiative

- **DeKalb County will replace 102,000 aging and potentially defective water meters**
- **In April 2019, DeKalb County will begin a three-year program to replace water meters**
 - **54,500 out of lifecycle meters**
 - **47,500 potentially defective meters**

What Can Customers Expect?

- **Accurate Billing and Meter Reading**

Improved Consistency and Efficiency in Billing Process

- **Increased Customer Service and Enhanced Technology**

Technology Transmits Radio Data

Access to Real-Time Water Consumption Data

- **Restored Trust**

Proactively Identify and Respond to Issues

About Our Meter

- **Meter Type:** AccuStream is a top performing positive displacement (PD) mechanical meter in the water industry. Built on 60 years of proven performance
- **Validation Process:** Engineering Technical Review of PD Water Meters (6 different meters / 5 brands)



About Meter Technology

- **Technology and Flexnet:** Significant investment already placed in Sensus FlexNet AMI
Investment: Approximately \$6 million to date
 - 10 Tower Gateway Base Stations (TGB) – **Investment: \$2 million**
 - 28250+/- SmartPoint MXU Transmitters – **Investment: \$4 million**
- **Partial system:** Improved functionality when existing AMI and meter vendor is the same entity
 - TouchCoupler patented technology creates plug-and-play installation simplicity



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Water Meter Replacement Customer Service

Presented by: Antrameka Knight,
Interim Deputy Director, Utility Customers
Operations



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Water Meter Replacement Customer Service

Elevated Priority

- Designated team of customer service representatives to respond to water meter replacement questions and concerns
- Additionally, all customer service representatives have been trained to respond to questions and concerns
- What Should Customers Do About Billing Concerns?
 - Call: 404-378-4475
 - Email: dekalbwaterbillingfn@dekalbcountyga.gov

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Communications Strategy

Presented by: Suzanne Forte, Public Information
Officer, CEO Office of Communications



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Communications Strategy

To generate awareness and understanding about the water meter replacement initiative through effective and ongoing customer engagement and communication.

Goals

- **Reach all affected water billing customers 5 times during the meter replacement work with timely, accurate information.**
- **Utilize current feed-back channels for customers and the public.**
- **Receive and respond to customer questions and concerns in a timely manner.**

Communications Strategy

Touchpoints

- Customer Letter
- Billing Inserts
- Website
- Social Media
- News Release
- County Newsletter, The Relay
- DCTV Video and Social Media
- Next Door
- Yard Signs
- Door Hangers
- Contractors
- Call Center/ Customer Service
- 311

Inside



Outside



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Questions and Answers



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