



"Quality water, Quality people"

Frequently Asked Questions

SERVICE DELIVERY

Does the BWA inform residents when there will be a disruption to the supply of service?

Yes every attempt is made to inform residents. For planned work the Authority gives a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours public notice in print and/or on the radio before commencement of work. For emergency work such as repair of burst mains advance notice of the work is not always possible, but public notices are placed on the radio once the extent of the work and outages are determined. The major challenge the BWA faces in the area of disruption of service is the lack of an online and on time monitoring system (SCADA). Without this system the BWA depends on calls from the public to be aware of areas experiencing outages or low pressure.

Why does it take so long to repair burst mains/pipes?

There are a number of factors which cause repairs to take a very long time. These are: repairs are currently carried out with manually operated tools, time is needed to depressurize the main and delays can also be due to limited equipment which requires the sharing of this equipment between several job sites. The age and large mix of pipes and fittings installed in the system sometimes delays the time it takes to get the relevant fittings to complete repairs. These parts may then have to be machined at the fabrication workshop at Bowmanston thus holding up the completion of the work. In some instances, it may be a combination of the above which impacts the repairs.

Is there an inadequate number of tankers to service densely populated areas when there is an outage?

The Authority has 13 water tankers (13) which in most cases have to be assigned to deal with a minimum of three (3) burst main affected areas everyday in addition to servicing those areas that experience regular low pressure and water outages at peak demand times. The tankers are therefore spread across the island on a daily basis. It is important to note that tanker service is inadequate to replace regular water supply from the pipe. We advise residents to keep some water in storage for emergencies such as this.

Explain why there is such a frequency of recurring burst mains?

The frequency in burst mains occurs because more than sixty (60%) percent of the large sized mains are more than seventy (70) years old and do not have concrete liners inside the pipe to protect them from the aggressive water. Most of these mains have reached a point where they need to be replaced as demonstrated by the fact that a repair at one location on occasion results in a burst at the next weakest point. Also, most of the water mains are located in the road and are therefore impacted by the increased traffic load. Funding is currently being sought for an intensified long-term mains replacement programme which is planned to start during 2010.

Why is there a delay in new service installation time?

Even though the BWA Act states that new services will be installed within ninety (90) days, the Authority has been working to reduce this to within seven (7) days. Currently more than sixty (60) percent of new service installations are done within fourteen (14) days. Delays are sometimes encountered due to material outages, lack of adequate directions and contact details. The need to investigate those applications that fall in Zone 1 to determine whether they qualify for a new service can also result in delays.

Collections

Why are payments made before the due date not seen on the next month's bill?

Payments made at the BWA's Customer Service Centre are applied to the water accounts on the same day.

However, payments made at external payment centres such as the Post Offices, BNB branches, SurePay, the Barbados Public Workers' Co-operative Credit Union Ltd, or online via Scotia Bank or FirstCaribbean International Bank are batched and are sent to the BWA periodically. Therefore these payments will not instantly appear on the water account.

If a bill is processed before the payment information is received from the external centre, it will not be shown on the next month's bill.

Why are arrears transferred from a previous owner/occupant to a new owner?

Where there has been a change in the ownership of a property and there is an outstanding unpaid debt in the name of a previous owner/occupant, the debt on the old account is transferred to that of the new owner in accordance with the Barbados Water Authority (BWA) Act CAP. 274A s.30(4) which states that:

"Unpaid rates and charges are a lien and charge against the premises in respect of which the debt is incurred."

A lien is a legal claim (upon property) until a debt on it is repaid. Therefore, persons who intend to purchase any property in Barbados are advised to ensure through their attorneys, that encumbrances, such as water rates, are paid in full and that no additional charges for water rates are being incurred while the sale of the property is being processed.

Are customers informed when their services are due for disconnection?

Yes. At the back of every water bill, customers are informed:

"Bills with a balance forward must be paid at a BWA Customer Service

Centre immediately to avoid disconnection of service.”

In addition, if any part of a bill is unpaid, the next month, the customer is issued a bill with a warning “Disconnection Pending” written in bold print on the front of the bill. If this bill is not paid by the due date on this bill, the service can be terminated for non-payment anytime after the due date.

Does the BWA only disconnect the services of householders and not businesses?

Both Domestic and Commercial Customers are subject to disconnection for the non-payment of their bills.

At October 31, 2009:

- Domestic customers owed \$16.36 million dollars or 55.5% of the \$29.49 million dollars owed for water rates.
- Commercial customers owed \$10.71 million dollars or 36.3% of the total balance.

Water Quality

Why is the water from Bowmanston Pumping Station muddy after heavy rains?

The problem is due to sucks or fissures connected to the cave feeding Bowmanston well. No filtration is provided to the muddy runoff going into the sucks. This only occurs with high intensity rainfalls.

What is involved in leak detection?

The following activities are involved in leak detection:

- Isolating a given water main, checking how much water is going through it and comparing this with the amount required to service the users connected to it.
- Locating the position of the leak by using sounding equipment (listening for sound of escaping water during the daytime) or noise correlators.

Is age the main cause of burst pipes?

No, age is not the only cause of burst mains but it is a major factor. Some bursts are due to increased traffic load since most of the pipes are laid in the road. Bursts may also occur due to corrosive environment that attacks the pipe.

What is BWA doing about all these water problems?

The BWA has put a number of measures in place and these include:

- Replacement of stopped meters.
- A comprehensive water conservation program
- Intensified leak detection and mains replacement programmes
- Modifications to the distribution system to increase water transfer capabilities
- Investigations for locating and excavating wells to optimise groundwater extractions

- Review of options to supplement the groundwater sources (i.e. use of runoff, treated waste-water and desalination)
- Public education program development

Billing

Why are customers' meters not read on occasion?

There are a number of factors which can impact the Authority not getting meter readings. In the case of no readings this is primarily due to:

- i) Access to the meter being obstructed (e.g. by garbage, animals or bush)
- ii) Meter inside fence or guard wall
- iii) Meter covered (e.g. by sand)
- iv) Meter buried
- v) Difficulty in locating meter

In these cases the Authority will:

- Prepare correspondence which is sent to customers advising them to clear meters;
- Initiate internal processes to make the meter accessible; for example; if the meter is inside the fence and cannot be accessed then a request is made for the Distribution Department to reposition that meter on the outside. Requests may also be made to clear buried meters or turn the dial to facilitate reading. An inspection is conducted to determine and correct the difficulty.
- Estimate the customer's usage and issue an estimated bill

N.B: It is a customer's responsibility to keep the meter clear and accessible.

Why do some customers get abnormal readings which result in high bills?

Abnormal readings resulting in high bills may be an indication of one of the following:

- i) Customer has a leak in the system
- ii) Reading has been recorded incorrectly
- iii) Unnecessary use or abuse of water
- iv) Water theft

In these cases the BWA will take the following actions:

1. When an abnormal reading is noticed, an attempt is usually made, by phone, to contact the individual. Failing that, an inspection is carried out and the customer is advised by letter of the high usage.
2. If the reading is recorded incorrectly, the correction is made through a credit adjustment to the account.
3. Customer is advised of option to have meter tested if he/she is sure that there is no leakage or other usage.

Why do customers receive bills after the due date?

BWA has made all attempts to streamline the billing process, by implementing the following system controls:

- i) Meter readings are done and bills are processed based on these readings.
The bills are processed 2 days later;
- ii) Bills are then printed the following day, separated and submitted to Post Office within 3 days;
- iii) The Due date is 21 days after bills are processed.

For example:

Meter read date:	2009-11-01
Bill date:	2009-11-03
Post Date:	2009-11-10
Due Date:	2009-11-24

Please note : Customers are billed according to the meter reading recorded on the meter. Also to be noted is the fact that after an estimated bill the usage recorded when the meter is read may appear to be excessive but in actual fact represents more than one month's usage.

Why are letters from customers not acknowledged and responded to within a reasonable timeframe?

The BWA receives a great deal of correspondence and although attempts are made to responded in a timely manner in all of the cases, research needs to be done and this may involve obtaining information from more than one department. BWA is however seeking to implement a system to update customers on the status of their queries.

Why should a customer pay \$57.50 to test a meter which belongs to the BWA?

It is the policy of the BWA that the party requesting the test must be prepared to bear the full cost of testing. Of course, where the test is found to be necessary (faulty meter) the money will be returned to the customer by credit to the account.

Why are BWA plumbing bills issued so long after the service was installed?

The BWA (Water Services) Regulations require the Authority to base its charges on the actual cost of work executed. To arrive at the actual cost requires collating information from three separate units (viz. Distribution, Stores and Payroll) of the Authority and vetting the final figures before the bill can be sent to the customer. This process can be time-consuming because it is manual system.

BILLING CALCULATIONS

Understanding how domestic water is calculated.

How are domestic customer rates calculated?

BWA's bills for domestic customers are calculated according to four rates blocs and the charges are determined over a 30-day period. The rate blocs are as follows:

- **\$2.48 per m³ (0-8 m³);**
- **\$3.10 per m³ (9-20 m³);**
- **\$4.66 per m³ (21-40 m³) and**
- **\$7.78 per m³ (over 40 m³).**

If the customer used the water in a 30-day billing period then either the minimum charge or the rate blocs apply to determining the overall charge. The daily average formula may also be used.

Understanding the Minimum Charge

e.g. 1

Meter reading indicates usage is 9 m³ in 30 days, this falls within the minimum amount (less than 12 m³) for which the minimum charge of \$32 is applied.

$$[384 (\$32 \times 12 \text{ months}) \div 365 (\text{days}) \times 30 (\text{days}) = \$31.56]$$

e.g. 2

Meter reading indicates usage is 8 m³ in 35 days, this falls within the minimum amount (less than 12 m³) for which the minimum charge is applied. However, since the number of days exceeds 30, then the overall charge is calculated using the daily average formula. $[384 \div 365 \times 35 = \$36.82]$

So for using 8 m³, the minimum charge does apply but must be prorated as the number of bill days exceeds 30.

Explaining Rate Blocs

e.g. 3

Meter reading indicates usage is 21 m³ in 30 days –

the first 8 are billed @ \$2.48 = \$ 19.84

the next 12 @ \$3.10 = \$ 37.20

the final 1 @ \$4.66 = \$ 4.66

Charge = \$61.70

If the timeframe in which the meter is read exceeds or is less than 30 days then the amount is prorated over the actual number of days between meter readings. The formula for calculating a bill for a period other than 30 days is done on a daily average and worked out as follows:

$8 \div 30 \times \text{number of days in billing period} = \# \text{ of m}^3 \text{ to be billed @ } \2.48
 $12 \div 30 \times \text{number of days in billing period} = \# \text{ of m}^3 \text{ to be billed @ } \3.10
 $20 \div 30 \times \text{number of days in billing period} = \# \text{ of m}^3 \text{ to be billed @ } \4.66
 Remaining m^3 calculated to be billed @ \$7.78

NB: All blocs may not be used.

Example 1

Customer A used 46m³ in a 35-day billing period

$8 \div 30 \times 35 = 9.33\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$2.48 = \$ 23.14$
 $12 \div 30 \times 35 = 14.00\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$3.10 = \$ 43.40$
 $46 - 23.33 = 22.67\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$4.66 = \$105.64$
Charge = \$172.18

Example 2

Customer B used 46m³ in a 31-day billing period

$8 \div 30 \times 31 = 8.27\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$2.48 = \$ 20.51$
 $12 \div 30 \times 31 = 12.40\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$3.10 = \$ 38.44$
 $20 \div 30 \times 31 = 20.67\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$4.66 = \$ 96.32$
 $46 - 41.34 = 4.66\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$7.78 = \$ 36.25$
Charge = \$191.52

Example 3

Customer C used 46m³ in a 28-day billing period

$8 \div 30 \times 28 = 7.47\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$2.48 = \$ 18.53$
 $12 \div 30 \times 28 = 11.2\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$3.10 = \$ 34.72$
 $20 \div 30 \times 28 = 18.67\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$4.66 = \$ 87.00$
 $46 - 37.34 = 8.66\text{m}^3 \text{ @ } \$7.78 = \$ 67.37$
Charge = \$207.62

Example 4

Calculation for usage of 120m³ over a 60-day billing period as compared with two (2) bills generated for usage of 60m³ over a 30-day billing period each.

$8\text{m}^3 \times 2.48 = \19.84
 $12\text{m}^3 \times 3.10 = \37.20
 $20\text{m}^3 \times 4.66 = \93.20
 $60 - 40 = 20\text{m}^3 \times 7.78 = \155.60
Charge = \$305.84
Charge for one month = \$305.84
Charge for two months = \$611.68 (\$305.84 x 2)

8 ÷ 30 × 60 = 16m³ @ \$2.48	= \$39.68
12 ÷ 30 × 60 = 24m³ @ \$3.10	= \$74.40
20 ÷ 30 × 60 = 40m³ @ \$4.66	= \$186.40
120 – 80 = 40m³ @ \$7.78	= \$311.20
Charge	= \$611.68

Please note in **Example 4** that whether billed separately or together using BWA's formula the charge is the same.

What is the Sewage Tariff?

The sewage tariff is a fee paid by customers who are connected either to the Bridgetown or South Coast Sewage Treatment Systems. It is calculated as a percentage of their monthly water bill. For domestic customers the fee is 1/3 of the water bill.

Understanding how commercial water bills are calculated?

How are commercial customers bills calculated?

BWA's bills for commercial customers are calculated according to the commercial rate of **\$4.66 per m³** and the charges worked out for the entire billing period in question.

Example

Meter reading indicates usage is 31 m³ in 34 days.

$$[31 \times 4.66 = \mathbf{\$144.46}]$$

Sewage tariff for commercial customers

Remember if as a commercial customer you are connected to one of the island's two sewage treatment plants, a sewage tariff of 2/3 of the water bill is charged to your account monthly.

How are estimated bills calculated?

Estimated bills are calculated by the system using the same rate blocs regardless of the number of days - they are not prorated. Once the meter is read in the following month or months, the system goes back to the last meter reading and makes the calculation accordingly. Any payments that were made during this period are then subtracted from the total and the remaining balance charged to the account.

What is the criteria used to calculate estimated charges?

The criteria used by the system to calculate estimated charges are as follows:

1. The previous month's reading once there was one reflecting consumption **OR**
2. The same month of the previous year **OR**
3. The highest recorded usage in the period referred to as winter or summer peak.
4. If none of the above criteria can be applied to the account, then the system uses the BWA generated average usage per household of 14 m³.

Any customers who require in depth explanation of their bills are advised to call or come to the Barbados Water Authority's Customer Service Centre.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

When conducting business with the Barbados Water Authority, customers should be aware that:

- When querying or paying a bill, customers should present a current water bill to the agent.
- The due date which appears on the bottom right hand corner of your water bill refers **ONLY** to current water charges and **NOT** any previous balances or arrears on the account. Any balances forward need to be cleared immediately to avoid disconnection.
- Accounts with arrears should be paid directly to the Barbados Water Authority payment centre in Probyn Street.
- Any customer having challenges making payment to the Authority can visit the Customer Service Centre to make arrangements to settle the outstanding amounts.
- To apply for a new service the documents required are:-
Town & Country Planning Approval, picture identification & a recent copy of a Land Tax Receipt. If the land does not belong to the applicant then a letter from the owner granting permission to the applicant, along with the owner's national registration number must be included.
- When applying for an additional service the new account must be in the name of the existing Account holder; the service must be inspected and approved by a BWA Superintendent **before** payment is made or installation done. In addition, if there are arrears on the existing account, the additional service may be denied.
- If a service is in a **Zone 1** area it must be inspected before payment for installation is made and the customer will be notified of the findings.
- Services of 1-inch and over **must** be approved by a BWA Engineer.
- BWA Meters should be accessible and visible at all times to BWA personnel. Garbage should not be dumped next to meters or on meters.
- The customer is responsible for the service from the meter to their home while the BWA is responsible for service of all pipes from the road to the meter.
- Customers should ensure that plumbing connections are in good working condition especially toilets with flapper valves.
- Services which were disconnected by the Authority with a lock are not guaranteed restitution in under 24 hours.
- When there is a change in property ownership, the following documents are required by BWA, **Title Deeds, Conveyances, Wills, Land Tax Receipts or a letter from an Attorney.**
- Property owners are reminded that the Barbados Water Authority does not mail bills overseas. In the event that the property belongs to an absentee owner, a local agent who will accept responsibility for the service must be appointed.

BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS

Water bills are distributed monthly and are payable at several locations:

- **BWA Customer Service Centre, Probyn Street;**
- **All branches of the Barbados National Bank;**
- **All Post Offices;**
- **The Barbados Public Workers Credit Union Ltd., Belmont Road & Broad Street and**
- **All SUREPAY outlets.**

Bills can also be paid online via **Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Nova Scotia** and **FirstCaribbean International Bank**. Customers paying at the Authority's Customer Service Centre may also use debit or credit cards to settle their bills.



"Quality water, Quality people"

Visit or call our customer service centre:

434-4292

BWA Customer Service Centre,
Coles Building, Probyn Street, Bridgetown