Coronavirus: Maintaining Utility Service During a Pandemic

I am writing to you on Day 8 of Governor Jay Inslee’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order of March 23, 2020. As this newsletter won’t reach some of you ‘til late May, things may be entirely different by the time you read it. Things seem to change by the week day hour.

First, and foremost, we at Kitsap PUD hope this newsletter finds you and your family well. 

For now though, from Day 8 of the lockdown, let me explain how Kitsap PUD has been operating in this challenging time.

Just prior to the Governor’s Stay Home order, we scaled back operations to only those tasks that were immediately necessary to maintain utility service to the community. We have suspended new service installations, most routine maintenance and all public events. This is to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus and to keep our staff safe.

Although our office is closed to the public, our Customer Service Department is available via email or by phone at 360-779-7656. On call personnel staff this number 24 hours/day.

With modern telecommunications we are able to accomplish much work remotely. Most of our water systems are outfitted with telemetry that allows us to monitor and even control critical components of the water system. Telecommunications also provide KPUD management staff with the ability to hold daily video conferences. This has allowed us to adapt to the ever-changing situation in a coordinated manner. Rest assured, we will continue to provide the critical utility services on which our community depends.

It’s not all doom and gloom. KPUD staff share a laugh during a video conference on April 2.

About Billing...

During this crisis, Kitsap PUD will suspend shutting off services for non payment. We will also stop issuing late fees on delinquent accounts.

To protect the health of our staff, we will discontinue reading meters at least through May. Billing during this time will be for the Basic Service Charge only ($26/month or $52/billing cycle). When we resume meter reading, we will bill for water used since the last reading. Commodity charges will be adjusted to ensure customers remain in usual cost tiers rather than higher tiers due to an extended reading period.

The Importance of Broadband

As mentioned above, broadband telecommunications have allowed KPUD to continue operating even under a Stay Home order.

All over society, industries are waking up to the potential provided by this modern utility as their staff are forced to work remotely.

As crazy as it might seem right now, when Public Utility Districts were given wholesale broadband telecommunications authority in 2000, some argued that broadband was not an “essential” utility.

Since that time, Kitsap PUD has installed over 300 miles of broadband infrastructure throughout Kitsap County. While a good start, there is much more to do to ensure all citizens have access to this essential utility and that all of society benefits from its promise. Learn more at www.kpud.org.

A broadband “heat” map showing levels of broadband service throughout Kitsap County. Since 2000, KPUD has been helping improve access amongst unserved and underserved communities.
**A Message from General Manager Bob Hunter**

I want to take a minute to assure you that, as this Coronavirus crisis proceeds, Kitsap PUD will continue to provide the essential utility services on which our community depends. Like most everyone, we have scaled back operations to only those tasks that are immediately essential to our core mission. This is to minimize the risk to our staff and the public as we go about our duties. Utility services are the foundation on which the rest of our society builds. As we respond to this developing challenge, know that I and the staff at Kitsap PUD are engaged and committed to maintaining these critical services through these uncertain times. Best wishes.

**A Message from Commissioner Debra Lester**

KPUD is committed to maintaining safe, reliable utility services during this Coronavirus crisis. KPUD’s employees have impressed us by immediately putting new systems/procedures into place. Thanks to our Information Technology (IT) Department, employees are able to work remotely. Operations, Telecom, and Construction Departments have established protocols of safe distancing, disinfection, and remote communication for KPUD field crews. Customer Service is still available by phone. The KPUD’s Board is holding virtual meetings so that necessary emergency orders, expenditures, projects, and policies can be approved. Please attend these meetings either online or by phone. Email ClerkoftheBoard@kpud.org or call (360) 626-7709 as to how to attend. We are grateful for citizens diligently following the directives aimed at slowing the spread of this virus. Lastly, we want to acknowledge and salute the front line workers putting themselves at risk. We extend our gratitude to first responders and healthcare providers as well as to grocery employees, sanitation workers, postal clerks, financial services, utility providers, food and agricultural workers, and many more who continue to show up regardless of the personal risks. This, in our opinion, is the essence of community. Please take good care of yourselves.

**Update: PFAS testing at NBK Bangor**

In late January, Kitsap PUD was notified the U.S. Navy would be testing groundwater wells around NBK Bangor for the presence of 18 different PFAS compounds. PFAS is an umbrella term for a class of manmade chemicals used in a wide range of products; including cookware, upholstery and fast food packaging. PFAS compounds are also used in firefighting foams that have been used on military bases. There have been documented cases where PFAS from these foams have infiltrated into local aquifers. Because they have used these foams on Bangor, the Navy is testing wells in the purple shaded areas to the right. KPUD has one well in the area, which serves our Avellana water system and another just outside the study area that serves our Brianwood water system. In February, KPUD tested both these wells for the 18 PFAS compounds in the study. Four compounds were detected at trace amounts as shown in the table below. These detections are well below any established or proposed regulatory levels. I will continue to update you as this study progresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFAS Compound</th>
<th>EPA Lifetime Health Advisory Level (ppt)</th>
<th>Proposed State Action Level (ppt)</th>
<th>Brianwood Detected Level</th>
<th>Avellana Detected Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PFBS</td>
<td>No LHA established</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFHXS</td>
<td>No LHA established</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFHXA</td>
<td>No LHA established</td>
<td>No SAL proposed</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFOA</td>
<td>70 -combined total of PFOA and PFOS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If reported in parts per million, instead, the 0.7 ppt results on the table to the left would be: 0.0000007 ppm.