



**PRESS RELEASE – Aug. 31, 2015**

**Communications: 972-624-3156**

## **Billing period, weather result in high water usage**

THE COLONY, Texas — The city has received many calls recently about unusually high water bills from the western portion of the community – mainly the Ridgepointe and Stewart Peninsula HOAs. Upon initial assessment, these readings did seem high so city staff went back and checked all complaints received, and also spot-audited a selection of homes to ensure that the readings were correct and to see if we could better understand the reason for these high bills.

In addition to checking the individual meters, we performed a billing audit and had our third-party billing administrator review the data to ensure the billing process had no issues and there were no anomalies in that cycle.

Upon reviewing the research, the city has concluded that the readings are correct and that the water was used by residents. The review has also led to the conclusion that a couple of factors compounded in a short period of time to result in the large bills; namely, the billing period and the weather. While normally one of these factors would not vary the bills by this amount, the timing of both factors combined for a large jump in the billing usage.

After an extensive research and re-reading process, we have seen that each and every meter we have read is higher than the reading billed, meaning more water has been used than billed. Had these meters been incorrectly read high (resulting in more water billed than used), we would have had a reading at or below what the re-reads taken weeks later had shown us.

**Billing period:** Typically, the city reads water meters every four weeks. These readings are done either by Water Department personnel physically or by an automated meter-reading system through the use of data transponders. This last billing cycle had a five-week usage period, versus the typical four, resulting in an extended time period of water usage to be billed. This 25-percent increase in the billing period will result in more water used for that specific bill. With 52 weeks per year, this happens roughly four times per year.

**Weather:** The North Texas area has seen an unusually cool and wet spring and early summer. This resulted in less outside water use as the need for watering was at its lowest point during the very wet, rainy season in which we saw all of our North Texas waterways and reservoirs full and overflowing. This

weather ended around early to mid-July and immediately turned into 100 degree-plus temperatures with very sparse to no precipitation afterwards, resulting in a large use of water typical for this part of the state this time of year.

In conclusion, water bills have been low since the summer of last year until now. With an extended billing period coupled with a dramatic weather change, we have seen usages go back to typical levels given the extended billing period that coincided with the calendar year. Had these factors happened at different times we would have seen more usage increases due to the weather but these are compounded by the fact that higher use due to weather hit at the same time as the extended billing period.

The City of The Colony is willing to work with any resident impacted by these circumstances to allow for an extended period to pay their bill given that this is a non-standard situation that has caught many North Texas residents off-guard. For information or to work out a payment arrangement or extension, please call the Customer Services Department at 972-624-3100.

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