



City of Duluth Communications Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information, contact Mayor Don Ness at (218) 730-5230; or Jeff Papas in the City's Communications Office at (218) 730-5211.

AMR project to begin Wednesday, April 2

The \$9.5 million dollar automated meter reading (AMR) project, approved by the City Council last January, is scheduled to begin on April 2, 2008, and to be completed by the spring of 2009.

At that time, the City of Duluth's Public Works and Utilities Department and its project partners will begin installing modules to existing water and gas meters to automate the meter reading process. The city has over 58,000 meters that will be upgraded by three contractors -- SL-Serco, A. G. O'Brien, and A. W. Kuettel & Sons. All installers will have photo identification badges, wear a company uniform, and drive clearly marked vehicles.

Residents and businesses should be on the lookout for information in their city utility bills about when the meter upgrades will take place in their area. Customers will receive information in the notice about scheduling appointments before the contractors commence work in their neighborhood. If a customer does not schedule an appointment in advance, then a postcard with a prescheduled appointment time will be sent to them.

Nearly all water meters are located inside a residence or building and contractors will need clear access to the meter to make the upgrade. The contractors will attach a module to the meter that will collect readings and any tamper data. The modules work indoors or outdoors, and are powered by batteries with an average life of 20 years. In most cases this upgrade can be made without interrupting utility service to the customer. There are also about 1,500 water and gas meters that must be replaced. In those cases a brief interruption to utility service will be necessary.

Once the installer arrives, it should take no more than 20 minutes to complete the work unless a full water or gas exchange is taking place. In instances where a full exchange is taking place the time may vary and the installer will let you know the expected time.

Data from the AMR meters will be transmitted by radio signal to a laptop computer with a radio receiver mounted in a vehicle driven near the meter to receive its data. This data will be downloaded to the City of Duluth's computer billing system to generate customer bills. Meter reading data for the whole City can be collected in just three business days each month through this AMR system.

All water and natural gas meters must be retrofitted with AMR modules for the project to be successful. There is no charge for the meter upgrade. The project will be paid for by savings from a more efficient and streamlined meter reading and billing process.

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