



HCWA Currents



NEWS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE HENRY COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 2 ♦ SPRING 2020

HCWA Caring for Customers and Community During Coronavirus

In an attempt to “Slow the Spread” and protect the safety and well-being of customers, employees and the community amidst the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, the Henry County Water Authority (HCWA) has implemented a number of proactive and responsive actions in phases.

Closing Customer Service Lobby

Phase 1 of the HCWA business continuity plan was to assure continued water and sewer operations, while protecting public health.

This first phase involves limiting public access to HCWA facilities, to promote social distancing and best practices for preventing the spread of the Coronavirus and COVID-19. The Authority has closed its customer service lobby at the Headquarters on Highway 20 West in McDonough, until further notice. However, the “drive-thru” window has remained open.

In addition, some HCWA employees are able to telework and/or report directly to respective job sites. And any necessary new development or pre-construction conferences or meetings with commercial customers are being held in the field.

Suspending Service Disconnections

HCWA leadership has enacted a policy to suspend customer cut-offs during the crisis, while allowing customers to make special payment arrangements as



While the HCWA Headquarters customer service lobby is closed until further notice in response to the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, the drive-thru window remains open.

well. However, HCWA customers are encouraged to keep their accounts current, with several payment options still available, such as online bill-pay, payments by phone and other methods. (See 'Payment Options' on page 2.)

Redundancies and Consistent Coverage

Phase 2 of the HCWA business continuity plan involves providing redundancies in operations and consistent coverage. The HCWA identified essential operations and employees to make sure there is continual coverage of their critical functions, which primarily include customer service, water treatment and wastewater treatment.

The HCWA has annual labor contractors who are on call to assist with line repairs and related emergencies, if necessary. The Authority also has placed some retired water and wastewater plant operators on notice to assist with plant operations, if needed.

In addition, the HCWA has duplicated its Customer Call Center, moving staff to a separate building to assist with handling the higher volume of calls. And current Authority employees with experience in customer service, who are working in other areas of the utility, may be called upon. Finally, all preventative maintenance activities that are not mission critical have been suspended.

For more information on HCWA activities and public education during the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, contact Customer Service at 770-957-6659, or email customer.care@hcwa.com.

You Can Help Prevent the “Coronavirus Clogs”

Remember: The Toilet is Not a Trash Can!

While HCWA customers are confined to their homes for much of the time during the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, the Authority has had to deal with the unintended consequences of a higher volume of wet wipes and grease entering sewer lines and threatening the sewer system operations.

To maintain the integrity of your home's plumbing (and septic tank), as well as the HCWA sewer system, please refrain from flushing any type of wet wipe down the toilet, even those that are labeled as “flushable.”

When wet wipes are flushed down the toilet, they enter the HCWA sewer system (or your septic tank), where they are likely to clog HCWA sewer lines and cause sewer spills and overflows, not to mention sewer backups in your home, even potentially damaging equipment at HCWA wastewater treatment plants.



These wet wipes and rags were pulled recently from the HCWA sewer system. Remember, the toilet is not a trash can, so please don't flush even “flushable” wet wipes.

Instead of flushing wet wipes, please throw them in the trash after use. Remember: “the toilet is not a trash can!”

Help Us in the Fight Against FOG!

During the current pandemic, Authority officials also have noticed an increase in fats, oils, and grease (FOG) entering the HCWA sewer system, as a result of more people cooking at home.

Excessive fats, oils and grease have damaging effects on your plumbing (and septic tank), as well as the HCWA wastewater conveyance and treatment system.

When customers dispose of FOG down the sink, they act as a coagulant within your plumbing, which may cause backups in your home that require you to call a plumber! FOG also clogs the flow throughout our sewer system, which results in sewer spills and overflows, in addition to service outages requiring costly repairs!

Rather than pour grease down the drain, let it cool and pour into a container that can be sealed and thrown away. Plus, please scrape food from plates and wipe dishes clean prior to washing.

For updates and more information on HCWA operations during the pandemic, contact our Customer Service at 770-957-6659, or refer to our website at www.hcwa.com.



HCWA Naturalist Maranda Stonica (right) shows students an image of how sewer lines are clogged by FOG.

Is My Water Safe to Drink? Absolutely.

HCWA customers can have the peace of mind knowing their drinking water is not a source of Coronavirus or COVID-19.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), conventional water treatment like that of the HCWA uses filtration and disinfection that removes or inactivates the virus that causes COVID-19. In addition, the World Health Organization adds that the presence of the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water supplies.

The HCWA uses the disinfectants chlorine and chlorine dioxide during water treatment, in addition to filtering, before distributing finished drinking water to its customers. The disinfection and filtration processes are controlled and monitored continuously at the water quality



Barry Brand (left), Operations Supervisor at the Tussahaw Water Treatment Plant, shows touring guests how the Authority tests its water quality.

laboratories of the Towaliga and Tussahaw Water Treatment Plants, to ensure that Authority

customers are receiving the highest quality drinking water possible.

In addition, HCWA sewer customers can rest assured that there is no evidence that sewer or the wastewater conveyance and treatment processes are sources for the Coronavirus. HCWA Water Reclamation Facilities treat and then disinfect wastewater using chlorine. This Coronavirus causing COVID-19 is particularly susceptible to chlorine.

Evidence of HCWA water quality, including laboratory test results explaining “what is in your drinking water and why,” is provided in the annual Water Quality Report, available on the HCWA website at www.hcwa.com. The most recent 2020 Henry County Water Quality Report will be online prior to July 1, per regulatory guidelines.

Second Front

HCWA Receives Spring Industry Awards

Authority recognized for outstanding facilities, employees and operations

While the Spring Conference of the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) scheduled for April was cancelled due to the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, the industry's leaders still announced those awards



Lindsey Sanders (left), Environmental Compliance Coordinator, was instrumental in implementing HCWA Public Education events and activities, resulting in the GAWP Education Program of Excellence Award.

won by the best of the best water utilities in the state.
The Henry County Water Authority (HCWA) is among select company after receiving nine GAWP Spring Awards, honoring individuals, facilities and programs that were noted for excellence.

- The HCWA received the following GAWP Awards:**
- ★ Best Operated Water Treatment Plant Certificate of Achievement AND Platinum Award for 13 consecutive years of 100% permit compliance at the Tussahaw Water Treatment Facility.
 - ★ Best Operated Water Treatment Plant Certificate of Achievement AND Platinum Award for 13 consecutive years of 100% permit compliance at the Towaliga Water Treatment Facility.
 - ★ Wastewater Facility Gold Award for 100% permit compliance at the Indian Creek Water Reclamation Facility.
 - ★ Land Application System (LAS) Gold Award for 100% permit compliance at the Bear Creek Facility.
 - ★ Education Program of Excellence Award for Water Systems in Georgia.
 - ★ Golden Hydrant Society Induction for Andy

Young, Operations Supervisor at the Towaliga Water Treatment Plant.
★ District 3 Top Operator for Sheila Kern, Class 1 Operator at the Tussahaw Water Treatment Plant.
For the complete feature on HCWA Awards and other news and public education from the Henry County Water Authority, check out our website at www.hcwa.com, or the Cubihatcha Outdoor Education Center Facebook page.



The Cubihatcha Center staff is responsible for carrying out many of the programs responsible for the HCWA winning the GAWP Education Program of Excellence Award.

HCWA Customers Have Convenient Payment Options

While the customer service lobby inside the HCWA Headquarters may be closed in response to the current Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, the Authority provides multiple, convenient ways for customers to still make payments on their water/sewer bill, 24 hours a day and seven days a week.



- Those HCWA payment options for customers include:**
- ✓ Our outdoor Kiosk (no money orders or certified checks, please);
 - ✓ Our night-drop depository (no cash, please);
 - ✓ Our website at www.hcwa.com;
 - ✓ Our Interactive Voice Response phone system at 404-341-9689, or toll-free at 1-855-985-1136;
 - ✓ Customers may also choose to

speak with a representative by dialing the main number (770-957-6659) and selecting our dedicated "Payments Only" line;

- ✓ During regular business hours, our main office has a convenient drive-thru window, which will remain open until further notice;
- ✓ HCWA customers also can pay their bills through their financial institution's bill pay service;
- ✓ We still accept checks thru the mail as well.


Please note: all payments made with a credit/debit card will incur a \$2.50 convenience fee up to \$300.00, while payments over \$300.00 will incur a 2.95% convenience fee.

The HCWA Headquarters (home office) is located at 1695 Highway 20 West in McDonough. Our office is open Monday – Friday, from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
For questions or more information, feel free to call our Customer Service staff at 770-957-6659, or email us at customer.care@hcwa.com.

You Can Help Through Charitable Assistance

Since being established in 2014, through the leadership of Board Member Carlotta Harrell, the HCWA Charitable Assistance Program (CAP) has raised nearly \$33,000 to distribute to customers in need, assisting them with their water/sewer bill payments.
The HCWA receives contributions to the CAP fund through customer donations, coming primarily from the Authority's "Round Up" program. HCWA customers can round up their monthly water/sewer bill to the nearest dollar, with that contribution dedicated to the CAP fund. Those cents turn into dollars, which in turn provide hope for those in need.
An added benefit of this generosity from HCWA customers is

that 100% of their contributions are returned to the community, since no administration fees are necessary to operate the program. That's because the Authority partners with Samaritans Together of Henry County, a local non-profit who administers the program and distributes the funds to qualified recipients.
If you know of someone who needs assistance, the HCWA has a dedicated helpline with Samaritans Together at 404-590-7735. Just leave your contact information and a Samaritans Together volunteer will respond to your request.
And for those HCWA customers not yet participating in the CAP, you can clip and return the form below, and we'll get you signed up!



Henry County Water Authority

Customer Name: _____

Account Number: (if known) _____

Service Address: _____

☐ I authorize the Henry County Water Authority to round up my utility bill to benefit the Charitable Assistance Program. I understand that my bill will continue to be rounded up on a monthly basis unless I notify the Henry County Water Authority, in writing, that I wish to discontinue the program.

Signature: _____ Date: _____


Mail to: HCWA-Customer Service
1695 Highway 20 West
McDonough, GA 30253

Email to: customer.care@hcwa.com



DRINKING WATER WEEK
May 3 – 9, 2020

There when you need it

ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP			
Jimmy Carter	Chairman	Lindy D. Farmer, Jr.	 <p>Henry County Water Authority 1695 Highway 20 West ■ McDonough, GA 30253 (770) 957-6659 ■ www.hcwa.com</p>
Warren Holder	Vice Chairman	General Manager	
Carlotta Harrell	Secretary/Treasurer		
Cletonya LaGrand Stidom	Member	Kimberly Turner	
Zuvena Poole	Member	Osborne Clerk	