



Meters

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Table of Contents

Meters	3
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Meters

Reference Number: MTAS-838

The main source of information for revenue is water meter readings. Care should be taken to make sure meters are properly read and maintained. Any discrepancies or questions about readings should be noted and handled before billings are sent to customers. Occasionally, a meter reading may have to be estimated due to inaccessibility of the meter location. The account should be noted as estimated for future reference and, if at all possible, should be read at the next billing period.

Automated Meter Reading — One of the more recent changes in meter reading is the availability of automated meter reading (AMR). AMR is being done in several forms. Devices may be installed on the meter, which allow the meter reader to use a touch wand to obtain the reading. Apartment buildings and condominiums that are metered separately may be networked so that touching only one meter reads an entire group. There also are radio read devices that let the meter reader simply drive past the location. A special device on the meter sends a signal that is picked up by the equipment in the meter reading truck. The most advanced systems can have all the meters read from a central location through either radio or cell phone transmission.

Meter Maintenance — It is important that water meters record usage as accurately as possible. Water meter readings result directly in water and sewer revenues for your city. As meters age they become more inaccurate and usually fail to record all of the water passing through them. Therefore, a regular program for changing out older water meters should be put into place. Replacing older meters on schedule will help the city maintain the revenue level it needs. Recommended schedules include changing out the meters every eight to 12 years or when a meter has recorded 1 million gallons of usage. The information from the meter manufacturer will provide guidance on expected lifetime of a meter. Large industrial or commercial meters should be tested periodically to certify their accuracy. Many times, these larger revenue sources will account for the greater percentage of the city's revenues. It is always better to test these meters at the location under the same conditions as normal service. Also, remember that sewer billings are computed based on water usage. If the water reading is less than accurate it will also affect sewer revenue.

Other Metering Concerns — It is usually recommended that each separate service location have its own water meter and sewer service. Sometimes multi-family dwellings will service all users through one master meter. The city needs to have policies in place that address minimum billing and other rates in master metering or the system will not realize as much revenue from these master meters as they normally would from individual metering. However, additional revenues in these situations may be offset by increased maintenance costs of the lines and meters necessary to serve each customer. Cities need to establish uniform policies for handling customer metering concerns for multi-family dwellings, and commercial and industrial customers. This will allow your employees to answer customer questions and ensure that the city is treating all customers fairly.

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

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