



INSIDE



North Ft. Myers joins the FGUA as our ninth system in south Florida. We have big plans for this system!



Unexpected water emergency in the middle of the night? Our emergency line is the place to call for up-to-date information on outages and what to do.



It's on your property, but it doesn't belong to you! By law, your water meter must be accessible to the utility for reading. Learn how to avoid common challenges.

# fguaNEWS

FALL 2010 — Golden Gate/Lehigh Acres/North Ft. Myers

updates & information from your water and wastewater utility

[www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com)

## Welcome North Ft. Myers!

The Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA) would like to welcome our new customers in N. Ft. Myers! The FGUA purchased the North Fort Myers Utility, Inc. (NFMU) at the end of July 2010. NFMU provides almost 12,000 customers in Lee County with wastewater service and 2,000 with both water and wastewater.

NFMU's owners originally sought more than \$100 million for the system. The FGUA purchased the system for \$55 million. The deal also included an agreement that if the system grows, half of the connection charges, up to an additional \$25 million collected from future customers, would be paid to the prior owner. As Robert Sheets, FGUA's System Manager, explained, "The FGUA reduced the price to \$55 million by having NFMU's owners take the risk that additional payments would be paid by future customers if growth occurs."

The FGUA is undertaking projects to improve service to NFMU customers and plans to expand involvement of customers in discussions about utility issues. John Andrews, Chairman of the Committee For Better Water Now, a Pasco County customer advocacy group, has worked closely with the FGUA for over a year. Mr. Andrews explained that "the FGUA has really turned things around for customers here in Pasco County. We went from an adversarial relationship with the prior owner to an outstanding relationship with the FGUA." There will be an FGUA customer ombudsman in the North Fort Myers office to monitor responsiveness, address customer concerns, and provide community information outreach.

"The FGUA will invest millions to improve and expand the wastewater treatment process at NFMU's main Del Prado plant," explained Mr. Sheets. Both of NFMU's wastewater plants require upgrades to meet current requirements and provide adequate treatment of the wastewater, according to engineers hired to evaluate the facilities.

Customers will also benefit from some new convenience features, including online bill pay and account access, expected to be available by the end of 2010.

The NFMU system is the ninth in the FGUA family of utility systems located in Lee, Collier and Pasco Counties. The FGUA is a special purpose government agency and is governed by a six-member board of directors from Lee, Polk, Citrus, Pasco, Hendry and Desoto Counties. Board members meet monthly to represent the member systems and establish policy on customer service, rates, conservation programs, water reuse and long-range planning. The public is welcome to attend any of the FGUA monthly board meetings. Copies of the meeting schedule, agendas and meeting minutes are available at [www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com).

North Ft. Myers customers can visit the FGUA Customer Service Office located at 5660 Bayshore Rd., Suite 36 in Ft. Myers or call 239-543-1005.

*U.S. Water Services Corporation is the contract operator for the water treatment plants and the customer service office. You may see their trucks, with FGUA logos, on the street and field staff checking different system components daily.*

## FGUA Soon Serving MacDill Air Force Base

WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE FGUA was selected to acquire, repair, improve and operate the water and wastewater systems serving MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa. The systems will be conveyed to FGUA as part of a Department of Defense program aimed at revitalizing aging utility system infrastructures at military installations.

According to the Defense Logistics Agency's Defense Energy Support Center, FGUA was selected following issuance of a competitive request for proposals to over 750 companies nationwide. A transition period for the MacDill acquisition is scheduled to take place through mid-March 2011, at which time FGUA will receive a bill of sale and take over operations. The process of acquiring ownership of these facilities is lengthy to ensure a thorough review of the actual facilities, equipment and inventory and their condition.

"Of course we're honored to have been selected to provide these critical services to the Central Command which is responsible for protecting U.S. security worldwide," said Robert Sheets, System Manager.

### Annual Consumer Confidence Reports

Want to know what's in your water? **The 2009 Consumer Confidence Reports are available online at [www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com).** We produce these reports once a year to inform you about your water quality based on the previous year of tests collected by the Florida Department of Health. Should any change in the current water quality occur that would present a health risk to customers, notification to those affected would occur immediately as well as any necessary work to correct the problem.

## Important Notes

### AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY CALLS

Plumbing emergencies are never convenient. If one occurs and your water needs to be turned off after hours, help is still available. Each customer service office has the after hours emergency number listed on a recorded message, and the phone numbers are also available at [www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com).

The emergency line staff can evaluate the problem and send someone to the property if necessary. They are notified of line breaks that happened during working hours, and can let customers know that local staff is working on the problem. However, if the water is off due to non-payment, the after-hours staff cannot help—the account holder must come into the office and pay the past due amount before service can be restored.

If the emergency call has not been resolved by the time the office opens at 8 AM, customers can call the local office for an update.

**BILL PAYING OPTIONS** For your convenience, the FGUA offers a number of options for paying your monthly bill. Our customer service office in your service area accepts cash, checks, and money orders. Credit card payments may be made in person, over the telephone or online at [www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com) (Lehigh Acres and Golden Gate offices). The North Fort Myers and two of the Pasco systems are currently working on web access and the ability to accept credit card payments online.

Another option is EZ Pay. This program automatically deducts your monthly payment from your bank account. You may also pay online through your personal bank account.

The FGUA has an agreement with Amスコ in Pasco County to accept FGUA payments at their facilities.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Pasco is the only system that has an offsite payment option. If any other facility advertises that they accept FGUA payments, please check with the customer service office before using their service. This could be a scam in which the company will take your payment but not apply it to your FGUA account. In these circumstances, some customers have not only lost the money they gave to these companies, but also were still responsible for their utility bill.

### FGUA AT YOUR SERVICE

#### Lehigh Acres Office

866-310-4878 or 239-368-1615  
1229 Homestead Road N  
Lehigh Acres FL 33936-6003  
[FguaCS\\_Lehigh@govserv.com](mailto:FguaCS_Lehigh@govserv.com)

#### Golden Gate Office

800-818-9677 or 239-455-1583  
11985 Collier Blvd, Suite 7  
Golden Gate, FL 34116  
[FguaCS\\_GoldenGate@govserv.com](mailto:FguaCS_GoldenGate@govserv.com)

#### North Ft. Myers Office

239-543-1005  
5660 Bayshore Rd, Suite 36  
Ft. Myers, FL 33917  
[FguaCS\\_NFM@govserv.com](mailto:FguaCS_NFM@govserv.com)

**FLORIDA GOVERNMENTAL UTILITY AUTHORITY Board Members** Lea Ann Thomas, Chairperson (863-534-6031); Robert Knight, Vice Chair (352-527-7647); Michele L. Baker, Vice Chair (727-847-8115); Jim Lavender (239-479-8505); Shane Parker (863-675-5220); Bart Arrington (863-491-7500) **Alternates** Polk: VACANT, Lee: Douglas L. Meurer, PE (239-479-8779); Hendry: VACANT; Pasco: Bruce E. Kennedy, PE (727-847-8115); Citrus: VACANT; Desoto: VACANT **System Management** Robert E. Sheets, System Manager (850-681-3717); Tarek Fahmy, Capital Program Manager (877-552-3482); Jerry Connolly, Operations Manager (877-552-3482) **Contact** Faith Doyle, Clerk to the Board, FGUA Operations Office, Suite 2000, 280 Wekiva Springs Rd, Longwood FL 32779, 877-552-FGUA (3482) Toll Free, 407-629-6900. **System Office & Customer Service Centers** Golden Gate: 239-455-1583, Lehigh Acres: 239-368-1615, Pasco Systems: 727-372-0115 [WWW.FGUA.COM](http://WWW.FGUA.COM) **FGUA News Editor:** [miller@govserv.com](mailto:miller@govserv.com)

# Water Meter Woes

IN ORDER FOR THE FLORIDA GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY (FGUA) TO CORRECTLY CALCULATE THE MONTHLY WATER AND SEWER BILL, we must read the water meter located on the property. Often the meters are in the right of way next to the street, but meters may be located next to the building or even in your backyard.

Water meters are the property of the utility, and state law requires that duly authorized agents of the utility be granted safe access at all reasonable hours to the premises of the customer for the purpose of inspecting the customer's connection; for installing, maintaining, inspecting or removing the utility's property and for reading meters just to name a few.

Often times, a meter is not easily accessible, perhaps it is behind a fence that has been locked, there is a pet contained near the meter that could be considered unfriendly, or there is overgrown vegetation, construction supplies, or other forms of blockage. As a result, the meter cannot be read on a monthly basis. In these cases, a utility may lawfully estimate a bill using the customer's twelve-month history. If estimation is necessary for more than two months, a utility has the right to turn off service until the meter becomes accessible.

In order to avoid this, we will contact customers with inaccessible meters by mail and ask that the obstruction be removed. This may include removing plants, moving other blockages, leaving gates

unlocked, or planning a time to read the meter when a pet can be safely moved away from the area of the meter. If we have to remove vegetation or other obstructions, it may be done without consideration to the landscaping plan at the property, so we make an effort to give notice and allow the property owner to manage the obstruction as they see fit. It is to the customers benefit to work with the FGUA and keep the meter accessible.

Although estimating a bill may seem like a good option, once the meter is accessible and a reading can be taken, the next bill will reflect the actual usage for the time period when the bill was estimated. The read could show either more usage than was estimated, resulting in a larger bill, or could show lower usage than was estimated, resulting in a utility credit on your account. Also, if a meter remains unavailable, we may need to relocate the meter—which may cause an interruption in service. In addition, you may be responsible for costs associated with installing new plumbing lines.

For these reasons, please contact the FGUA if you receive a letter indicating that we were not able to read your meter. Our staff can work with you to explain the issue and outline your options to correct the problem.

*In North Ft. Myers, where Lee County Utilities provides water to FGUA wastewater customers, the county provides meter reading services and provides the meter readings to the FGUA for sewer bills.*

## UPDATES AND TIMELY INFORMATION

**Lehigh Acres** Customers in Lehigh Acres should note that a rate increase of 9% took effect October 1, 2010. A public rate hearing was held on September 15, 2010 at the East County Regional Library to discuss the increase. The hearing was continued to the FGUA Board meeting on September 16, 2010 where the increase was approved. Copies of the presentations are available at [www.fgua.com](http://www.fgua.com) or in the Lehigh Acres customer service office located at 1229 Homestead Rd North. // FGUA has completed construction of the new lift station at the corner of Homestead Rd and Leland Heights Blvd. The lift station moves wastewater to the wastewater plant for processing. The new lift station provides many improvements to customers including larger capacity pumps that are quieter than those previously utilized, state of the art odor control and safety systems, and an emergency backup system to insure there is no interruption to the power supply. The landscaping around the outer fence uses native Florida plants, and a drip

irrigation system to insure the landscaping will survive with minimal water use. // Thank you to all our customers who came by the FGUA booth at the Lift Up Lehigh Event on October 2, 2010. FGUA was proud to be a sponsor at the 3rd annual event to help people learn about service organizations in the area.

**Golden Gate** Two ongoing Repair and Rehabilitation projects started in October. These include manhole rehabilitation to make sure the covers are even with the pavement and fit correctly. Fire Hydrants will be painted after the yearly testing and cleaning process is completed.

**North Ft. Myers** An extensive Repair and Rehabilitation project has started in N. Ft. Myers. This includes inspection and maintenance of all utility facilities, including lift stations, pumps, and manhole covers. // Two future capital improvement projects include installation of a force main from Waterways Estates to the Del Prado Wastewater plant, and a wastewater plant expansion at the Del Prado facility. Design-build contracts have been awarded to commence this work.

