



INSIDE



Now's the time to brush up on your hurricane knowledge and prepare a plan



FGUA now accepts credit card payments over the phone and in person! Learn more about this convenient option for bill payment.



We are hard at work for you, improving your water utility and responding to your needs. Check out the latest updates.

fguaNEWS

SPRING 2010 — Golden Gate/Lehigh Acres

updates & information from your water and wastewater utility

www.fgua.com

Hurricanes 101

Hurricanes are nature's most severe storms. While hurricane season runs from June 1–November 30, the most active part of the season is August–October. Knowing the serious warnings associated with hurricanes helps you to plan ahead for the safety and security of your property, your family, and your pets.

A **hurricane watch** is issued when a hurricane poses a threat to coastal areas, generally within 36 hours. Everyone in the area should listen for further advisories and be prepared to act promptly if a hurricane warning or evacuation order is issued. A **hurricane warning** is issued when hurricane winds of 74 mph or higher, or a combination of dangerously high water and very rough seas are expected in a specific coastal area within 24 hours. When a hurricane warning is issued, all precautions should be completed immediately. If the hurricane's path is unusual or erratic, the warning may be issued only a few hours before the beginning of hurricane conditions.

Stay informed of storm warnings by listening to NOAA Weather Radio. NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day. A battery- or crank-powered radio is an essential part of any storm survival kit. Always be prepared to take action and consider any hurricane or tornado warnings or watches to be serious and make plans to protect your family and property immediately.

Returning Home After Evacuation

If you had to leave your home, return only when local authorities tell you it is safe to do so, and return with caution. Structural damage, household dangers, and utility hazards may be present when you arrive.

When you first return home, check the outside of your home for structural damage, then check inside. Always sniff for gas leaks and if you detect the odor or hear hissing gas, leave the property immediately and call the fire department using a cellular telephone or a neighbor's phone. Always be aware, too, of rodents and wild animals that may have taken up shelter in or around your home.

If you see sparks or frayed/damaged electrical wires in your house, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the fuse box or circuit breaker. Be careful not to stand in water—even a puddle—to touch your circuit breaker. If you need help checking your electricity or repairing it, call a professional electrician for help.

If you have been told by The FGUA or other authorities that sewer lines were damaged (or if you suspect so yourself), avoid using sinks, showers, or toilets and contact The FGUA immediately. If water pipes are damaged, turn off the water at the main valve and call a plumber for assistance.

If the disaster was widespread, the water utility service may have been damaged or disrupted by the storm, or it may be operating with less pressure than usual. Therefore, listen to local television or radio stations for instructions about the safety of the water supply and whether you have to take special precautions such as Boil Water Notices before using the water. If you are unsure about the safety of the water, call your local FGUA service center and ask for or listen to emergency advisories.

The FGUA is committed to keeping your water supply safe during a catastrophic event. We issue Boil Water Notices to each household and business in the event extra precautions are needed, and we carefully inspect and test the water infrastructure and supply before we allow you to return to normal consumption. You can always call our customer service centers to get information before, during, or after a natural disaster. At the end of a Boil Water period, you will be notified officially by The FGUA that it is ok to return to normal water use.

It is important to get the right information at the right time during and after a hurricane, so listen carefully to your radio for weather warnings and information, and take proper steps to protect yourself, your family, and your pets when returning home.

After the Storm

In the event of a water emergency, make sure you know how to protect yourself and your family. There are five different instances in which you may be required to boil your water for safety.

MICROBIOLOGICAL CONTAMINATION:

Occurs when water samples show the presence of harmful bacteria.

ZERO OR NEGATIVE PRESSURE:

Occurs when we experience equipment failure or power outages, forcing the water to stop flowing.

LOW WATER PRESSURE:

Usually results from cracked or damaged pipes that could potentially allow contamination to enter the public water or excess capacity issues.

WATER MAIN BREAKS/INTERRUPTIONS:

Boil Water Notices must be issued in these cases because there is a possibility of contamination due to a loss of water pressure.

WELL FLOODING:

This occurs when the water supply well overflows, causing easy access for harmful bacteria.

To protect your family against potentially harmful bacteria in these rare situations, simply bring all water used for cooking or drinking to a rolling boil for one minute. These 60 seconds are enough time to effectively kill any active bacteria and make the water safe for cooking and drinking. As an alternative, you may use bottled water.

Your health is our greatest concern. If your residence or business is ever under a Boil Water Notice, you will be notified with a door hanger or through your local media outlets.

Adapted from "Hurricane 101" by Chris Floyd, American Red Cross and "Picking Up the Pieces After a Disaster" by American Red Cross Disaster Services. www.redcross.org

FGUA AT YOUR SERVICE

Lehigh Acres Office

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Lehigh Acres FL 33936-6003
FguaCS_Lehigh@govserv.com

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A New, More Convenient Way to Pay!

FGUA now accepts credit/debit card payments

You can now use your **Visa, MasterCard, or Discover** credit card to pay your water utility bill! The Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA) Customer Service Offices in Lehigh Acres and Golden Gate are now accepting credit cards—and debit cards with one of these three credit logos (they will be processed as a credit card).

In response to popular demand, all utility customers may now pay regular bills and deposits via credit card either in the customer service office or over the telephone. We believe this service will make it easier for both local and seasonal residents to work with us. You also continue to have the option of having your bill paid automatically from your bank account through the E Z Pay system. Just fill out a short form, include a voided check, and the bank will mail your payment to the FGUA approximately 5 days before the due date. You will still receive a monthly statement showing how much money will be deducted from your account, but the bill will read “Do Not Pay, E Z Pay” in the due date section.

On line payments are not yet available, but should be implemented later in the year. Customers may sign up to check account balance and due date at www.fgua.com. Click on the *Account Information* link on the left side of the page, and follow the instructions to set up a new login profile.



UPDATES AND TIMELY INFORMATION

Service-Ready Properties Now Included in Billing

New policy requires base facility charges for all properties with available utility service

As of October 1, 2009, all properties with water or sewer service available receive a bill for the base facility charges each month, even if there is not an open account. These fees are used to maintain the water and sewer lines and treatment plants so service is available to all customers. This policy of applying base facility charges to inactive accounts is new to the FGUA, but has been in use by other utilities in Florida and other states for years. Following public hearings in September, 2009, property owners with closed accounts were individually notified of the change in November 2009 and the first bills were mailed in December 2009.

Public hearings to discuss all the rate changes, including the new policy, were held September 2, 2009 in Lehigh Acres and September 3, 2009 in Golden Gate. The final hearing was at the September 15, 2009 FGUA Board of Directors meeting when the rate resolution was adopted.

As a result of the new policy, all customers wishing to open a new account will be required to fill out an application form that includes the property owner's name and address. When an account is closed, that was not previously opened in the owner's name, the account will automatically revert to the property owner.

Mandatory Sewer Connections in Lehigh Acres

Time draws near for connections to utility system

The FGUA has mailed reminder notices to the 166 properties identified as part of the mandatory sewer connection program. These properties are located next to existing sewer lines, and are required to connect to the sewer system within 365 days of first notification pursuant to Florida Statutes and Lee County Ordinance. The first official notification was sent to affected property owners in late June, 2009.

To ease the financial burden on customers, the utility is offering four different financing options, including a 20 year payment plan to be paid on the property tax bill. Connection requires the property owner to hire a contractor to disable the septic system and install plumbing lines. All connection costs, with the exception of the account deposit, may be included in the amount to be financed by the FGUA.

If you have received notice that you are included in the program, contact Barbara Kerby at 239-368-1615 for total costs and payment options. Financing agreements with the FGUA should be finalized in April so that the connection can be completed by the July 1, 2010 deadline.



Hard Water in Lehigh Acres

Customers in the Lehigh Acres system will continue receiving quarterly health department notices on a variance for high levels of total dissolved solids in the drinking water. The water is safe to drink and use for washing. The variance is due to the high levels of natural minerals contained in water samples. An extension to the original variance was requested until the Reverse Osmosis plant is built at water treatment plant 2 in Mirror Lakes. The estimated completion date for the plant is 2012. The variance only affects customers who receive water from water treatment plant 2. Most of these properties are located in the southern end of the FGUA system in Lehigh Acres.

Odor Complaints in Golden Gate

We hear you and we're working on a fix

The wastewater treatment plant in Golden Gate has received early morning complaints of strong odors when the wind is blowing. We reported the complaints to the Department of Environmental Protection. The odors were caused as solids were pumped from one treatment chamber to the next. This process is done during the daytime since the pump noise could interrupt nearby residents late at night. We are evaluating potential modifications to the process to minimize solids which cause the odors in that chamber.

Before You Set the Irrigation System

New year-round irrigation rules began March 15, 2010

South Florida Water Management District recently approved year-round watering restrictions. The new rules end the emergency rules that have been in effect for the last few years. Residents of Golden Gate may water 3 days a week, not between 10 AM and 4 PM. Due to a more restrictive ordinance in unincorporated Lee County, residents of Lehigh Acres may only water 2 days per week, not between 10 AM and 4 PM. Please check the Water Management District website at www.sfwmd.gov for more details on irrigation days and times for your property.