



# STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP

Quarterly Newsletter For Maine Water Systems

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## Legislative Update

A new draft rule for PFAS was submitted May 21<sup>st</sup> to the Maine state legislature by the DWP. The goal of this rule is to align with the proposed US EPA federal PFAS standards from April 2024. The rule would require all community and non-transient non-community public water systems as well as bottled water suppliers to test for PFAS.

There will be a public hearing about the draft rule on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2025 and the public comment period has been extended to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2025. Please check the draft rule page for more information or to submit a comment.



**Drinking Water Rule, 10-144**  
**CMR Ch. 231**



# Considering Monthly Billing?

In recent years many utilities have found moving to monthly billing has been beneficial.

An easy first step a utility can take is offering for customers to go paperless and to use an online payment option which will reduce mailing costs associated with the increased billing frequency.



## Potential Benefits

- 1 More consistent flow of incoming revenue
- 2 It is easier to detect leaks and repair them quickly when you check meters more frequently
- 3 Customers' bills are lower and easier for them to manage
- 4 New rates go into effect more quickly

# Private Subdivision Water Lines



If a water utility has voted not to invest in main extensions or service lines, and a private subdivision wants to connect to the utility, the new subdivision is responsible for the cost.

Utilities should consider whether they want to master meter the subdivision as a whole or individually meter the homes, which would require easements for shut-off valves.

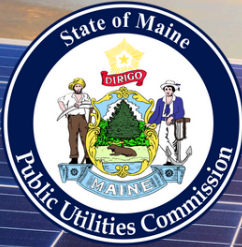
It is the responsibility of the utility to ensure that each extension is to their standards and plays a part in the proper development of the distribution system.

**For More Information, click below:**

- **Chapter 65 of Maine PUC Rules**
- **35-A M.R.S. § 6106**



# Solar Power: Dual Perspectives



## PUC Perspective

Utilities looking to lease property to a solar company should ask the PUC for certification that PUC approval is not necessary for this type of lease.

Utilities would need to demonstrate that:

1. They retain the right to the property
2. They have put proper protections in place, ensuring there will be no interference in serving water to their customers

If a utility does not ask the PUC for this certification, then the PUC may be required to formally approve or reject the project.

If a proposed solar project could affect the ability of the utility to serve customers, the utility would need to show a termination clause that would protect the utility. This would ensure that if an issue arose, the utility could get out of the lease.

For more information, click the link below:

**[35-A M.R.S. § 1101 \(4\)](#)**



## DWP Perspective

The DWP advocates for as little development as possible in the Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA). A mature forest is the most protective land use for drinking water quality. However, if a solar energy project is developed within a system's protection area, there are some considerations:

- Maintain an undisturbed buffer of at least 300' around a supply well
- Only documented PFAS-free panels should be used on or near a WHPA
- The construction phase poses elevated risks to a drinking water source due to the potential for accidental spills from contractor vehicles and heavy equipment.
- When construction is complete, the site should have an established stable and grassy meadow surface around and under the solar panels. This helps promote groundwater recharge and protects groundwater quality.

## Sharing Information with Landlords

Under PUC rules, utilities are not allowed to release tenant/customer information to a landlord unless the landlord requests it from the utility. In such instances, the only information that can be released is the status of the tenant's bill. If a landlord wanted more information (such as the tenant's usage), they must get permission from the tenant before utilities can provide additional information.

If landlords were not given permission by their tenants to have the utility release their information, then disconnect notices going to landlords may violate PUC rules as they often contain usage and financial information.

It may be in the utilities best interest to put something in the initial customer service agreement that would allow a tenant to pre-approve their landlord's access to some billing and usage information. This would prevent disconnect notices from violating their privacy.



Also, instead of asking on an individual basis, a landlord can send a blanket statement to the utility saying they want to be made aware, if any of their properties are facing disconnection at any point in the future.

For more information, click the link below:

**[35-A M.R.S. § 6111-B](#)**

## What to do if you get a positive *E.coli* sample

- Immediately notify the Maine Drinking Water Program at **(207) 287-2070**. If it is after hours, notify the Drinking Water Program at **(207) 557-4214**.
- Issue Boil Water Order and notify all customers of the Boil Water Order within 24-hours. Keep the boil water order in effect until the order is lifted by the DWP.
- If a sample tests positive for total coliforms or *E. coli*, the system must collect a set of repeat samples (following the system's sample plan) within 24-hours.



# Emergency Response Communication

## Drinking Water Program

Your primary contact with the DWP should be your inspector (PI). If you're unsure who your PI is or how to contact them, you can look it up [here](#). When in doubt, please reach out!



### Emergency After-Hours: Call (207) 557-4214

A drinking water emergency is any event that could cause a Public Water System to produce water that may be unsafe for consumption. Public Water Systems are required to report drinking water emergencies to the Maine Drinking Water Program within 24-hours of occurrence.

### Examples of Emergencies

- Water main break
- E. *Coli* positive sample
- Flood
- Unauthorized access to facilities
- Chlorination system failure
- Source contamination

## Public Utilities Commission

The PUC should be contacted in an emergency that may effect a large number of your customers or is wide spread. The PUC does not need to be made aware of Boil Water Orders, however, as the Drinking Water Program sends that information to the PUC. If you are contacting emergency management agencies, that would be an appropriate time to contact the PUC.



### Contact the Director of Telephone and Water:

Jody McColman at [Jordan.D.McColman@Maine.gov](mailto:Jordan.D.McColman@Maine.gov)

## Utility Contact Information

**When to update contact information**

### Drinking Water Program

For changes to contact information (phone number, address, etc.) please submit a point of contact change form to your inspector. The link to the contact change form is here: [POC Change Form](#)



### Public Utilities Commission

When there is a change at the utility you should update the contact information with the PUC. The PUC has on file for each utility, a contact for regulatory issues, billing and consumer assistance.

# Mark your calendars



## From Surviving to Thriving: Strategies for Managing Burnout and Growing Capacity in Water Utilities

Join MWUA, Maine DWP, and Maine PUC for a day of learning and networking. The training will cover ways to increase the technical, managerial and financial capacity of your water utility. [Check out MWUA website to sign up.](#)

### Trainings will be held:

- **July 22** in Farmington
- **July 29** in Ellsworth
- **July 30** in Bath
- **September 11th** in Alfred



## Coffee and Tea with the PUC

The PUC is hosting virtual, open forums where the PUC staff are available to answer questions. This is also a great opportunity for networking and information sharing among utilities.

### Scheduled Dates:

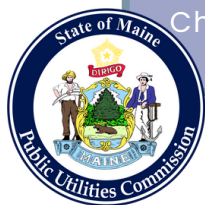
- August 14 from 9-9:45
- December 16 from 9-9:45

To sign up to attend, email [cwade@MWUA.org](mailto:cwade@MWUA.org).

*This newsletter has information for a variety of water systems and not all of them are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Additionally, Information provided doesn't necessarily apply to all water system types. It intended for informational purposes only. This information is not legal advice and does not set any legal standard. Regulated public utilities must comply with Maine law and regulations and should consult with legal counsel for interpretation of laws and regulations.*

### Maine Public Utilities Commission

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