



City of Yakima

NEWS RELEASE

Subject: New Online Services

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City Launches New Online Services to Better Connect With the Community

In an ongoing effort to enhance customer service, the City of Yakima has launched new online services which make it a lot easier for citizens to pay bills, notify the City about problems, and share ideas and opinions.

Through the City's new Online Payment Center, people can now pay water, irrigation, garbage, and sewer bills more conveniently. And an upgraded version of the Yak Back feature, which has been a longtime fixture on the City of Yakima website, now makes it simple for community members to let the City know about potholes, areas hit by graffiti, street lights that aren't working, and other issues that need attention. Both the Online Payment Center and the enhanced Yak Back feature can be accessed directly from the City website front page at <http://www.yakimawa.gov/>.

"The Yak Back feature has been around for quite a while, but its capability was limited to just e-mail," said Information Systems Manager Wayne Wantland. "The new and improved Yak Back now has enhanced e-mail functions and an 'app' that allows people to use their mobile devices to communicate with the City," said Wantland. "With the upgrades in place, the City will be able to respond to feedback we get from citizens through Yak Back within two business days. We've taken what has always been good about Yak Back and made it better so the community has even more ways to connect with the City," said Wantland.

The City provides utility services, including drinking water, irrigation, sewer, and garbage, to about 40,000 customers. Giving those customers another option for paying their bills other than in person or by postal mail was a natural transition to make.

"Launching the Online Payment Center is a key part of the evolution we are undergoing to modernize how we interact with our customers," said Utility Services Manager Tammy Regimbal. "More and more people are paying all of their bills online. Creating a way for them to do that with City utility bills was something that we knew we could do that would have an immediate and positive impact on the quality of the service we provide," said Regimbal.

Enhancing the quality of its customer service is one way the City is responding to the results of the 2012 Yakima Citizen Survey, which included relatively low marks in the area of public trust and accountability. In addition to the launching of the Online Payment Center and the new Yak Back feature, improving opportunities for citizens to interact with and do business with the City has also been incorporated in the City's 2013 Strategic Plan. Recently adopted by the City Council, the 2013 Strategic Plan will guide development of other customer service-related projects in the next year.

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