



City of Yakima

# **News Release**

---

**Subject: New Utility Billing and Management System**

**Contact: Utility Services Manager James Dean – 576-6615**

**Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler – 901-1142**

**Release Date: Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

## **New Utility Services System Gives Customers More Options**

The City of Yakima's Utility Services Division has implemented a new management and billing system that makes it easier and more convenient for customers to request services, change services, cancel services, pay bills, and manage their accounts.

Through the City's Utility Services Division, customers sign up for and discontinue utility services (water, sewer, garbage), pay utility bills (water, sewer, garbage, stormwater, irrigation) and parking fines, and buy dog licenses, bus passes, and parking passes.

"We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the customer experience," said Utility Services Manager James Dean. "The new system provides our customers with more options for interacting with the Utility Services office and gives them better access to their accounts. The new system really helps to streamline the whole process and make it more customer friendly," said Dean.

The new system includes online features that allow customers to set up a recurring payment schedule, pay by phone or text, and view their account details to better manage usage. Paperless billing and an automated phone messaging system that alerts customers of a bill that's due are also part of the upgrade. Additionally, the new system makes requesting, changing, or canceling services simple.

"Customers do need to be aware that their utility account numbers have been changed as part of the implementation of the new system," said Dean. "Changing account numbers may cause some short-term confusion, particularly for those customers who pay utility bills online using their own bank payment systems. Those customers need to make sure they enter the new account number in their bank payment system," said Dean. "But we're confident the long-term benefits will outweigh any short-term issues that may arise."

Work on the new system started about a year ago. The \$1.7 million cost of developing the new system has been paid from the Utility Services Division reserve fund.