

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A new customer communication system is being offered by the PUC to provide direct telephone notification to customers in advance of planned service interruptions. The Atlas Notification System is being introduced in a beta test format to ensure the system performs as expected and all customers are notified.

To assist in the transition to the new alert system, the PUC is encouraging customers to update their contact information while the system runs parallel to current notification methods.

Why is the Atlas Notification System being released in a beta format?

Implementing this new system required the planning and incorporation of three different components including a geographic mapping system, PUC's customer information database and an automated dialing system. The Atlas Notification System is being introduced in a beta test format to ensure the system performs as expected before current practices are terminated. During this beta test period, the PUC will continue with current notification procedures in order to ensure all customers receive advance notification of planned interruptions.

How does this service work?

The Atlas Notification System is essentially 3 separate systems; a geographic information system (GIS), PUC's customer information database and an Interactive Voice Response system (auto dialer). When work involving service interruption to customers is being planned, PUC staff will identify which area will be affected by the interruption. The electric or water meters in the identified area will be cross referenced with the PUC customer database and a call list will be compiled. That list will be used by the auto dialer to notify the affected customers.

For what types of situations will I receive phone calls?

At present the Atlas Notification System will only be used to provide advanced notification for planned power outages and water service interruptions.

When crews are planning work in a neighborhood, all customers to be affected would receive a call 24-48 hours in advance of the interruption. This will allow customers time to prepare for the interruption.

The Atlas system could also be used in the unlikely event of a major emergency where mass communication is required (e.g. a boil water advisory).

When should I expect calls?

Generally speaking, customers will only receive notification of planned interruptions that directly affect them between the hours of 8:00-4:30 Monday through Friday, except for holidays.

Do I have to enroll for this service? Will I receive phone calls even if I choose to not enroll?

Presently, every PUC customer is registered in the Atlas Notification System. The PUC would like to assure customers that the Atlas Notification System will only be used for planned service interruption notices and will NEVER be used for solicitation of any kind. However, should customers wish to not receive notifications there is an opt-out feature available.

Why are you announcing the new system on November 17th when it doesn't launch until December 1st?

These two weeks will act as the enrollment period for the Atlas Notification System when we are encouraging all customers to verify or update their contact information, and choose their preferred outage contact number, before the system goes live.

Is my account information still secure? Who has access to this information?

Customer privacy is something the PUC takes very seriously. This is why the Atlas Notification System is managed and operated solely by PUC employees. No third party has access to PUC's Customer Information Database.

What if my account information is not up to date?

The PUC is introducing the Atlas Notification System in parallel with current notification procedures while we fully test the system to ensure no customers fall through the cracks. Updating your account information is the best way to ensure you will receive notifications. The PUC is offering a convenient way to update your information at any time. Customers can visit www.ssmpuc.com/atlas to update their contact information, or customers can call PUC customer service at 705-759-6522 to speak to a representative who would be happy to update the account information.

What if I want these calls to be directed to my cell phone or another number?

While updating their contact information, customers will also have the opportunity to provide a preferred outage contact number. Once provided, this outage contact number will be the primary contact number used when delivering notifications through the Atlas System.

Is there a way to opt-out if I do not want to receive these messages?

Yes there is. Customers have the option to opt-out of the Atlas Notification System by selecting the “opt-out” feature on the Atlas profile update page, or by calling PUC Customer service at 705-759-6522. It should be noted however, that in the case of a major emergency where PUC must contact affected customers, those who have chosen to opt-out will still receive the emergency notice.

I'm a tenant. What happens if my PUC services are included in my rent (landlord pays for services) or I live in an apartment?

Currently the Atlas Notification System requires an account in the name of the customer to receive the notice. Customers who live in apartment buildings or townhouses and do not have a PUC account will have to rely on the building manager or landlord to pass on the notification.

How much is this system going to cost and how will it affect my PUC bill?

There will be no direct impact on customers' bills from this alert system.

Does this mean you will call me before discoloured water starts coming out of my tap?

We cannot accurately predict exactly where, when or who will experience discoloured water. But, if a discoloured water problem occurs within a generalized area, we can use this new system to get an alert out as quickly as possible to all customers within the area.

Also, when there are planned water improvement activities such as flushing we will use this system to alert residents in the area to the potential for discoloured water in advance of the flushing.

Why didn't you have this system in place a year ago when all the brown water problems were happening?

This new alert system required the planning and development of three different components including a geographic mapping system, PUC's customer information database and an automated dialing system. All of this took considerable time to complete.

Where can I access more information about this service?

More information can be found on the PUC website www.ssmpuc.com or by calling PUC customer service at 705-759-6522.