

# Phoenix Tap Water:

# At Your Service



City of Phoenix

A publication from your City of Phoenix Water Services Department

**T**hink about water. What would life be like without a reliable, safe supply of tap water? Think about wastewater. What would it be like if wastewater overstayed its welcome in your home or business? Think about how tap water provides life, extinguishes fires and makes sporting events possible.

For more than 100 years, the city of Phoenix Water Services Department has provided high quality, reliable, low-cost water and wastewater services; effectively planned for a dependable amount of water, even during drought; tested water to meet a multitude of regulations; maintained massive water and wastewater infrastructure; and, most importantly, cared for you, our customer.



As Phoenix ages, we constantly strive for innovations and efficiencies that enhance our services, whether it's by improving our website to make bill payment easier; embracing new technologies; maintaining 12,000 miles of water and sewer lines and seven treatment plants; planning rehabilitation projects; spending your money wisely; aiming public awareness programs at

children and adults to promote water awareness; or reading approximately 400,000 meters each month.

Enjoy this brief overview of Phoenix's water and wastewater services and related issues.

## Where Your Tap Water Comes From



Almost all of your tap water is considered surface water, as it comes from snow pack in the mountains north of Phoenix. In general, the better the ski season, the more plentiful our water supply. When all that snow melts, the water drains into the Salt and Verde Rivers, then into our lakes and reservoirs. The Salt River Project releases water from these reservoirs as it's needed. Then the water is carried to one of three of the city's five water treatment plants through SRP's canal system. Colorado River water also enters two of our water treatment plants after a 150 mile ride in the Central Arizona Project's canal system. But that water starts in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. A little groundwater from wells also is used when necessary to meet demand and maintain pressure. The city also provides reclaimed water (highly treated wastewater) to irrigation districts and the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station. Using reclaimed water is safe and helps conserve precious drinking water. Rain in the Valley does little to increase our water supply, unless we each turn off our landscape watering for a few days.

## Keeping Your Tap Water Reliable

Tap water is so reliable, we often don't think about it. It's just there, everyday, whenever you turn on the tap. Phoenix has a sustainable water supply for about 1.5 million customers, with no usage restrictions, because the city and its water partners have been doing a great job of balancing water demand, growth and our dry climate for decades. We even perform extensive planning that incorporates different climate scenarios and technological advances.

And, each day, behind the scenes, there is an extensive network of professionals, resources and technology working to provide quality customer services, deliver clean tap water and provide the best wastewater services available. Experts include engineers who design and construct infrastructure, plant operators who oversee the treatment of water and wastewater, chemists that test the water, professionals who distribute water where needed and, of course, customer services staff who provide fast, accurate service for you.

## Your Tap Water's Quality

The fact is: Phoenix's tap water quality is excellent. Getting water to your tap doesn't mean much if it's not high quality, so the city performs more than five million tests and measurements each year throughout the treatment and distribution systems, and operates state-of-the-art laboratories to ensure meeting or surpassing stringent regulatory requirements.

From time to time, various groups develop and publicize desired

standards for drinking water that differ from those established by the Environmental Protection Agency. While theoretical standards may start with good intentions, comparing Phoenix's test results, which are in full compliance with EPA standards, to artificial standards, can create confusing, incomplete, and many times, extremely misleading information. Be assured that Phoenix complies with current EPA requirements, works with water associations to remain up to date on water quality standards and is committed to protecting public health and safety. To see our annual Water Quality Reports, visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water). Also, visit [tapintoquality.com](http://tapintoquality.com).



### Important Phoenix Water Services Resources:



**website:** [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water)

#### Pay City Services Bill (water, sewer, garbage & recycling):

[phoenix.gov](http://phoenix.gov) and click on "Pay My City Services Bill" in left column

#### Customer Services:

602-262-6251 / TTY:602-534-1113,  
[water.customer.service@phoenix.gov](mailto:water.customer.service@phoenix.gov)

#### Water Emergency:

To report water leaks, pressure issues, sewer backups, or any other water or sewer emergency during weekday business hours:  
602-262-6251 / TTY: 602-534-1113  
For service issues after hours, on weekends and holidays:  
602-261-8000

## Paperless Billing

**P**aperless Billing allows customers the option to stop the mailing of their monthly paper bill and receive an email notification that the bill is available for viewing and payment online. There is no charge for this service, which will help reduce printing and mailing costs. Visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water) and click on "Sign Up for Paperless Billing."

## City Services Bill Payment Options

*(water, sewer, garbage & recycling)*

**Pay on-line** - To save time and postage when paying your City Services Bill visit [phoenix.gov](http://phoenix.gov) and click on "Pay My City Services Bill" in the left margin or visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water). You can pay 24/7 at no extra charge. We accept American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa and most debit cards.

**Pay by phone** - Use the **automated touch-tone payment system, 24/7, by calling 602-262-6251**. You will need your account number and your credit card.

**SurePay** - Pay via an automatic monthly deduction from your checking or savings account. To sign up for the program, visit [phoenix.gov](http://phoenix.gov) and click on "Residents" and then on "Access Your Water Account." You will find Sign up for SurePay under Payment Services. You also can visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water).

**Pay in person** -  
You can pay your bill at the following locations:

- **Water Services Pay Stations** at 10255 N. 23rd Avenue, 4105 N. 51st Ave, Suite 119, and 610 E. Baseline Road, Suite C5. Most stations are open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding city holidays.
- **City of Phoenix Payment Services** at 305 W. Washington Street. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding city holidays.
- **Any Chase Bank** - Only "current" bills may be paid at Chase. No delinquent bills or bills with final turnoff notices can be paid at Chase.
- **APS North Valley Customer Office** located at 4612 E. Bell Road (west of Tatum Blvd). Only "current" bills may be paid at this location. No delinquent bills or bills with final turnoff notices can be paid at this location. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**Pay by mail** - Mail your City Services Bill to: City of Phoenix Water Services Department; P.O. Box 78663; Phoenix, AZ 85062-8663.

**Customer Services email:**  
[water.customer.service@phoenix.gov](mailto:water.customer.service@phoenix.gov)

## Phoenix's Tap Water Supply

**P**hoenix's tap water supply is in very good shape. Don't believe reports to the contrary. Yes, the Sonoran Desert is parched, but that does not mean our water supply is weak. For decades, we have had a realistic, comprehensive and far-reaching approach for maintaining sustainable tap water even under drought conditions, by utilizing surface water from the Salt, Verde and Colorado Rivers, as well as some groundwater. Unfortunately, Phoenix occasionally gets mentioned with other cities and rural areas of Arizona that have more limited water supply portfolios that are more prone to being negatively affected by climate and other factors. In Phoenix, insightful planning, multiple water sources, modern technology, wisely maintained infrastructure, an effective leak repair program, sound financial management, practical groundwater management, wise use of reclaimed water and your conservation efforts team together to ensure that you have the water you need every day. And, that happens without the need for restrictions, fines or programs that look good on paper but drain your pocketbook.

But, we're wise enough to know that even with effective management our water supply can change if our watersheds do not receive adequate snowfall for several consecutive years. So, regardless of where you live, please make saving water a part of your daily lifestyle. To learn more, visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water).

## Taste, Scent and Hardness

Some customers notice tap water's taste, scent and hardness. These are harmless, aesthetic aspects of your tap water. They come mostly from the presence of minerals, such as calcium and magnesium, which occur naturally in the environment and get picked up as water travels to Phoenix's treatment plants. Our warm climate also contributes to the issues. And, you also may occasionally smell the chlorine used to keep your water disinfected. Even though only about one percent of the water we produce is used for drinking, Phoenix and its water partners are constantly brushing canals to remove algae, using activated carbon in the water treatment process and studying related issues. To minimize the taste and scent, chill your tap water, place a slice of lemon or lime in it, or let it sit for a few minutes before drinking.



## Leak Repair

A city the size of Phoenix, with more than 7,000 miles of water lines, has thousands of water main breaks each year, most of which you never even hear about. Age, construction accidents and even surges in water flow can cause water lines to become weak and break. The region's extreme temperatures and hard soil also can take their toll on the water lines.

Phoenix has one of the most aggressive leak repair programs in the country. We even use state of the art electronics to listen for leaks in the city's underground lines. Most of the time, repairs get done in a day or two and we don't even have to disrupt service to you.

To report what you suspect to be a leaking water line, valve, or fire hydrant in a city right-of-way, please call Water Customer Services at 602-262-6251 during normal business hours and 602-261-8000 after normal business hours, on weekends and holidays. Just remember, once a leak is reported, it's inspected, prioritized, scheduled, checked for possible interference with other underground utilities - then repaired and turned over to the Streets Department for final road repairs.

## Tap Water Remains A Great Value

The average Phoenix water and sewer bill is among the lowest of large cities nationwide. As Phoenix ages, the cost to replace and maintain our massive infrastructure, as well as to meet mandatory, unfunded federal requirements, continues to increase. So, Phoenix utilizes a solid, methodical water and sewer financial plan to help maintain the city's high bond rating and prevent huge increases in charges that many other public and private water providers have found necessary. To help keep Phoenix's rates low, Water Services constantly reviews budgets and staffing and continues to find innovative ways to save money while keeping critical health and safety services flowing. For specific water and sewer rate charges visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water).

## Water Treatment

**T**reating water is a technical, multi-step process designed to protect and serve you. It involves various types of filtration methods to enhance taste and a process called flocculation. But basically, it means we remove things you don't want in your tap water. We then disinfect the water and pump it to reservoirs, then into the city's water mains to your home plumbing lines. And, even though 99 percent of the water we treat is not used for drinking, it all must conform to a multitude of regulatory requirements. In fact, the treatment of your tap water is one of the most highly regulated industries in the United States.

## Why Save Water?

**P**hoenix has the water it needs, but none to waste. A water efficient lifestyle is one of many factors in maintaining a sustainable tap water supply. It's the smart thing to do. Think of the snowfall up north that supplies much of our tap water as our checking account. If it decreases (as your checking account would if your income decreases) then we'll have to depend more on our savings account - your water conservation efforts - that help keep water in the reservoirs that serve Phoenix.

By choosing more water efficient landscaping and technologies for your home and business, Phoenix's per person water usage has decreased about 20 percent in the last 20 years. Total water use in Phoenix is the same as 10 years ago, even with growth.

The bottom line is ... water conservation is a choice that helps to keep water flowing to your tap and can literally affect future generations. All you really have to do is think about water...every time you use it...and use it responsibly.



## Wastewater Management

**A**nother part of Phoenix's service is...the sewer, or as we politely say in the business...wastewater. With about 5,000 miles of sewer lines, almost 78,000 manholes, and 30 lift stations strategically placed around the city to pump that sewage to one of two wastewater treatment plants, it takes a lot of highly trained people to ensure service that you rarely have to think about. This is one area where out of sight – out of mind is a good thing! Phoenix wastewater crews even inspect sewer lines with a special camera to spot concerns before they turn into problems. This proactive approach to ensure reliable delivery of wastewater services keeps things flowing in the right direction.

Almost all of the tap water we use eventually goes back into the ground through landscaping or down the drain to the city's sewer lines. Once the wastewater takes that long journey to one of Phoenix's wastewater treatment plants, another technical, multi-step, cleaning process begins. Phoenix wastewater treatment plants are some of the most sophisticated in the nation. In fact, Phoenix provides wastewater treatment services for about 2.5 million people in several Valley cities, not just Phoenix. And, just like our drinking water, wastewater treatment also has extremely stringent rules and regulations.

Wastewater goes through various degrees of filtration, then depending on its future use, chlorinated, then de-chlorinated before it's placed back into the environment or reclaimed for things like inedible crops and power plant cooling. That's right, your wastewater helps to keep your electricity running, too. Just about every drop of water that comes out of our wastewater plants is reused somewhere.

## Your Private Water Lines

The city's water lines usually end at your meter. Anything past that on your property and in your home is your responsibility to maintain and repair. So, make sure you know where your main water shut-off valve is located. For most homes, this valve is usually located at the front of the home, sometimes near a hose bib. It's important for you to NOT shut your water off at the meter. This requires a special tool and you may be responsible for any repairs to a damaged water meter. To see an example of a shut-off valve and learn more about how to protect your home during those rare freezing nights in the desert, visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water).

## Pool Backwashing

When backwashing or draining your pool, place the water into your sewer clean-out in the ground near your house, or use the water to irrigate landscaping, if your plants can tolerate the salt and chlorine. Visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water) to learn more.

## Avoid Clogged Sewer Lines

Regular, old household grease and cooking oil are the biggest sources of clogged sewers. Clearing them in your sewer lines costs you money, and the cost of cleaning city sewer lines comes from your pocket, too. Remember - never pour grease down your drain. Sure, it's liquid when it goes down the drain, but once it cools, the grease hardens and sticks to the inside of your private sewer line or the city's sewer lines, and that's what causes a blockage.

The best thing to do with your grease is to let it cool, then scrape it into your trash bag. And we're not just saying this to homeowners. We work with local businesses to make sure they are disposing of grease properly, too.

# CEASE THE GREASE

**Place cooled grease  
and cooking oil  
in your trash -  
not down your drain**

## Hydrant Maintenance



Fire hydrants are another thing most of us take for granted. But Phoenix Water Services and your Fire Department know that there aren't many things that are more important for your safety than those 50,000 hydrants in Phoenix. So, we're constantly testing and repairing hydrants to ensure that they work properly.

In fact, our fire hydrant repair policy is just as aggressive as our leak repair program. We even flush the hydrants occasionally to test their volume and keep your tap water fresh. If the water sits a little too long in the water mains, it gets stale. So, we flush that water to keep you safe.

Also, whenever we flush our water distribution lines, we do our best to make sure the water does not become a hazard in your neighborhood or on city streets. When possible, we try to direct the water into a storm drain or a sewer manhole, which helps keeps the storm and sewer systems flowing properly too.

## Only Rain In The Storm Drain

Phoenix has two sewer systems. The sanitary sewer transports everything you use in your house down the drain and to wastewater treatment plants. The storm drain system basically starts at that cutout at the end of the street in the gutter and collects everything that runs across your roof, lawns and streets. The problem is: it transports pollutants like trash, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease and delivers that untreated water to rivers, washes, catch basins and some areas that serve as local parks. Even leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria to wash into the storm drain.

Stormwater runoff is our most common cause of water pollution and it's caused by the daily activities of each of us. So, Phoenix maintains storm drains, outfalls and manholes, as well as works with businesses and homeowners. The city urges you to help prevent spreading stormwater pollutants by recycling or properly disposing of household products that contain chemicals such as pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers, paint, solvents and motor oil. Also, absorb liquid spills with an absorbent material such as kitty litter and sweep up spilled chemicals rather than washing them into the street; pick up after your pet; and drain your pool properly. For more information, visit [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water) or call 602-256-3190.

## Water Conservation Tips



- Landscape using desert-adapted plants that need little water, and place grass only where kids or pets will use it. After all, wherever you live in Phoenix, you live in the desert.



- Know how your landscape watering system works. When it rains, turn it off for a few days. Too much water can actually kill native plants!



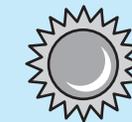
- If you're installing new landscaping, use a drip system and zone it separately for trees and shrubs.



- Thinking of remodeling your bathroom? Look for the EPA WaterSense label on water saving toilets, showerheads and faucets.



- Make sure your toilet isn't leaking. Place a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If the food coloring appears in the bowl...then you have a leak that usually requires just installing a new flapper device.



- To prevent evaporation – water landscaping before sunrise and buy a pool cover.

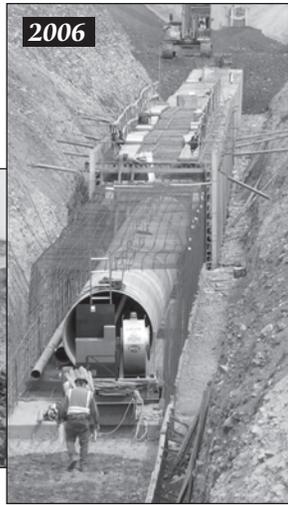


- And, remember to be a good neighbor and not let water run into the street. That creates a hazard and wastes water.

To learn more about how to save water indoors and outdoors, you can order free literature from the Phoenix Water Conservation Office at [phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water) or call 602-256-3370. You also can visit [ag.arizona.edu/azmet/phx](http://ag.arizona.edu/azmet/phx) for a lawn watering guide or [wateruseitwisely.com](http://wateruseitwisely.com) or [h2ouse.net](http://h2ouse.net) to learn more about water conservation measures.

[phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water)

# More Than Years of Superior Water Services In Phoenix



The city of Phoenix Water Services Department has been around for more than a century. And, as you can guess, things have changed a lot since the early 1900s. Here's a little perspective on how far we've come.

Phoenix was incorporated in 1881. A network of canals created by the ancient Hohokam centuries earlier laid the groundwork for the current system of transporting water to Phoenix water treatment plants.

During the early stages of Phoenix's history, water services were primarily provided by private companies. In 1907, Phoenix purchased the main private water supplier in town for \$150,000.

As Phoenix grew, more improvements to the system were made, including delivering surface water from the Verde River through a 28-mile long, 38-inch redwood pipeline. Phoenix also built several large reservoirs to meet customers' needs when demand was high.

In 1932, everyone in the country was becoming aware of the little town in the desert when Phoenix began operation of one of the West's largest and most modern wastewater treatment plants. And, by 1949, Phoenix had built its first water treatment plant.

After World War II, Phoenix's population and service area grew to almost 110 square miles ... and more water and wastewater treatment plants were constructed to enhance service and bring a variety of water sources to the desert.

Spread throughout 550 square miles, Phoenix now has five water treatment plants and two wastewater treatment plants. The city serves 1.5 million tap water customers in Phoenix and about 2.5 million wastewater customers throughout the Valley of the Sun, with enough water and sewer lines to stretch nearly halfway around the planet.

## Keeping You Informed

At Phoenix Water Services we can't spend your money on a lot of expensive advertising campaigns, but we can put your dollars to good use through innovative, award-winning public awareness programs to better inform you and your children.

In addition to performing hundreds of media interviews each year about water and sewer issues, Phoenix prepares news releases, editorials and articles for various publications, phoenix.gov/water and *NOTES* – the newsletter that accompanies your City Services Bill.

Phoenix Water Services also produces videos, like *WATERways* and *Water Works* for Phoenix Channel 11 and the website, as well as innovative public service announcements. And, we speak to local clubs and associations; utilize social media; attend fairs and civic events; and work with other Valley cities to help increase the chances that you'll see, hear or read one of thousands of informational messages each year. We also give you plenty of notice and information, through various means, about water or sewer projects in your area.

And, for more than 20 years, Phoenix has had a multi-layered, innovative water conservation awareness program. Phoenix also is a founding partner in the Water - Use It Wisely water conservation campaign, and works with water partners in the Valley to provide up-to-date and comprehensive information to customers.

And most important, we listen to you – through calls to Water Customer Services, emails and public awareness events.

## Did You Know?

-  Almost all of Phoenix's tap water starts as snow far north of the city and is transported via the Colorado, Salt and Verde Rivers to canals, then into to the city's five water treatment plants
-  Phoenix's water, sewer and stormwater lines combined would stretch more than halfway around the planet
-  More than five million tests and measurements are conducted each year in the treatment and distribution systems
-  Phoenix's water and sewer rates remain among the lowest in the country
-  Phoenix serves tap water to about 1.5 million customers, but our wastewater treatment plants serve about 2.5 million people in several Valley cities
-  Phoenix's Water Quality Report is published each May with your City Services Bill and placed online at phoenix.gov/water
-  Despite being in the desert, Phoenix's water supply is in very good shape due to decades of planning and multiple water sources
-  Phoenix is delivering about the same amount of tap water in total today as it did 10 years ago despite population growth
-  Almost all of Phoenix's wastewater is highly treated and reused for crops, power generation and environmental wetlands
-  Phoenix's underground water lines range from two inches to about nine feet in diameter
-  Phoenix uses cameras and high tech equipment to clean grease, roots and other debris from about a third of its sewer lines each year
-  Phoenix's Water Services Department is more than 100 years old

WATER

WE STAND BEHIND EVERY DROP



City of Phoenix  
WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT



[phoenix.gov/water](http://phoenix.gov/water)

To acquire this publication in Braille, large print or audio tape, contact the city of Phoenix Water Services Department at 602-262-6251, or 602-534-1113/TTY.

Este informe contiene información importante sobre su agua potable. Si desea esta publicación impresa en español, braille, letra grande o en casete de audio comuníquese el Departamento Municipal de Phoenix del Servicio del Agua, al 602-262-6251, ó 602-534-1113/TTY.