



## METERING PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### SILVER STAR WATER METER IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) – Silver Star Water (SSW) is beginning a water meter and meter reading improvement program in 2024. The program entails replacing the current “touch pad” manual meter reading technology with Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) technology and where applicable, replacing old meters.

AMR uses wireless radio frequency technology to collect meter reading data remotely using low frequency radio waves and these radio waves are generated by a battery powered device called an Encoder-Receiver-Transmitter (ERT). All SSW water meters will be retrofitted with an ERT, which is typically mounted to the outside of buildings. For most customers, ERTs will be installed by replacing the touchpad they currently have using the same wires. Some customers will have older meters that will also need to be replaced as they cannot be converted for use with AMR technology.

#### The Water Meter Improvement Program will:

- improve meter reading accuracy,
- improve customer service,
- reduce operational costs,
- replace ageing meters nearing the end of their serviceable life,
- reduce staff time to enter properties and businesses to obtain meter reads.

This work will help ensure Silver Star water meter equipment is suitable for many years to come. Together we can promote sustainable practices and increase operational efficiencies in our community.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1. Why is the Water Meter Improvement Program being initiated?

This program has two components – updating the meter reading technology for all SSW customers and replacing old water meters where required.

SSW started installing water meters over 20 years ago. Water meters are mechanical devices and like all mechanical devices they wear with age. For this reason, older meters will be replaced so that SSW can ensure that the water meters are providing accurate measurements.

Currently, water meters are read manually using touchpads located on the outside of buildings. These touchpads will be replaced with an ERT to allow remote water meter reading as manual meter reading is labour intensive, and at times unsafe for staff. This upgrade will lower the cost of the meter reading program and improve customer service.

#### 2. What if my property is vacant?

If your property is vacant, you do not have a water meter and this improvement program does not apply to you.

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### 3. What will it cost?

There is no charge to the customer for replacing the existing touchpad with an ERT or to replace an existing water meter; it is included in SSW's ongoing budget.

### 4. When will the ERT installations occur?

This work will be completed during the weeks of July 15 to 26, 2024 and November 25 to 30, 2024.

### 5. How do I book an appointment?

The ERT and/or meter replacement will typically take about 30 to 60 minutes per home and could require a brief interruption of service. In trying to accommodate our customers' busy schedules, we are offering daytime, evening, and weekend appointment options.

**Please book your appointment online at [book.metercor.com](https://book.metercor.com) or call 888-290-3070 between 7:30 am and 3:30 pm (Mon-Fri).**

#### Appointment Availability:

- Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Friday & Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

If for any reason you need to reschedule your appointment, please call Metercor at 888-290-3070.

All appointments must be scheduled by **July 5, 2024**.

### 6. How are the ERTs installed?

A Metercor representative will install the ERT by removing the touchpad mounted to the outside of the building and replacing it with an ERT. To complete the work, we require access inside buildings and homes to inspect the meter and wiring and replace if required. If the touchpad is located in an area that is inaccessible due to fencing, animals, or other obstructions, a minimum service charge of \$50.00 will be applied to your account as per the Small Utilities Rates and Regulations Bylaw.

### 7. Does someone need to be home for the installation of the ERT?

Yes, an adult at least 18 years of age must be present for the installation appointment. This person will be asked to verify and sign the service order as confirmation of work completed. If no adult is present, another appointment will need to be made which will result in a minimum service charge of \$50 to your account as per *Small Utilities Rates and Regulations Bylaw No. 2867, 2021*.

### 8. What happens if the wiring from the touchpad to the meter needs replacement?

In most cases, the existing wiring on the exterior of the building from the water meter to the touchpad will be compatible with the ERT; however, if the wiring from the meter to the touchpad cannot be re-used, the Metercor technician will replace the wiring during the appointment.

### 9. What happens if my meter needs to be replaced?

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During an audit of the SSW meter system, it was determined that many of the meters are reaching end of life and require replacement. For many properties, this will require a meter replacement to be done at the time of ERT installation.

The building owner is responsible to provide clear and unobstructed access to the water meter. If there are any boxes or stored items in the way, these need to be cleared prior to the arrival of the Metercor representative. If the water meter has been covered by drywall or paneling, it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the Metercor representative has clear access to the meter.

### **10. Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?**

There will be no service interruption for the installation of the ERT. If your meter needs to be replaced, there will be a temporary interruption of less than one hour.

### **11. Who will be doing the ERT installations and/or meter replacements? How do I know who is authorized to do the work?**

The RDNO has contracted with Metercor to perform this work. Metercor is a company based in Calgary, Alberta and will have call centre staff and a website to allow SSW customers to book their required ERT installation appointment. A Metercor representative wearing a uniform and carrying identification will complete the ERT installation and/or meter exchange. Their field technicians will be onsite for the installation dates to complete the ERT and/or meter installations at SSW.

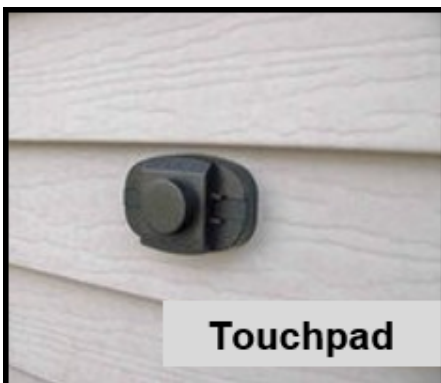
ERT installations require personnel with expertise in wiring, meter replacement, and ERT installation. Metercor has trained, experienced, professional staff available to meet with the property owner or a representative who is providing access to the inside of the building, on site at the scheduled appointment time and complete the necessary work required to install the ERT.

### **12. How can you prepare for your appointment?**

To enable this work to be performed with minimal inconvenience to you, please be sure that the main shut off inside the house is in working order, the area around the meter and touchpad is accessible to our staff and an adult, at least 18 years old, is scheduled to be present at the appointment.

Touchpads are located on the outside of buildings and water meters are located inside the building, usually in a utility room but can be located other places in the building. **Technicians cannot complete meter replacements if the main shut off valve in the house is inoperable.**

In both cases, another appointment will need to be made which will result in a minimum service charge of \$50, to your account as per *Small Utilities Rates and Regulations Bylaw No. 2867, 2021*.





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### **13. If I have a new meter, do I need to make an appointment?**

Yes. If you have a water meter that was installed before May 31, 2024 you need to make an appointment. The meter you have has a touch pad and requires an ERT.

### **14. What if I am a tenant and do not own this property?**

If you are a tenant, you will be asked to provide the Metercor representative with access to the water meter and touchpad. The property owner will have booked the ERT installation appointment.

### **15. What if my property is a rental?**

If you have tenants or if the property is currently unoccupied, you are responsible for booking an appointment and making sure an adult, at least 18 years of age, is present for the installation appointment. This person will be asked to verify and sign the service order as confirmation of work completed.

### **16. How are the meters currently being read?**

For most metered locations, the meter inside the house or building is connected by a wire through the wall / ceiling to a touchpad mounted to the outside of the home or building. To get the reading, a meter reading staff member must walk to the touchpad and touch the reading equipment to the touchpad to obtain a reading.

### **17. What is Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) technology?**

AMR uses wireless radio frequency technology to collect meter reading data remotely using low frequency radio waves. These radio waves are generated by an ERT. ERTs are a battery powered device that transmits the meter reading data and has an expected battery life of 20 years. ERTs are typically mounted to the outside of buildings. The ERT is a safe technology (information provided at [www.itron.com](http://www.itron.com)) being used at other RDNO water utilities.

### **18. Is the new AMR system safe?**

ERTs use wireless technology to communicate with data readers in much the same way household devices such as cordless phones, cell phones, baby monitors, garage door remotes, radio stations and wireless internet routers work. These devices transmit signals through radio frequency (RF), which is all around us. The low frequency radio waves transmitted by an ERT are less than the signals transmitted by other day-to-day devices. The transmitter will not interfere with other household devices and in most cases, the ERT is mounted on the outside of houses and buildings, away from the occupants.

AMR wireless technology is regulated by the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission to ensure ERTs transmit with extremely low power (less than 1/100th of a watt). Each radio transmission lasts less than one second. Health Canada says exposure to this kind of wireless radio technology does not pose any public health risk.

The frequency used is the same as short wave radios (902-928 MHz) and the amount of radio waves that reach a building's occupants are considered negligible as the ERT transmits in short intervals at very low power (less than 1 watt). In comparison, a cell phone emits 800 times more energy than an ERT. A cell phone transmission is continuous during its operation unlike an ERT which transmits intermittently with each transmission lasting less than one second. The ERT radio transmissions occur

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on a frequency different from those used by television signals, cordless phones, garage doors and pacemakers and will not interfere with these devices.

Read more about radio frequency guidelines at:

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/radiation/cons/radiofreq/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/radiation/cons/radiofreq/index-eng.php)

External Website: Health Canada

For more information on ERTs:

<https://na.itron.com/radio-frequency-resource-center>

External Website: [itron](http://itron.com)

### **19. How do I know that you have my meter reading and not someone else's?**

Each ERT has a unique identification number, which is transmitted along with the meter reading. The unique ERT identification number is linked to your utility bill account number stored on a secure server.

### **20. How big is the ERT and how is it attached to my home?**

ERTs are small grey boxes which are 4.5" x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (11.5 x 13 cm). They are attached to the home using three 1.5" (4 cm) screws and are positioned on the outside of the building in the same location as the existing water meter touchpad.



### **21. I am re-siding my home, how do I ensure the ERT is working correctly?**

Customers who already have an ERT installed and will be re-siding their home, should call the RDNO Utilities Department at 250-550-3700 to ensure the ERT is working correctly after the job is complete.

### **22. What about privacy?**

The privacy of customers is a priority for RDNO and SSW. When the data is sent from the meter to the meter reader, there is no personal profile information connected to that data. It just transmits the meter ERT identification number and the meter read. The information goes to a handheld device, which is then downloaded to a secure server at the RDNO on behalf of SSW where the ERT identification number is

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linked to customers' accounts. The RDNO's Information Services department ensures there are security protocols in place to protect transmission of the data.

Phone numbers and emails on file may be released to Metercor for the purposes of booking appointments for this project only.

### **23. Will I be able to read my own meter?**

Yes, meters will have a display so the water consumption can be read directly. Consumption reads of the meter for utility billing purposes must be performed by RDNO staff.

### **24. What is a Customer Portal and why can't I access it immediately after the ERT is installed?**

The RDNO is currently working towards an online customer portal called TEMETRA where property owners will be able to monitor daily water usage and receive alarms for high water consumption, possibly identifying leaks early. Currently, there is no automatic sign up for this service and the RDNO is working with the provider to develop this function with a goal of rolling out this service in 2025.

An ERT needs to be connected to your meter for the online Customer Portal to work in the future.

### **25. What happens to the old meter?**

Old meters will be recycled appropriately.

### **26. Can I decline having the water meter or touchpad replaced?**

SSW customers cannot decline having their water meter replaced.

Customers can decline having an ERT installed for reading their water meter. In this case, SSW will continue to read the meter manually using the touchpad. **There will be a manual meter read charge applied to your utility bill at least three times a year, to have the water meter read manually, per the current Small Utilities Rates and Regulations Bylaw.**

To decline having an ERT installed, customers must call or email the RDNO Utilities Department at 250-550-3700 or [utilities@rdno.ca](mailto:utilities@rdno.ca). If an ERT has already been installed at your property, there will be a one-time fee to reinstall a touchpad, and a manual meter read fee applied to your utility bill to have the water meter read manually. For more information about the metering requirements for SSW customers and for the current rates, please refer to the Small Utilities Rates and Regulations Bylaw on the RDNO website at [www.rdno.ca](http://www.rdno.ca) under the Bylaws link or on the SSW page at [www.rdno.ca/ssw](http://www.rdno.ca/ssw).

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