

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Digital water meter trials

### About digital water meters

#### Why is South East Water trialling digital water meters?

South East Water is always looking for new and innovative ways to identify cost savings and network efficiencies for our customers.

Early testing has indicated significant water savings can be achieved through detecting leaks with this technology, with 12 per cent of all water supplied to our test site lost through leaks.

The trials will also help inform the broader use of digital water meter technology in South East Water's service region in the future.

#### How do digital water meters work?

The digital water meter reads the volume of water that enters your property in real-time and wirelessly sends this information back to South East Water. We can then identify irregular water use patterns – which may be caused by a water leak at the property.

#### What are the benefits of digital water meters?

Digital water meters allow us to understand a customer's water use in real-time, helping to detect water leaks, ensure accurate meter reads, and identify out of the ordinary water use patterns. It also means we won't have to enter your property each quarter to read the meter manually anymore!

- **Detecting water leaks:** Early detection of water leaks in a property's internal plumbing or a water appliance (e.g. sprinkling system) will help save precious drinking water supplies and reduce the customer's water bill. Plus, digital water meters may be able to pick up even the smallest of water leaks that are difficult to detect with the current quarterly manual meter reads.
- **Meter reading accuracy:** Currently, water meters are read every three months by our field operators. Sometimes we need to estimate a customer's water use due to locked gates, dangerous dogs or inaccessible meters – having a digital water meter installed will remove the need to do this.
- **Water efficiency checks:** In the long-term, if this technology is expanded throughout our network, customers may have the ability to check how efficient their water appliances are (e.g. washing machines and dishwashers) by tracking the volume of water they use over set periods of time.
- **Reduce water bills:** In the long-term, digital water meters have the potential to create efficiencies in our network which could lead to reduced water bills by decreasing the costs associated with unaccounted for water.
- **Business efficiencies:** Digital water meters will also create efficiencies in our business by reducing field service and call centre costs.
- **Life span:** digital water meters have a longer lifespan than mechanical water meters – as they do not have any moving parts that deteriorate over time. Manually-read water meters have a life span of seven – 10 years before accuracy may start to diminish. Digital water meters have a life span of up to 15 years, based on battery life.

## About the digital water meter trials

### What do the digital water meter trials involve?

South East Water is undertaking a small number of trials to better understand how improved technology can help reduce the volume of water lost through leaks and create a more intelligent water network.

The findings will be used to inform our ongoing efforts to optimise the efficiency and reliability of the water and sewerage supply for customers across Melbourne's south east.

### When do the trials start?

The digital water meter trials will start in November 2013. The project will commence with trials involving around 1,000 customers in South Yarra and Seaford. Additional trials will be rolled out across our service region over the next 12 – 18 months, with timings and locations to be determined.

### What will I notice during the trials?

If you live within one of the trial areas, a new digital water meter will be installed alongside the existing water meter for the duration of the trial.

As we are trialling a few different types of digital water meters, the type of technology installed will differ depending on the trial location.

If you live in the South Yarra trial area, the digital water meter will look similar to this:



If you live within the Seaford trial area, the digital water meter will look similar to this:



#### **Why have these areas been selected?**

The areas have been selected due to their terrain, housing density and access to property meters and other required infrastructure like utility power poles.

#### **How long will the trial go for?**

Each trial is currently scheduled to run for up to six months.

#### **What happens at the end of the trials?**

At the end of the trials, South East Water will return to the property and remove the additional meter and billing will continue as normal via the original water meter.

#### **What information will you collect through the digital water meter?**

During the trials, the digital water meters will record the number of litres of water used by each property every 30 minutes.

Currently, we collect this information manually every quarter and measure the volume of water in kilolitres. The digital water meter will not record information on the use of specific water appliances.

#### **What will South East Water do with the data?**

The data will be used to calculate the volume of water used at the property, allowing us to quickly identify any irregular spikes in water use that may indicate a potential water leak.

#### **What level of detail will the data be broken down into? Will you be able to see every toilet flush?**

The digital water meters will not record information on the use of specific water appliances.

### **Safety**

#### **Are the digital water meters safe? Do they comply with electromagnetic exposure limits?**

Digital water meters are subject to regulatory arrangements made by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. This includes compliance with the electromagnetic exposure limits developed by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

The digital water meters are battery operated and use a low level of power.

### **More information**

#### **Who can I contact for more information about the trials?**

For more information visit [southeastwater.com.au/digitalwatermeters](https://southeastwater.com.au/digitalwatermeters) or contact us on 131 694.