

WaterSource

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A Newsletter to the Customers of Bella Vista Water Company, Inc.
an Algonquin water utility.

Inside this Issue!

In this issue we'll bring you up to date on the status of the new Bella Vista Water billing system. We'll also discuss the new "Vulnerability Assessment" required of certain public utilities by the Federal Government.

We're also pleased to present the Water Usage numbers for 2003. Did we do better saving water? Worse? You'll find out inside!

We'll continue our series on bottled water and home water treatment devices with a quick overview of both. We've also included "9 Quick Things" you should know - and might find very interesting - about bottled water.

All this and more...in this issue!

New billing system - and online bill payment - delayed.

BY JUDY GIGNAC

In our last newsletter I announced that we would be unveiling the new billing system and that we would start using it in November 2003 in the South System first and then for the remainder of our customers. Well, as we all know sometimes the "best laid plans" just don't work out the way we hoped. What we found was that there were many more areas of information gathering that we needed in the billing system than the consultant had incorporated. Many of them were required by the Arizona Corporation Commission. As a result, we have had to go "back to the drawing board" so to speak and require the software developers to rework the product.

When I last checked with our corporate offices, I learned that it probably won't be until late summer before we can roll out the new billing system. This is very discouraging since so many customers are anxiously awaiting the time they can pay their water bills on-line.

It is our genuine hope that once the billing system is working without "bugs" we can offer the on-line payment system. Although I don't want to make promises that I can't keep, I do feel "cautiously optimistic" that this will occur this year.

Your patience is greatly appreciated.

Vulnerability Assessment:

In June 2002, President Bush signed the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act into law. This Act amends the Safe Drinking Water Act by adding a section that requires certain community water systems conduct Vulnerability Assessments and certify to EPA that they have been conducted. We are in the process of conducting these required Vulnerability Assessments for both Bella Vista Water - City System and Bella Vista Water - South System. Our submittal deadline is June 30, 2004, with our certification to EPA due December 31, 2004.

For both systems we have chosen multiple well sites that, were they to go down for any reason, could cause extreme stress on our ability to serve customers adequately. We must include a review of all pipes and constructed conveyances, physical barriers, water collection, treatment, storage and distribution facilities, electronic, computer or other automated systems, the use, storage, or handling of various chemicals, and the operation and maintenance of such a system. There are six specific issues the Assessment requires us to address. For a detail of these issues, please contact us at our office. Please note the work is underway and we expect to comply fully with the requirements and deadlines, but once the Assessment is completed, the information is sensitive and cannot be released to the public.

We are "cautiously optimistic" that on-line payment of your water bill will be available this year.

BOTTLED WATER AND HOME TREATMENT DEVICES!

A brief overview.

In recent years, the popularity of bottled water and home water treatment devices has increased dramatically. A recent national survey revealed that nearly half (43%) of the adults questioned used bottled water at least some of the time and for a variety of reasons. 14% of those polled said they used a home water treatment device other than a water softener. With literally hundreds of bottled water and home treatment devices to choose from, it's more important than ever to investigate the product thoroughly before purchasing!

There are approximately 700 brands of bottled water sold in the United States alone. The most common kinds are spring water, mineral water, purified water, sparkling water, and well water. Bottled water is considered a food product and is therefore regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and must be labeled with the manufacturer's name, address and the source of the water. All bottled water is not the same, so read the label carefully to make sure you're getting exactly the right product.

Of the hundreds of home water treatment devices on the market, there are three basic kinds - those that install where the water enters the home, those that install at the point of use (your faucet), and the countertop pour-through kind. Each will most likely use one of three main water treatment technologies: activated carbon filtration, reverse osmosis, or distillation. While each removes different substances from your water, *all require regular maintenance to ensure proper and effective water treatment performance!* Prices and effectiveness vary greatly, so research devices carefully to make sure you get the water treatment device that is the most effective for meeting your particular needs.

9 Quick Things to Know about Bottled Water!

1. 50% of bottled water manufacturers get their water **from the same sources as municipal water departments**. Just because it's "bottled" water, that doesn't mean it is necessarily of higher quality or purity than the water you can draw from your tap right now! Always check the label of the bottled water you buy.
2. Bottled water **costs about 1,000 times more than tap water** and most of that pays for product packaging and advertising. In many cases, the water inside is the same as the water we can drink from our taps.
3. It is actually **unlawful for bottled water companies to make health claims** about their products. Make sure that the bottled water you buy makes no claims about its healthful benefits for your body.
4. If the source and treatment of the water are not identified on the label, ask about it by calling or writing for information.
5. Bottled water is not required to be date stamped, and **its quality can deteriorate over time**. It's important you understand that "bottled water" doesn't assure quality or purity. Any bacteria in the water at the time of bottling can continue to grow over time.
6. If you drink a lot of a certain brand of bottled water, be sure to ask for a copy of the bottler's water quality test results and compare that to the EPA standards for drinking water contaminants.
7. Water that contains any flavoring and/or sugar **is not subject to the same quality regulations** as other bottled water. By simply adding a certain flavoring (or sugar) to the water, a manufacturer can free itself from complying with certain strict water quality regulations.
8. For the first time, bottled water is now **required to be monitored and tested in the same rigorous manner** that tap water has been subject to for years.
9. **It's important to emphasize that all bottled water is not the same!** There can be a huge difference in quality and purity! And because of that it's important that you check the label of every bottled water you're considering to make sure you purchase - and ultimately drink - only the highest quality.

Water Proverb!

The deepest waters make the least noise.

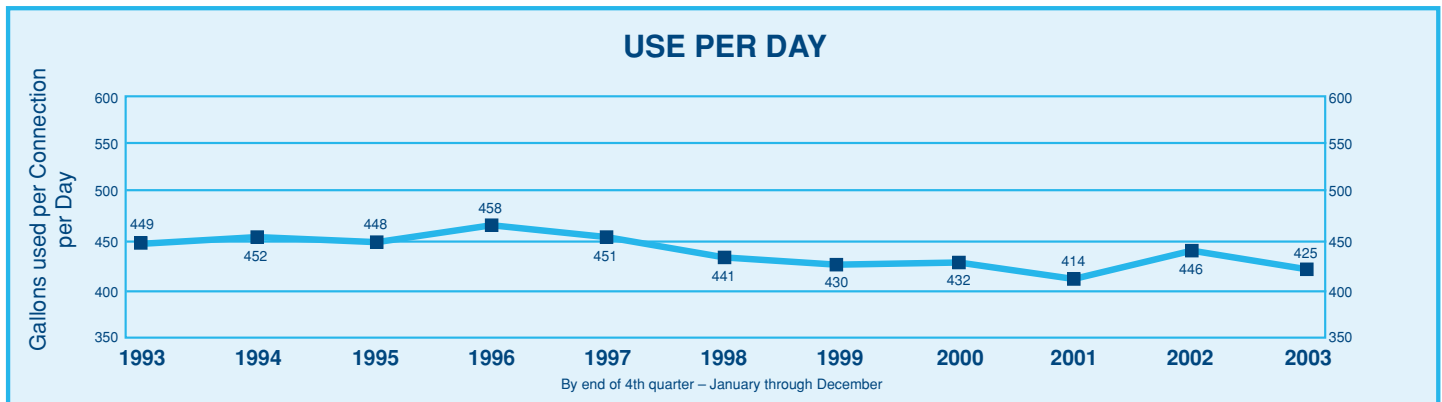
(Guatemalan Proverb)

Water Usage Per Connection!

The final water usage numbers for 2003 are in, and once again, congratulations are in order!

The chart below shows our average annual gallons of water used per connection per day for the past 10 years. 2003 saw us reduce our average water use per connection from drought-stricken 2002, but we still have a ways to go as we progress (hopefully) out of our drought conditions. 2003 saw us return to a more normal rainfall amount, but it will take a couple of years of good rain to completely replenish our aquifer and get us back to where we should be. So remember, that during times of drought, water conservation is more important than ever. Let's keep up the great work!

(It should be noted that when we say "average water usage per connection," we mean all our connections. These numbers include residential, commercial, industrial and educational customers.)



The numbers below show the average number of gallons used per day per connection for the last 10 years.

1994 - 452 1995 - 448 1996 - 458 1997 - 451 1998 - 441
1999 - 430 2000 - 432 2001 - 414 2002 - 446 and for 2003...425

So, you see that while water usage in 2002 increased dramatically from 2001, it has returned to the second- lowest level we've seen in the last 10 years! You are all to be congratulated! Last year at this time we were just hoping for a more normal rainfall pattern. Well, we got it...and our water usage numbers show it.

On our web site there is a far more complete breakdown of water usage for all our customers. It shows which months have heaviest water usage and which months of the year water usage is lightest. It also shows total gallons per month per year for the last 11 years. Visit our web site soon. We hope you find the information we've provided there very interesting.

For more complete information on water usage, as well as important updates and status reports on current facilities upgrading projects, take a moment and visit our web site at www.bellavistawater.com

In our next issue...

More information on Home Water Treatment Devices.

Consumer Confidence Report

Did you know...?

DID YOU KNOW?

... that 75% of the water we use every day flows through the bathroom?

... that changing to a low-flow shower head in just one bathroom can save an average family 27¢ a day in water and 51¢ a day in electricity?

... that the five "Great Lakes" bordering the U.S. and Canada contain about 20% of the entire world's available fresh water?

This newsletter is offered as a service to our customers. If you have any questions or comments about any of the material in this issue, or ideas or suggestions for future issues, we'd love to hear from you. Please address them to:

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