

Digital meter fact sheet - July 2022

Digital meter technology can help detect leaks early, not only saving water, but also saving money on your water bill and environment.

How they work

Digital meters enable water volume to be recorded on an hourly basis at your water meter. The meter transmits daily consumption data through low level radio frequency waves well within Australian safety standard, to a secure website. The data doesn't contain your personal information, it's encrypted and held securely in accordance with national privacy principles.

The specialised meters are battery operated and use a low level of power. The signal sent by the digital meter is lower than that of a text message sent from a mobile phone. We have successfully used this technology in our region over the last decade with large water using businesses and agricultural customers, as well as a Sustainable Communities – Water project in Birregurra. Digital meters have also been used successfully by other water corporations in Australia and overseas.

Detecting water leaks

Leaks can be a significant source of water loss in homes, businesses and the water supply network and can occur in new and older properties. If not detected early, leaks can waste large volumes of water and increase customer water bills. Typically, customers remain unaware of leaks until they receive a higher than usual quarterly water bill. Digital meter technology allows Barwon Water to identify leaks as soon as they happen. If you think you have a water leak, don't worry as we have support programs in place that can help you find it and fix it straight away.

Changing your water meter over

All customers who have a connection to drinking water that is supplied by Barwon Water, have a water meter. Periodically these meters are replaced as part of our meter replacement program.

Your existing water meter will be replaced with a new digital meter. If you would like to discuss your new meter or have any concerns, please contact us.

Installation process

Your water meter will be replaced with a digital meter, commencing early August 2022. It will take approximately 15-30 minutes to change the meter over at your property. You do not need to do anything, or be home for us to install the new meter. There is no cost to you to replace your meter, and there won't be any changes to your water bill.

Why Marengo?

Barwon Water has identified several towns within its service region as opportunities to progress a digital network and digital meter trials.

The Apollo Bay water supply system has the highest water leakage rates within the Barwon Water region¹. 13% of the water supplied in FY21 was lost through leakage (44 Million Litres) and the rate of leaks grows each year. This makes the town an ideal location for a leak detection trial using digital meters to find leaks. The suburb of Marengo sits within the Apollo Bay network between the Water treatment Plant and Apollo Bay, makes this an ideal location for a leak detection trial that uses digital meters and sensors to find leaks.

Key drivers for the project include, but not limited to:

- Water Security
- Environment
- Summer tourists

¹ Water leakage rates for Apollo Bay water supply system, currently at 13%, compared to a regional average of 7.5%.

As the peak population continues to increase, the ability to meet peak demand is becoming more challenging. With limited winter storage capacity, and an increasing demand for water during summer, we need to consider future options for water security within the next five years. This is why Marengo has been chosen for the digital meter rollout.

In Marengo, drinking water is sourced solely from the Barham River in the Southern Otway Ranges, with no alternate supplies. During peak periods in summer, the amount of water in Barham River is lowest, whilst the demand for water is at its highest. To manage this, the two storages basins fill over the winter season to ensure supply over the summer – Marengo and Apollo Bay basins. These storages do fill in most years, which sees us through peak summer demand. However, the system remains vulnerable in very dry years, like in 2015/16, when the region experienced record low rainfall and storage levels reached 24%.

Fast Facts – steps to changing your meter over

1. Make sure access to your water meter is clear
2. Your old water meter will be read and a photo taken
3. The new meter will be installed and checked to make sure it is working

Commonly asked questions

Q. Do I need to do anything to prepare for a digital meter?

No. Our contractor, Skilltech will visit your property and change over your meter. You don't need to be home when your digital meter is installed. To ensure a smooth transition to your new meter, please help us by removing any obstructions over or around the meter within the next three weeks.

Q. Will I be without water when my digital meter is installed?

We will need to interrupt your water supply for 10-15 minutes. If a continual water supply is vital, due to a medical condition or operation of a business, please contact us as soon as possible so we can work with you on a suitable arrangement.

Q. Are digital water meters reliable?

Yes. The digital meter will be verified after our contractor installs it. We will periodically verify that the meter is operating accurately. Manual water meter reads will still continue for billing purposes.

Q. Who is responsible for the maintenance of the digital meter?

Just like your old water meter, the digital meter is the property of Barwon Water. You are not required to perform any maintenance on the meter. Please help us by ensuring Barwon Water staff and contractors have safe and clear access to your water meter, and that it is not covered by any rubbish, landscaping or debris.

Q. Will I be notified if a leak is detected at my property?

Yes. If we identify a possible leak at your property, we will notify you via SMS, email or letter so that you can fix the leak or arrange a plumber. If you find a leak we encourage you to rectify it as soon as possible, or if you need assistance we have plumbing support programs to help. Fixing a leak will help you save water, and also save money on your water bill.

Q. What about my privacy and data security, can data be tampered with?

We take your data privacy seriously. Data will be stored securely and subject to our normal privacy procedures, personal data will not be passed on to any third parties or used for any other purpose.

The data that the digital meter collects is encrypted and does not contain any personal information. All data is collected and is held on secure servers in accordance with national privacy policies and our collection statement.

Further information

Further information about the digital metering trial can be found at:

www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/marengo

You can also contact us on 1300 656 007 or info@barwonwater.vic.gov.au