



Winter 2024

UTILITIES & YOU

It's story time...

Water rate adjustments in effect January 1

New water rates went into effect on Jan. 1 through two separate adjustments. The first was previously approved in the fall of 2022 and accounts for increased costs from inflation to maintain our water system. From that adjustment, you will see a \$1.80 average monthly increase on your utility bills if you live in Tacoma and \$2.11 if you live in our surrounding service area.

The second is due to the revenue shortage resulting from the closure of the paper mill in Tacoma this past September. The mill accounted for one-third of our drinking water use or the equivalent use of 100,000 homes and over \$7 million in revenue. As a customer-owned municipal utility, our rates only cover our cost to provide clean, reliable drinking water. To maintain our system and ensure we can continue providing some of the best drinking water in the nation, we need to compensate for the loss of expected revenue with an additional rate adjustment. From that increase, you will see a \$2.28 average monthly increase on your utility bills if you live within Tacoma and \$3.03 if you live in our surrounding service area.

Together, these increases will result in a combined \$4.08 average monthly increase if you live in Tacoma and \$5.14 if you live in our surrounding service area.

We also increased the credit amount available through our Bill Credit Assistance Plan for income-eligible households to help cover the proposed rate increase from the mill closure. Visit MyTPU.org/Assistance to view the income guidelines and application.

Providing clean, reliable drinking water is vital to community health. These rate adjustments help cover the cost of operating the utility and caring for its assets.

Visit MyTPU.org/MillClosure for more information. **U***

Protect pipes from freezing to avoid costly repairs

Burst pipes can cause property damage during cold weather and cost you a lot of money. They can also leave you without running water. You can take many easy, inexpensive steps to keep your pipes from freezing.

- **Insulate pipes and valves** in attics and crawl spaces.
- **Disconnect, drain, and store** garden hoses.
- **Use a faucet cover** on outdoor hose bibs.
- **Open cabinet doors** to allow warm air to circulate.
- **Locate the shut-off valve** for emergencies.

For more tips, visit MyTPU.org/ProtectPipes.

If you have a water emergency, call **253-502-8344. U***

Ways to help manage your water bill

Water Conservation

Using less water can help you manage your utility bill. Here are some tips to keep in mind.



Turn off the tap when brushing and shaving.



Run full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine.



Find and fix leaks that can waste water.

For easy, cost-effective ways to conserve water, visit MyTPU.org/WaterSmart.

Bill Credit Assistance Plan

Paying bills can sometimes be challenging. If your household meets the requirements, you may qualify for a bill credit of up to \$80* monthly.

You are eligible to apply if:

- ✓ **You have a current TPU account in your name.**
- ✓ **You live in the dwelling full time as your residence.**
- ✓ **Your household does not exceed the income guidelines.**
- ✓ **You have residential single-metered service.**

**The credit amount you receive depends on the number of services you are billed directly by our utility.*

View the application and guidelines at MyTPU.org/Assistance. **U***

POWER MOVE #41

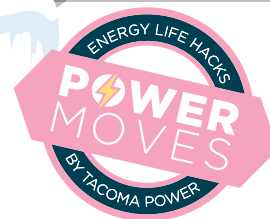
Keeping your energy-efficient resolution. Automatically.

Here's a resolution that's easy to keep—use a smart thermostat to save money and energy automatically.

It might be the easiest thing you do all year. What if you could use your phone to tell your thermostat you were on your way home and to warm up the house? Or better yet, what if your thermostat could sense when you were close to home and calculate the optimal time to make your home nice and toasty for your arrival? With a smart thermostat, these features and many others come standard.

With a smart thermostat, you can make the most of your heating system without wasting money or energy. Plus, we'll help you pay for one! Install one. Get a \$75 rebate. Done.

See other offers at MyTPU.org/PowerMoves. **U***



Save \$90 on trees at select nurseries

Trees have incredible benefits for our environment and its people. Well-placed trees block winter winds and provide summer shade, which may help lower your utility bill. Trees also reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, and beautify your landscape. Partnering with the City of Tacoma and Pierce County Surface Water Management, Tacoma Power offers customers a \$30 coupon for purchasing up to three trees (\$90 maximum savings) through March 31, 2024. Everyone benefits from the services more trees provide in our communities.

For a list of participating nurseries, tree care tips, and to get your free coupon, visit CityofTacoma.org/TreeCoupon. U*

What to do during a power outage

Report power outages and view outage information on our Power Outage Map at MyTPU.org/Outages.



Turn off and unplug electronics such as computers, TVs, security systems, lights, and appliances, including your heater, water heater, and air conditioner.



Turn on a porch light and one inside light so you and our crews know when your service is restored.



Keep your refrigerator closed to keep food cold. Remove ice cream from the freezer; it is one of the first things to melt and is messy.



Stay inside and stay safe.

Use flashlights, not candles.



Do not use a natural gas range to heat your home. Don't burn charcoal for heat or cooking indoors. Both fuels give off dangerous fumes.



If using a generator, use it properly.

Learn more at MyTPU.org/PowerOutAtHome. U*

How to stay safe near downed power lines

Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or death. They can energize the ground up to 35 feet away – even more in wet conditions.

Follow the safety tips below if you see a downed power line.

Safety Tips

- If you see a downed power line, **move away from it** and anything touching it.
- You cannot tell whether a power line is energized just by looking at it – **always assume it is live.**
- **Shuffle away with small steps**; keep your feet together and on the ground to minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.
- **Do not touch** anyone in direct contact with a downed line.
- **Do not attempt to move** a downed power line or anything else in contact with it.
- Be careful **not to touch or step in water** near a downed power line.
- **Do not drive over** downed power lines.
- **If you see a downed line**, call 911 for help. U*

Get up to a \$3,200 credit when you file your taxes

It pays to upgrade your home! If you made energy-efficient home improvements last year, we have good news. On top of the incentives we provided, the IRS would like to thank you through a tax credit. Projects completed in 2023 could get you a tax credit of up to \$3,200. Upgrades that qualify for the tax credit include heating and cooling systems, electric hybrid water heaters, insulation, windows, and more.

Learn more at Energy Star's website at bit.ly/EnergyStar23. U*

Welcoming new Public Utility Board member Anita Gallagher

Former Public Utility Board member Holland Cohen departed in July, creating a vacant position. Anita Gallagher, an independent government relations consultant and freelance writer working primarily in the public policy arena, recently joined the Public Utility Board in Holland's place.

Before starting her business, Anita led government relations in the Pacific Northwest for Lime, in the City of Tacoma Manager's Office, and then as Regional Relations Manager for our utility. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Colorado State University, a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice, and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Washington State University.

Anita will serve Holland's term through June 30, 2026. **U***

Advanced meter project update

With supply chain issues impacting the availability of electric meter production, we've been focused on water meters and have upgraded over 95% of all water meters. We are now receiving electric meters, so we will ramp up these exchanges as we wrap up the water meter upgrades. We expect to complete all meter upgrades before the end of 2024.

Check out our deployment map at MyTPU.org/AdvancedMeters to see our progress. **U***

U* readers know what to do when suspecting a utility phone scam

Congratulations and thanks to the 238 people who participated in the trivia published in the fall issue of *U* - Utilities & You*. If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to represent Tacoma Public Utilities and demanding payment, hang up immediately. We will never call, email, or visit a home demanding immediate payment, request a credit card, banking, or financial information, payment via prepaid card, or disconnect services without mailing a notice. **U***

U* Calendar

All events take place online and in person unless otherwise noted.

JANUARY

1
New Year's Day | TPU offices closed

10
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

15
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
TPU offices closed

24
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY

14
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

19
Presidents' Day | TPU offices closed

28
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

MARCH

13
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

27
Public Utility Board Meeting
6:30 p.m.

Find a complete list of events at MyTPU.org/Calendar. **U***

You make the call

Area code (253)

Report a power outage	502-8602
Start or stop service	502-8600
Home weatherization	502-8363
Fishing and recreation	502-8690
Fish and wildlife programs	502-8008
Education programs	502-8224
Power conservation	502-8363
Water conservation	502-8723
Report a water emergency	502-8384

Bill Payment Assistance

(available for limited-income customers)

- **Electric bill assistance**
 - City of Tacoma residents 572-5557
 - Pierce County residents 855-798-4328
- **TPU Utility Bill Assistance** 502-8400

U* Trivia ANSWER AND WIN

Downed power lines can energize the ground up to how many feet away?

Be one of 50 randomly chosen people with the correct answer, and we will mail you a free prize. To enter, submit your answer by Jan. 31 either online or at MyTPU.org/Trivia or by mail to *U* Trivia*, 3628 S. 35th St., Tacoma, WA 98409. Include your name, phone number, and mailing address for mail-in and postcard entries. **U***

* City of Tacoma employees and their immediate family members are ineligible to win. One entry per household.

Winter 2024

UTILITIES & YOU

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