

SWUA

SAGE WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

HANDBOOK

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Introduction

This handbook is designed for all Sage Water Users Association (SWUA) members to use as a quick reference guide and to answer the majority of frequently asked questions regarding our water system. Its purpose is to give you (the user) a better understanding of: our policies and procedures; our water system; how we obtain water; our operation; how we accomplish repair and maintenance; and how we charge you for the water you use each month. This handbook is subordinate to the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws. Copies of the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws may be obtained from the SWUA board.

History and Background

SWUA was incorporated on 03 July 1986 as a nonprofit corporation. Our primary purpose is to maintain the water distribution system and deliver water to the Sage Creek North, Sage Creek South, and Blue Sage subdivisions.

SWUA does not own or operate any water wells or water storage capabilities. We purchase water from Mid-Colorado Investments who own and operate two (2) deep wells, a 30,000 gallon storage reservoir, and a booster pump station. Water is delivered to our system through a main water meter. The Mid-Colorado Investments well pumps operate on 3 phase electric power supplied by Mountain View Electric Association and are backed up with a 3-phase diesel generator. The booster station operates on single-phase electric power from MVEA and is partially backed up by a generator.

SWUA does not treat or alter the water delivered to your residence. Mid-Colorado Investments chlorinates the water and together we are responsible for performing water quality and safety tests mandated by Federal and State laws. The quality of our water is “as delivered” by Mid-Colorado Investments. To date our water purity has been excellent and has passed all Federal and State tests. Beginning in 1999 and every year thereafter, ALL water systems in the United States are required, by federal law, to generate and deliver to every customer served by the system, an “Annual Drinking Water Quality Report.” This report lists several of the possible contaminants known to exist in water systems and the results of the analytical tests the system (SWUA and Mid-Colorado) has performed to detect these contaminants. Beginning in 2000 and every year hereafter this report is required to be delivered by the first week of July. Copies of the current report are available by contacting the SWUA board or online at www.sagewater.org.

The SWUA distribution system consists of 6 inch diameter main lines (mains) which reduce to 2-3 inch branch lines which are then tapped to provide water to your home. Isolation (shut-off) valves are placed in strategic locations through out our system to enable repairs with disruption to a minimum number of users. All piping is PVC and is buried below the frost line. SWUA maintains maps of the subdivisions showing the location and size of the lines and isolation valves. Each lot we provide with water has a water meter and a shut-off valve.

Operation

You (homeowner) own the Sage Water Users Association. Each residence is allotted one (1) vote in the SWUA.

A board consisting of five (5) directors conducts business operations. The board determines the direction of the SWUA, within the guidelines of the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws, by means of a majority vote of the directors. Board directors make the final decisions regarding all issues before the Association. Board directors are elected at the annual SWUA meeting held in October. A director's term is 3 years. Generally two (2) directors are elected or reelected each year.

SWUA officers consist of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and one at large position. The president (vice president in the president's absence) conducts the SWUA board meetings and acts as a point of contact to outside agencies (i.e. developers, water suppliers, and government agencies). The secretary prepares minutes of the board meetings, correspondence, and documentation. The treasurer is responsible for tracking SWUA finances. SWUA officers are current board members and elected by the directors. All director and officer posts are unpaid, uncompensated, volunteer positions.

Currently SWUA has contracts let for: account management; billing and accounting; meter reading; the monthly and periodic water quality tests for which we are responsible; and maintenance and repair of the distribution system.

Maintenance and Repair

SWUA is responsible for maintaining and repairing all of the distribution system lines (mains and branches) and isolation valves up to and including the first piping joint past the meter and meter loop on each lot. We have a contract with local excavation firm to perform system maintenance.

SWUA requires each homeowner to keep the area around the meter pit free of weeds, debris, fencing, and animals. Please inspect this area frequently and verify our meter reader has full access to the meter pit. Most meter pits are located in utility easements to ensure access by both the meter reader and repair/maintenance crews.

There is a "T Post" (fence post) installed by each meter pit/shut off valve. This post allows our maintenance crews to locate the meter and shut off valve in the event of snow, soil infiltration, etc. This post also allows the Fire Department to quickly locate the valves in the event of an emergency. Please do not move or remove this post.

The only personnel authorized to access shut off valves or meter pits are those acting on behalf of SWUA or the SWUA maintenance contractor. SWUA reserves the right to file criminal trespassing charges against any individual that access any part of the SWUA water distribution system, including shut off valves and meters, without authorization. Each account (household) is allowed one free courtesy shut off every 90 days for emergencies (for example, leaks). All other shut offs will pay a \$50 fee to the maintenance company at the time of shutoff.

Sand, and other particulates, is naturally occurring in well supplied waters systems like the SWUA water system. While the well owners treat the water, and both the well owners and SWUA test the water to ensure compliance with state and federal drinking water regulations, neither the well owners nor SWUA filters the water for sand or other particulates. Sand can also get into the system through breaks or during repairs. If sand is a concern, SWUA recommends contacting a plumbing professional to install a house filter in your home. SWUA will not reimburse for damage due to sand, or other particulates, or for the cost of filtering systems or filtering system components.

Article 12 of the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations states a public water system shall have no uncontrolled cross-connections to a pipe, fixture, or supply, any of which contain water not meeting provisions of the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations. A cross-connection is any point in a water distribution system where chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may come into contact with potable water. During a backflow event, these contaminants can be drawn or pushed back into the potable water system.

Consider having a garden hose in a bucket of soapy water at your home, and having an event occur causing that soapy water to “backflow” into the drinking water portion of your home. A backflow prevention device installed at every point of cross-connection prevents contaminated water from entering the potable water distribution system.

Billing

The SWUA billing structure is based on the city of Colorado Springs suburban rates and consists of a monthly commodity charge, a maintenance fee, and a charge per cubic foot of water used. An example of billing rates are explained below. For current rates call SWUA or lookup online at www.sagewater.org.

SWUA Billing Structure – Sample Rates

Customer Service Charge	\$7.68 per month per meter	\$7.68/month
SWUA Maintenance Fee	\$15.00 per month per meter	\$15.00/month
Consumed Water Charge	\$3.13 per 100 cubic feet	\$3.13/100cf

Example:

If you had used 1,234 cubic feet of water since the last meter reading your bill would be calculated as follows:
 $\{(1234 / 100) \times \$3.13\} + \$7.68 + \$15.00 = \61.30

There are definite costs to SWUA to provide water to your home. In addition to the maintenance and repair costs mentioned above we have to purchase: water from Mid-Colorado Investments; monthly meter reading; monthly bill preparation and mailing; have certain water tests performed and documented monthly; and have other tests performed and documented at varying intervals as mandated by the Colorado State Health and Environment Departments. All of these costs are factored into our plan to arrive at the SWUA billing structure.

You are billed each month for the total amount (to the nearest cubic foot) of water you have used since your meter was last read. Bills will be mailed to you on or before the 10th of each month. Payments are due no later than the 25th of the month in which they are mailed.

Any payment not received by the 25th of the month (in which the payment is due) will be assessed a \$5.00 late charge. Any account that is 30 or more days delinquent will be assessed a 1 ½ % interest charge in addition to the \$5.00 late charge. Final notices will be posted the 15th day of the month after the bill is due. Any account receiving a Final Notice will be charged a \$15.00 Collection Fee, and any account not paid by the 25th day of the second month after the bill is due will result in the water to the property being turned off. To reestablish water service in the event of the water being turned off, SWUA will require a nonrefundable \$50.00 reconnect fee, and a \$50.00 deposit which will be refunded after a one (1) year history of acceptable payments. SWUA will charge a \$20.00 fee to process returned checks.

Sample Billing Process for Past Due Payments

	Fees	Total Due
Water used between May 1 st and May 31 st - Bill mailed out between June 1 st and 10 th		\$ 41.97
Payment Due June 25 th		
Payment Late June 26 th - \$5.00 late fee assessed - Past Due Noticed mailed between June 26 th and 30 th	\$ 5.00	\$ 46.97
Bill for Junes water usage mailed out between July 1 st and 10 th	\$ 41.97	\$ 88.93
Final Notice Posted July 15 th - \$15.00 collection fee assessed	\$ 15.00	\$ 103.93
Payment 30 days past due July 25 th		
Water shut off July 26 th for non payment – Past due amounts incurs 1.5% interest charge	\$ 1.56	<u>\$ 105.49</u>
To resume service you must pay past due and a \$50 reconnect fee and a \$50 deposit	\$ 100.00	<u><u>\$ 205.49</u></u>

A \$100.00 fee is charged to establish an account. If a home is sold, the account is closed. The new homeowner will be required to pay a \$100.00 fee before water service can begin.

Policies and Procedures

Only the actual homeowner will have an account and one (1) vote in the SWUA. Renters do not have accounts or have voting rights in the SWUA. In disputes between homeowners and renters regarding water service, the homeowner is required to submit a written request for the water to be shut off to the SWUA board before any action will be taken.

Each homeowner/property is allowed to irrigate (water) a maximum area. Properties in Sage Creek North and Sage Creek South subdivisions may irrigate a maximum of 2,000 square feet, properties in the Blue Sage subdivision may irrigate a maximum of 1,600 square feet. This includes lawns, gardens, trees, crops, etc. Irrigation of property in excess of the maximums mentioned above is a violation of our contract with Mid-Colorado Investments and will be handled on a case by case basis between the homeowner and SWUA.

There is an annual meeting of all SWUA members on the first Wednesday of October. The time and location of this meeting will always be announced no more than 60 and no less than 30 days in advance. This meeting is designed for all SWUA members to express their concerns; meet the board and officers; and for you to have input into your Sage Water Users Association. Your attendance at this meeting is vitally important to the smooth and continued operation of the SWUA.

Regular board meetings begin at 7:00 PM and are held on the third Wednesday of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May...) at the Sage Creek Church (basement) on Murr Road. All SWUA members are welcome and encouraged to attend board meetings. Representatives of other interests will be allowed to attend SWUA board meetings by invitation only.

SWUA does not operate a full time office. SWUA has one (1) numeric pager and a voice mailbox that can be reached at **222-2955**. When you call **222-2955** you will receive a greeting which will give you the current status of the SWUA system. We will change the message to acknowledge outages and include as much information about the outage as possible. You will then receive instructions for leaving a message after the tone at the end of the greeting (please include your name and a phone number where you can be reached). Leaving a message will activate our pagers and the SWUA manager or a board member will answer your page as soon as possible. The SWUA manager has the primary responsibility of carrying and answering the pages. **222-2955** is the number to call for any and every question or concern (general information, leaks, outages, etc.) you may have about your water service.

222-2955

Send your payments to:

Sage Water Users Association, P.O. Box 435, Colorado Springs, CO 80901-0435

This handbook was prepared, edited, and approved by the SWUA board and officers.

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