

# NEWSLINE

ELECTRICITY • WATER • NATURAL GAS • WASTEWATER • TELECOMMUNICATIONS

## Fort Valley Utility Commission

Since 1891

500 Anthoine Street

Fort Valley, Georgia 31030

(478) 825-7701

(478) 825-7704 FAX

[www.fvutil.com](http://www.fvutil.com)

After hours: (478) 825-5482

Follow Us



**CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!**

### Commissioners

**Alre' Horton, Chairman**

**Rose Marie Thompson**

**Robert Dickey, IV**

**Keytrick Jones**

**Stephen Lindsey**

**Ned Watson**

**Darrel West**

**Mayor Jeffery Lundy**

*The Commission meets the second  
Monday of each month at  
6:00 p.m.*



April 2023

Editor: Martha McAfee

## Plan the Plan

Having a strategic plan is crucial for the success of any organization, as it provides a clear direction and purpose for the organization's activities. FVUC Commissioners and senior staff recently gathered for an annual retreat to discuss some key issues relating to the Commission's overall health. Some may wonder, why plan? Here are some of the key benefits of having a strategic plan:

- Defines an organization's vision, mission, and values, which helps employees understand why they are doing what they are doing.
- Helps organizations allocate resources efficiently and effectively. It provides a roadmap for decision-making on where to invest time, money, and human resources, and helps avoid wasting resources on activities that don't contribute to the organization's goals.
- By analyzing potential risks and opportunities, a strategic plan enables organizations to identify and mitigate risks before they occur. It provides a framework for decision-making that takes into account both short-term and long-term risks and opportunities.
- Establishes measurable objectives and goals to be used to monitor progress and evaluate the success. This helps organizations stay on track and make adjustments as needed.



In addition to reviewing and setting goals, support organizations presented information. One key piece was Electric Cities of Georgia and The Gas Authority's review of the Commission's current rate structure and recommendations on how to move forward to ensure the stability of the organization. Other topics included capacity expansion, employee development, economic development opportunities, and gas industry compliance/regulations.



**Clay Walker**  
**General Manager**

## **From the General Manager's Desk...**

### **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

You will read in another section of this Newsline a story about our recent annual planning retreat. I have had the opportunity to participate in this annual session throughout my tenure at the Commission, both as a senior manager and in my current role. The dynamics of having all of the members of an organization's leadership team in one room for a couple of days present different challenges and opportunities:

*Tough decisions. Tough discussions. Education. Growth. High energy.*

*Compassion. Celebrations. Comradery. Relationship Building.*

We experienced all of these things plus more and I believe we all left the retreat with a sense of rededication to making FVUC the best it can be.

#### *The Good....*

It is always exciting to celebrate accomplishments. I am proud of the work that our team has done around succession planning and employee development. Preparing our workforce for future leadership roles is key. I am grateful for the members of the Board of Commissioners who give the support and the resources that allow our employees to provide reliable service to our ratepayers. We are fortunate to have great support staff and resources at organizations such as Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG), Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG), Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), Peach County Development Authority, the Gas Authority, and others. They help make what we do possible. We celebrate the good. But we have work to do.

"In the very near future, some extremely difficult decisions will be made on what has to be done to secure the Commission's future."

#### *The Bad....*

We are 130+ years old. With longevity comes aging infrastructure. There exists the continuing need to plan to upgrade, replace, construct, and expand systems. Some infrastructure upgrades and maintenance have been kicked down the road. It is passed the time to stop kicking. We are nearing capacity in some areas. Our service area is considered almost daily by companies looking to located here. Requests for information regarding infrastructure capacity are at an all time high. And let us not forget about the 1200+ acre State megasite. What a blessing to this community. The Commission must plan for the future and build the capacities to be ready and stay ready and not have to get ready when industry knocks. We acknowledge and embrace the bad. But we have work to do.

#### *The Ugly....*

In order to continue to have the good to celebrate and to address the bad, something ugly raises its head: Funding. In the very near future, some extremely difficult decisions will be made on what has to be done to secure the Commission's future. One trip to grocery store or out to dine quickly brings to the forefront the ever increasing cost of items. Sadly, the utility industry is not immune. We have work to do.

## Utility Markings

You arrive home and find numerous little flags or paint on the ground around your property and/or in the right of way. What is the significance?



### White

*Proposed Excavation*



### Red

*Electric power lines,  
cables, conduit and  
lighting cables*



### Pink

*Temporary Survey  
Markings*



### Yellow

*Gas, oil, steam,  
petroleum or gaseous  
materials*



### Orange

*Communication, alarm  
or signal lines,  
cables or conduit*



### Blue

*Potable Water*



### Purple

*Reclaimed water,  
irrigation and slurry  
lines*



### Green

*Sewers and drain  
lines*



**Now you know!**



## An Important Message About Damage Prevention Prior to Excavating

This message is brought to you by **Fort Valley Utility Commission**. There are thousands of dig-in damage incidents in the United States every year. Striking an underground pipeline may lead to expensive fines, serious injury or death. Gas pipelines are built with safety and reliability as top priorities. Over the past 20 years, risk exposure has been rising through increased populations, energy consumption and pipeline miles. At the same time, the number of serious pipeline incidents involving death or injury has declined by 50%. Natural gas leaks do happen and may result in fire, explosion, and/or asphyxiation. Natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas; however, a chemical that smells like rotten eggs is added to help detect a possible leak. It's a bad smell. That's good!

Some of the signs of a gas leak include seeing bubbling water, hearing a hissing or blowing sound from a pipeline or appliance, dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area, or dirt or dust blowing from the ground, or the smell of rotten eggs.

If you smell gas, or just think you might have a gas leak:

- **Leave** the area immediately; **Do Not** congregate around natural gas facilities.
- **Call 478-825-7701 or 911** from a neighboring home or business
- **Never** turn on or off switches, open or close garage doors, use a flashlight or phone/cellphone in the presence of the gas smell, as these devices may be a source of ignition, causing an explosion.

**Stay** in a safe location until the Emergency Responder arrives and gives you clearance to return to the area.

Here are five easy steps to damage prevention:

**Survey and Mark** – Survey the proposed excavation area and mark the dig sites in white paint.

**Call Before You Dig** - 48 hours prior to digging, call 811 and get free staking of underground utility lines which helps reduce the chance of injury and unneeded expense. It is the law in Georgia.

**Wait!** Wait the required time to allow utility owners to locate and mark the lines.

**Respect the Marks!** Maintain visibility of the marks and safely follow them when digging.

**Dig** – Dig with care. Hand excavate within 24-inches of each side of the locate marks. If you plan to dig anywhere near a marked area – especially when using mechanized equipment – use a shovel and carefully hand dig to expose the lines.

If your equipment contacts a gas line:

- **Leave** the equipment; jumping clear and shuffling away – **DO NOT** turn off the engine.
- **Warn other and leave** the area quickly.
- **Do Not operate** any gas pipeline valves or stop the flow of gas or try to fold over plastic pipelines.
- Leave the **excavation open**.
- If gas is escaping the pipeline, **call 911**, then **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**

If the line is nicked, scraped, gouged, dented or otherwise damaged but not leaking, call **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**; these may appear to be minor but can lead to future leaks if not properly repaired.

Natural gas is America's most popular home heating fuel and is increasingly popular for use by homeowners, schools, businesses, factories and electric power-generation plants. Natural gas is efficient, clean, reliable, and a relative bargain compared to alternative energy sources. Natural gas flows through a network of underground main lines that serve approximately **3891** customers in our system. These main lines are typically 2-inch in diameter and branch into household service lines which are typically half-inch to three-quarter-inch in diameter and buried 12- to 18-inches below the surface. The service lines end at each customer's meter where gas is delivered.

This message is brought to you by Fort Valley Utility Commission as a part of our Public Awareness Program. For additional information regarding this message, call 478-825-7701.

The Commission is governed by a board of elected and appointed officials. They are listed below. The Commissioners make decisions that directly impact rates and the level of service. Let's get to know them....

WHO  
WE  
ARE

Commissioner Darrel West is married to his college sweetheart for over 32 years and they have 4 wonderful sons, 3 fantastic daughters-in-law, and 3 of the cutest grandbaby girls in the history of grandbaby girls! He graduated with a degree in Chemistry and has been part of the utility industry for approximately 30 years. He currently serves as the Division Director – Training, Employee Development, Safety and Security for Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources.

*His Hobbies?* He is an avid beekeeper with a small apiary and is an outdoor canoe enthusiast. He has logged over 8,000 miles of river travel by canoe as far north and west as the Yukon Territories, as far north and east as Nova Scotia, as far south and west as Florida and many places in between!

When you see Commissioner West out and about, be sure to thank him for his service.



Commissioner Darrel West



**Stay tuned for more on Commissioner West  
and the other Commissioners in future Newsline editions!**

Alre' Horton	Chairman At-Large – Post 3	Term Expires: 12/2025
Keytrick Jones	Commissioner East Ward – Post 1	Term Expires: 12/2025
Stephen Lindsey	Commissioner West Ward- Post 2	Term Expires: 12/2023
Rose Marie Thompson	Commissioner At-Large – Post 4	Term Expires: 12/2023
Jeffery Lundy	Mayor	Term Expires: 12/2025
Robert Lee Dickey IV	Commissioner Crawford County	Term Expires: 06/01/2025
Ned Watson	Commissioner Peach County	Term Expires: 06/08/2025
Darrel West	Commissioner Peach County	Term Expires: 06/08/2025



# ALWAYS ASSUME **LIVE**

Downed power lines can be **deadly**. Always assume a downed power line is **live** and avoid approaching them or anything near them.

## Use Precaution



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 feet away**. Even more in wet conditions.



**Never drive over** downed power lines or anything in contact with them.



If you see a downed power line, **call 911**.



**Never try to move** a downed power line.

If a vehicle contacts a **power line** or **utility pole**...

## STAY AWAY AND CALL 911



Consider **all lines** to be live and dangerous.



Stay in place or inside your vehicle unless you see **fire** or **smoke**.



Warn others to stay at least **35 feet away**.



**Tell others** not to approach vehicle, downed lines, or anything that may be in contact with downed lines.



Call **911**.



## In the Event of Fire or Smoke

**Do not** touch the ground and vehicle at the **same time**.



Jump from the vehicle with your **feet together**.



**Shuffle away**, avoid lifting your feet.



Please share this free content to save lives



[www.facebook.com/ESFI.org](https://www.facebook.com/ESFI.org)



[www.twitter.com/ESFI.org](https://www.twitter.com/ESFI.org)



[www.youtube.com/ESFI.org](https://www.youtube.com/ESFI.org)



*Blessed Event!!*

Name: Utility Commission Newsline

Proud Parents: The four elected Commissioners:  
Bob Hunnicutt, Motea Jackson, Claude  
Lawson, and Joe Frank Rinehart

Attending Physicians: Glen Taylor, General Manager;  
and Adina Bailey, Secretary-Treasurer

Midwives: Florine Perry, Freida Davis, Jeane Burnett

Labor Room Coaches: Superintendents Larry Dailey, John Harmon,  
Ezekiel Harvey, Jimmy Hobby,  
& Walter Lanter

Birthdate: December 1992

**1992****2023****A \$400,000 Light Bill!**

Think your light bills are high? How would you like to get one for \$400,000? And ... what would you do if the postman brought you a gas bill for \$140,000?

The Commission writes checks for electric and gas bills every month - just as you do. We expect to pay more than \$6,000,000 for gas and power this year. That's 63% of our budget.

Our customers get 20 days to pay their bills. We aren't as lucky. Our biggest power bills are due a week after we get them. Several vendors send power and natural gas to us, but our largest electric invoices come from MEAG. MEAG sends nine to 10 million kilowatt hours of power to us each month for your use.

The payments we make to MEAG are wire transferred from the bank on the day we deposit them - no float time for us! And, if our check bounced, everybody in town would know, because we'd all be cut off!

Light bill: \$664,095!

Gas Bill: \$371,000!

FY 2023 Gas &amp; Power Total

Budget: \$12.4 million

There was a trial run for the panic button in the office when a customer came in to pay his bill, nothing unusual about paying the bill except for the mask he was wearing. Only his eyes showed through two holes. Well, the panic button worked, the police came, the customer was rushed outside. In shock he asked, "Why didn't somebody take my money". Back inside the office all was calm after several cups of coffee and lots of chatter. The moral of the story is, If you wear a mask when you spray pecans, please pull it off when you come inside.



# CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORNER



SIGN UP for e-bill! Call us at  
478.825.7701 Option 3  
or email [customerservice@fvutil.com](mailto:customerservice@fvutil.com)  
You can also sign up by logging into your account on-line.  
Visit [www.fvutil.com](http://www.fvutil.com)

## Lighting the way to a brighter future

The Fort Valley Utility Commission  
is proud to provide electric, gas,  
water, wastewater, fiber optic, and  
wireless telecommunications to  
its customer service area in  
Central Georgia.

Chat with us



Check out our chat feature on our  
website!



For payment assistance call 478.825.3193



Up  
to **60 MONTHS**  
FINANCING AVAILABLE  
MONTHLY PAYMENT ADDED TO YOUR BILL

+

**0%**

### FINANCING AVAILABLE

on qualified natural gas appliances

Ask Customer Service about our Main Street On-Bill  
Finance Program  
478-825-7701



## NEW PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Android & Apple App
- 24 hour Pay by Phone

Pay by credit card or debit card.

Get real-time balances and due dates.

Pay your account 24 hours a day.



Download on the  
**App Store**

Call 478-825-7703 to make your payment over the phone!



GET IT ON  
**Google Play**





# Emergency Preparedness

M X R P N P N I Z P Y M V Y N T N  
 R W O R J O Q P R V F H I C C V E  
 O E S O N P T B S W E A Y N L N G  
 T A I C R E Y I A I L N P E H Y O  
 S T V E E E H X F R M L C G E T R  
 R H R D O T K D R I L L S R O I D  
 E E E U A A N A G A C U A E D L Y  
 D R P R E F C O E A K A Z M A I H  
 N S U E O R C T I P K J T E N B N  
 U Y S S M S E R I T S E U I R I E  
 H J L R A O H V O O A D P M O S R  
 T M A B E Y D E E U N U U D T N I  
 M L O F M Z C V L S T U C O L O F  
 A V P O W E R S H T Z A Y A L P J  
 P J O O J S S J N V E V G A V S I  
 S J J G D R X S U C F R I E M E T  
 B L Q W A T Z P A F R A D I O R X

Responsibility	Notification	Thunderstorm	Loudspeaker
Evacuation	Procedures	Supervisor	Emergency
Assembly	Hydrogen	Shelter	Tornado
Weather	Action	Drills	Outage
Severe	Alarm	Power	Radio
Fire			

# Eat Safe Food after a Power Outage

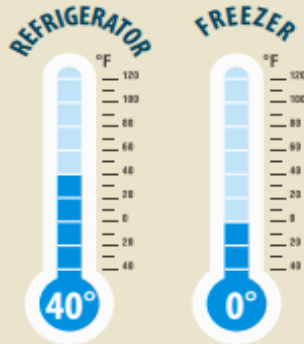
Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after the loss of power. Find out what you can do to keep food safe during a power outage, and when you need to throw away food that could make you sick.

## Before

Keep appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.

The refrigerator should be at 40°F or below.

The freezer should be at 0°F or below.



## Prepare for emergencies or natural disasters



Freeze containers of water and gel packs to help keep your food at 40°F or below.

Have a cooler handy.

Buy dry ice or block ice to keep food cold in the refrigerator if the power might be out for a long time.



## During

**KEEP**  
Refrigerator  
& Freezer Doors  
**CLOSED**



**4**  
Hours  
in a  
Refrigerator



**48**  
Hours  
in a  
**FULL**  
Freezer



**24**  
Hours  
in a  
**HALF-FULL**  
Freezer

After 4 hours without power, put refrigerated perishable foods in a cooler. Add ice or another cold source to keep them at 40°F or below.

## After

**Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. When in doubt, throw it out.**

- **Throw out perishable food** in your refrigerator (meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, and leftovers) **after 4 hours without power** or a cold source.
- Throw out any food with an **unusual odor, color, or texture**.
- **Check temperatures of food** kept in coolers or your refrigerator with a cold source. Throw out food above 40°F.
- If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check to see if it is still at 40°F or below.
- You can **safely refreeze or cook** thawed frozen food **that still contains ice crystals** or is at 40°F or below.



[www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)



# Team FVUC



Be Pro Be Proud Career Showcase



Annual Planning Retreat



Volunteering at the Chester Food Bank Event



First Place Award for float in Crawford County Bicentennial Parade

**Congratulations** to our 2022 Milestone Achievement Team Members! We appreciate you!!

Coleman Leslie—25 years  
Joe Rodgers—25 years  
Jay Sorrow—15 years  
Lorando Clark—5 years  
Quenton Tate—5 years



### NEWSLINE


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P.O. Box 1529  
Fort Valley GA 31030

### Emergency Service

Nights and Weekends  
478-825-5482

### Office Hours

8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Monday - Friday



**“I dig  
here  
all the  
time.”**

**You might not know the area as well as you think!**

Even if you've excavated an area previously, erosion, settling ground and other factors can change the depth and location of utilities over time. **ALWAYS** contact 811 before putting your shovel to the ground!



**Contact 811 before you dig.**

**811beforeyoudig.com**