

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

After hours: (478) 825-5482

Follow Us



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

811 or (800) 282-7411

Elected Commissioners

Dollie Horton

Chairman

Bob Hunnicutt

Vice Chairman

Alre' Horton

Linda Johnson

Mayor Barbara B. Williams

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



December 2018

Editor: Martha McAfee

Tis the Season...



Holidays are a special time when families and friends make an extra effort to get together and make new memories and reflect on the past. Those special times are often missed by those employees who are considered mission essential. Professionals such as law enforcement, health care providers, military personnel, firefighters, emergency medical service, and yes, utility workers, often miss the opportunity to spend that quality time with their loved ones in order to fulfill the pledges they took to protect and serve others. We thank them for their service and dedication.

Our message is simple... **we hope all of your Holidays were filled with joy, peace, and happiness.**



UTILITY COMMISSION • PROVIDING SERVICES TO PEACH, CRAWFORD & MACON COUNTIES

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



Looking Back

Another year has come and gone and the work of the Commission continues. As I reflect on 2018, I am pleased with our accomplishments and the progress that was made.

- ◆ *Financial Audit:* The Commission received a clean audit report for fiscal year 2017 with **no findings**. We are committed to being good stewards of the Commission's funds and commend our staff for ensuring that our records reflect excellent practices and that expenditures are appropriately made and revenues properly accounted for according to acceptable governmental auditing standards.

- ◆ *Economic Development:* We were pleased to be selected as the utility provider for Southern Flavor Farms, a hydroponic green house that located on Highway 96 East. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and the first crop of tomatoes and cucumbers were harvested. All of our departments were integral parts of bringing the company on-line.

- ◆ *Infrastructure Upgrades:* Major upgrades were completed on water wells 4 and 5. These upgrades increased the life expectancy of the infrastructure as well as help to ensure the reliability and safety of our water system. Major sewer rehab was also conducted on lines in several neighborhoods including the areas of Spruce, Calhoun, Troutman, and Samuel Jones Streets. Water lines were upgraded in the Sunset Circle community. Significant work continues in identifying and repairing gas leaks throughout the system.
- ◆ *Customer Engagement Center:* A new home for our Finance, Customer Service, Metering, and IT Departments was brought on line. Located at 902 Knoxville Street, the newly renovated space enhanced our ability to provide a much better service to our customers as well as provided a securer workplace setting for our employees. The building includes a drive-thru option with the entrance off Anthoine Street.
- ◆ *Financial System Conversion:* The Commission completed a conversion to a new financial system that greatly enhanced our ability to complete and monitor all financial transactions more efficiently as well as provided the customers with account management options.
- ◆ *Energy Efficiency:* Our Weatherization Program was brought on-line. All customers can now receive a FREE energy audit of their home with eligible customers receiving complimentary energy efficient supplies such as LED lights, weather stripping, caulking, and other items. We also made available the Main Street On-Bill program which allows customers to obtain interest free loans to purchase and install gas appliances with low payments added to the monthly bill.

I look forward to sharing our 2019 expectations in a future Newsline edition. Peace and blessings to each of you in the New Year.

Georgia's Move Over Law

Everyday those who work on or near the highway are put in danger. From police officers, utility workers, first responders and wreckers; the moment they step out of the vehicle and onto the shoulder of the highway, the danger begins.

Georgia's Move Over Law originated from efforts to keep these workers safe. The law is helping hundreds of thousands of workers state-wide stay injury free while at work and return home safely every day. Georgia's Move Over Law reads as follows:

A. The operator of a motor vehicle approaching a stationary authorized emergency vehicle that is displaying flashing yellow, amber, white, red, or blue lights shall approach the authorized emergency vehicle with due caution and shall, absent any other direction by a peace officer, proceed as follows:

1. Make a lane change into a lane not adjacent to the authorized emergency vehicle if possible in the existing safety and traffic conditions; or
2. If a lane change under paragraph (1) of this subsection would be impossible, prohibited by law, or unsafe, reduce the speed of the motor vehicle to a reasonable and proper speed for the existing road and traffic conditions, which speed shall be less than the posted speed limit, and be prepared to stop.

B. The operator of a motor vehicle approaching a stationary towing or recovery vehicle or a stationary highway maintenance vehicle that is displaying flashing yellow, amber, or red lights shall approach the vehicle with due caution and shall, absent any other direction by a peace officer, proceed as follows:

1. Make a lane change into a lane not adjacent to the towing, recovery, or highway maintenance vehicle if possible in the existing safety and traffic conditions; or
2. If a lane change under paragraph (1) of this subsection would be impossible, prohibited by law, or unsafe, reduce the speed of the motor vehicle to a reasonable and proper speed for the existing road and traffic conditions, which speed shall be less than the posted speed limit, and be prepared to stop.

C. Violation of subsection (a) or (b) of this Code section shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$500.00.

In summary: If you are on a highway and are approaching a vehicle with flashing yellow, amber, white, red, or blue lights, start preparations for making a lane change. Slow down and turn on your turn signal to indicate your intention to make a lane change. Check the lane to make sure it is safe to move into the lane, then make the lane change. If the lane change is impossible or unsafe, **slow down** even further to the point in which you would be able to stop at any moment. Pass the vehicle slowly and carefully, staying alert for any individual on foot.. Not only is it safe, **IT'S THE LAW!**



Commission Celebrates Employees

Every good thing that an organization desires to accomplish will be powered by the same energy source -- the commitment and talent of the employees. "I call them our *A Team*," said Chairman Dollie Horton when speaking of the employees of the Fort Valley Utility Commission. "We are extremely proud of our employees and really appreciate all that they do for us."

The Commission employment base consists of 50 employees with a combined total of 650 years of service. In September 2018, the United States Department of Labor reported that the median tenure of a wage and salary employee is 4.3 years. This means that nationwide, one half of employees have more than 4.3 years of service and the other half has less than 4.3 years of service. The median tenure of the Commission's employees is 12 years.

"We pride ourselves in providing a work environment that supports our employees in their professional development and we work diligently to maintain a positive work environment with high expectations of performance," said Craig Mims, General Manager/CEO of the Commission.

Each year, the Commission recognizes employees who reached certain years of service milestones. As you see these employees in the community, please take time to congratulate them. *(Not pictured: John Faherty— 15 years)*



Gary Dye—30 Years



Oscar Hall—20 Years



Donna Mullis—20 Years



Jammie Taylor—15 Years



Alvin Wallace—15 Years



Dusty Wilcox—5 Years



Daniel Gay—5 Years



Esther Demichow—5 Years



ARE YOU SIGNED UP TO RECEIVE EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS FROM THE UTILITY COMMISSION?

By subscribing to the email list, you will receive outage notifications and information on news or events from the Utility Commission. Follow the directions below to sign up.

- Visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/fvutil/>
- Click on the **BLUE** sign up button.



- Enter your email address and name. Providing your phone number is optional.
- Select the distribution list you would like to be added to and your preferred format.
- Once sign up is complete, you will receive a confirmation email from customerservice@fvutil.com.
- You can unsubscribe at anytime.

Scenes from the Commission's Sip, See, and Selfies with Santa





The Commission was awarded the **2018 Jeff Cook Award for Safety Excellence**. The honor is awarded to Municipal Utilities that meet various criteria regarding Safety in the workplace, especially as it relates to the Electric Department. The Award was created to help the Electric Cities of Georgia's Training & Safety Department encourage the different cities and municipal organizations to improve their Safety Programs. It was named after Jeffery Cook, to honor the trainer with Electric Cities of Georgia who passed away due to the devastating effects of Cancer.

ECG and The Georgia Electrical Municipal Safety Task Force recognize the cities and municipal organizations who have exhibited a continued commitment to safety and whose department has implemented procedures to ensure the safety of their staff. To achieve the standard required by this award, Utilities submit an application that documents their commitment to safety. Some of the topics that are judged in the application process are:

- ⇒ Management Participation – Ensuring that a written safety policy including goals and objectives is a part of the Safety Program.
- ⇒ Employee Safety Awareness
- ⇒ Employee Procedures – A wellness program to maintain and improve employee health.
- ⇒ Training & Education – Documents all aspects of training such as First Aid/CPR, regularly documented safety meetings, Certifications, Rescue training, etc.
- ⇒ Accident Investigation Procedures
- ⇒ Supervision & Job Planning
- ⇒ Use of Personal Protective Equipment, Protective Devices, and availability of Automated External Defibrillator (AED)
- ⇒ Facilities and availability of Safety equipment on site.



Jason Johnson, Electric and Telecom Superintendent accepts 2018 Jeff Cook Award for Safety Excellence

The Georgia Electric Municipal Safety Task Force consists of 8 members from ECG members. The purpose of the task force is to assist the Training & Safety Department in improving the ECG Lineworker Programs and safety topics.

The Utility Commission takes employee safety very seriously, and we are excited that our hard work is showing and paying off. We are proud to say our employees put Safety First!

Commission Software Offers Enhanced On-line Options

Fort Valley Utility Commission has transitioned to a new finance software system that gives customers *secure* access to account information. Through the system customers can now:

www.fvutil.com



► Apply for Service

► Pay Bill Online

► Report an Outage

- Economic Development
- Departments
- RFP & RFQ Bids
- News
- About Us
- Contact Us

⇒ Pay Utility Bill **

- ⇒ Pay Multiple Bills in One Payment
- ⇒ Save Payment Method for Future Payments
- ⇒ View Consumption History
- ⇒ View Address Information
- ⇒ Review Account Information
- ⇒ Sign up for e-Billing
- ⇒ Manage Multiple Accounts
- ⇒ Submit Service Requests
- ⇒ Sign up for reminders

**** Payments are processed through Municipal Online Payments, a separate company not affiliated with FVUC. The company adds a \$1.50 per transaction service fee that goes directly to Municipal Online Payments.**

To use our on-line portal, visit our website at www.fvutil.com, and click “Pay Bill Online” tab on the left side of menu. You will be redirected to our payment portal. Once here, select **Utility Billing** from available services.

A customer has the option of registering an account or completing a quick pay. To register an account, click login and proceed with entering an email address and creating a password. A link will be sent to the email for verification and validation.

Once the account is verified and validated the customer has the option to add utility account(s). Account numbers are located at the top right of the billing statement (include the dashes, example 012-03456-07).

To register an account, a customer will be required to enter the last amount paid on the account.

No login is required to complete a Quick Pay. But the account number (including dashes) and the last amount paid is required.



Questions regarding the on-line portal and assistance with setting up accounts can be obtained by calling Customer Service at

(478) 825-7701

Option 3.

*One of these ladies in Customer Service/
Billing will be glad to help!*





Weatherization

Approximately one half of a household's energy use can be contributed to heating and cooling it and water heating accounts for approximately 18%. This makes these two items alone some of the largest energy expenses in any home.

FVUC's Weatherization Program is designed to help customers reduce energy usage to help better manage these expenses. A few customers have already taken advantage of this program and are on the way to more efficient energy use.

The first stage of the program is to have an energy audit completed. The audits will be conducted at no cost to the customer. Several Commission employees have received the necessary training to conduct the audits.

Qualified customers also receive items to help weatherize the home. This includes items such as LED light bulbs, weather strips, caulking, air filters, and insulation. Depending on the magnitude of the project, the items will be installed by Commission employees or by a local contractor.

Applications are available at the Customer Engagement Center located at 902 Knoxville Street and are available on our Customer Service page on our website. Visit www.fvutil.com.

Energy Saving Tip: Unplug It!

- Unplug appliances such as computers and monitors, coffee makers, toasters, etc., when not in use.
- Unplug devices and chargers once your device battery is fully charged (cell phones, digital cameras, handheld video games and devices.)



NEED ASSISTANCE?

DID YOU KNOW?

DISCOUNT

65+ Discount

To qualify for the 65+ discount:

- you must show proof of age
- account must be in your name
- you must reside at the location

12 MONTH AVERAGE PAYMENT PLAN

"Levelized Billing"

To qualify for the 12 Month Average Payment Plan you must have:

- resided at your current residence for at least one year
- have a zero balance
- have a good payment history (no late fees or returned checks for the previous 6 months.)

When you move or close the account, you will be responsible for any balance due if applicable.



Weatherization Program

Free Energy Audits
& Tips
on more energy
efficient home

Do you want
to save money
on your bills?

Do you have
a home that
needs
weatherization?

Will provide energy efficiency kits to customers meeting certain income guidelines.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
RECEIVE AN APPLICATION:

CALL: 478.825.7701

EMAIL: customerservice@fvutil.com

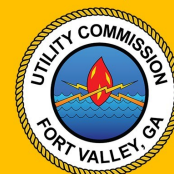
Completed applications may be emailed or brought to our customer engagement center at 902 Knoxville St.



0%
Financing
Available

Need a new NATURAL GAS stove, furnace or another major home appliance?

Ask Customer Service
about our Main Street On-Bill
Finance Program
478.825.7701



Loan terms up to 60 months
Monthly payment added to your bill

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 18-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.

112013



Whether you're hoping to ease your impact on the planet or just want to save a few dollars, reducing your energy use can help you get there. In fact, 10 percent of renters in a recent Rent.com survey said that utilities are their biggest monthly expense, coming in third after monthly rent and groceries.

Heating and cooling your home, especially those in regions with extreme temperature shifts, can be among the more expensive components of your utility bill. Luckily, making some easy adjustments in your home can dramatically reduce how much you spend on energy.

Here are several tips to reduce energy consumption and maintain comfortable temperatures in your home this winter:

- 1. Use the sun for free heat.** That bright orb in the sky should be the focus of temperature control in your residence throughout the year. Open the curtains on your south-facing windows during winter days to bring free heat into your home. Close your window coverings when the sun goes down to keep the heat inside.
- 2. Bundle up with warm accessories.** This is one of the easiest ways to save on your heating bill. Instead of turning the heat up, put on a cozy winter sweater and warm socks. Keep throw blankets on your couch, and add an area rug to insulate the floor.
- 3. Use ceiling fans to your advantage.** Homes that have better ventilation and airflow can be more energy efficient in the summer and winter months. If you have ceiling fans in your home, you have more control over ventilation than you know. Ceiling fans can be used strategically to achieve better airflow: counter-clockwise will push hot air up in the summer and clockwise will trap heat inside to keep your rooms warmer during cooler months. Turn your ceiling fan on a low setting to gently push hot air back down.
- 4. Adjust the thermostat at night.** According to the U.S. Department of Energy, you can save about 10 percent per year on your heating bills by turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours. Consider investing in flannel sheets and a warm comforter for your bed and keeping your home cooler when you sleep.
- 5. Only heat the rooms you use.** If you have rooms that you never use, like guest rooms or large storage areas, close and seal off the vents in those rooms to be more energy efficient and direct the flow of air to the rooms you use most.
- 6. Keep your furnace clean and unblocked.** Keeping your furnace and vents properly maintained will reduce energy consumption and help you save. Check your furnace filter monthly, and replace it when it gets dirty.
- 7. Get a humidifier to add moisture to the air.** The air inside your home can become very dry. Moist air feels warmer and holds heat better, so a humidifier can help you feel comfortable when your thermostat is set at a lower temperature. You can also increase the humidity in your home with a collection of house plants.
- 8. Invest in insulation.** Hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy costs are lost each year due to escaping heat and cold air in homes without proper insulation. Get some inexpensive insulation from your local home improvement store, and cover up all those areas where heat might escape. Start with foam weather stripping for your doors and windows; it's cheap and is extremely easy to apply.
- 9. Only use exhaust fans when necessary.** Exhaust fans in your kitchen and bathroom pull the hot air that rises to the ceiling out of your home. Use exhaust fans sparingly, and shut them off when you are done with them.

Just For Fun!

Energy Education

E N L U E L F K Q K P S T Z N W G G E R Y T K F G
 L L O A X Z S O L A R K D H O I F E L A Z U I T G
 R A E I P U C I R M M K H E I N R O B E B P L N O
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BIOMASS
 COAL
 COMBINED
 CONSERVATION
 CYCLE
 DISTRIBUTION
 EDUCATION
 ELECTRIC
 ELECTRICITY
 ENERGY
 GAS
 GENERATOR
 GEOTHERMAL
 HOMETOWN
 HYDRO
 KILOWATT
 LINES
 MEGAWATT
 MUNICIPAL
 NATURAL
 NONRENEWABLE
 NUCLEAR
 PANELS
 PLANT
 POWER
 RENEWABLE
 SOLAR
 TRANSMISSION
 TURBINE
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NEWSLINE

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Emergency Service

Nights and Weekends
478-825-5482

Office Hours

8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Monday - Friday
(6:00 pm on Payment Due Dates ONLY)

Visit Our Drive Thru Window for Your Chance To Win!

(Cut here)

We are pleased to offer our customers the opportunity to pay bills from the convenience of your vehicle! Feel free to use our Drive Thru window. The entrance is located off Anthoine Street.

WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

Pay your bill through our Drive Thru window for your chance to win a gift card. Contest ends February 28, 2019. Just complete the form below and give it to the teller!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

