

# NEWSLINE

ELECTRICITY • WATER • NATURAL GAS • WASTEWATER • TELECOMMUNICATIONS

## **Fort Valley Utility Commission**

**Since 1891**

500 Anthoine Street  
Fort Valley, Georgia 31030

(478) 825-7701

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### **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 Fort Valley City Hall.*



**December 2019**

**Editor: Martha McAfee**

## **COMMISSION HOSTS ELECTRIC CITIES OF GEORGIA MEETING**

The Fort Valley Utility Commission recently hosted the Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG) monthly meeting. ECG is a non-profit organization that provides strategic and technical services to 52 public power communi-



tions. Services provided include Analytical Services, Economic and Community Development, Engineering & Energy Services, Member Training and several others. "When possible, we like to take our board meetings out into the communities that we serve," said ECG Board Chairman, Craig Mims. Mims, the Commission's General Manager | CEO currently serves as the ECG Board Chair. "We were very honored that ECG decided to bring our October board meeting to Fort Valley and the Commission was honored to be the host, further stated Mims.

ECG senior staff members shared with the Board members and the attendees updates on recent activities of the organization that included financial as well as reports on operational and economic development activities throughout the state. Plans were also announced that included Fort Valley being tentatively included in the August 2020 ECG bus tour.



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

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



The ending of a calendar year typically prompts a reflection on the year's accomplishments as well as promotes looking forward and making plans for the new year. 2019 has been a very busy one at the Commission. A lot was accomplished but there is still so much more to be done. Let's look at a few of our highlights...

### *Disaster Response Center*

No one looks forward to disasters but in our business, we must always be prepared. This year we faced several threats which precipitated the need for the Commission to employ disaster preparedness measures. This year we were successful in streamlining our emergency operations to one location. In 2017, the Commission acquired the building located at 902 Knoxville Street and repurposed the building to be used as our Customer Engagement Center. This facility serves as the central location for our customers to conduct business and has greatly enhanced our ability to provide a much better service as well as provides a securer workplace setting for our employees. Having a location such as this that can readily be converted into a disaster response center made our ability to respond during emergencies easier and more efficient.

### *Downtown Corridor Rates*

In an effort to help encourage business growth and stability in the Fort Valley Downtown District, the Commission implemented a discounted electric rate for businesses in the *small commercial rate class* and located in the Downtown/Main Street Corridor. Approximately 70 businesses are currently taking advantage of the discounted rate and the special rate is still available to all new businesses meeting the guidelines. We are committed to looking for ways to support and grow our local economy.

### *Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)*

We were successful in implementing a pilot AMI project. An AMI system is an integrated system of smart meters, communications networks, and data management systems that enables two-way communication between the Commission and customers. We are currently testing the pilot project and will seek funding for full deployment in the future. Having this fully implemented system will provide enhanced opportunities for both commission staff and customers. This includes the ability to monitor usage at various intervals, "pay-as-you" go option for customers, instant meter reading without truck-rolls, and faster response time to customer issues and requests for information.

**"To achieve excellence, we must raise the bar—create a gap between where we are and where we want to be."**

### *Awards and Recognitions*

We have remained focused on our desire to achieve excellence. To achieve excellence, we must raise the bar—create a gap between where we are and where we want to be. This focused and our work was recognized by several external organizations this year. Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, a clean audit report status letter presented by the independent auditing firm of Butler, Williams, and Wyche, American Public Power Association's Reliable Public Power (RP3) designation, Electric Cities of Georgia's Major Electric System Improvement Award, ECG's Jeff Cook Safety Award, and the Municipal Gas Authority's Economic Development Award are all indicative of the Commissioners and staff's commitment to excellence.

## From the General Manager's Desk cont'd.....

### *Customer Support*

During 2019, we ramped up our efforts to provide Energy Efficiency and Weatherization support to our customers. Nationwide, there is an explosion of customer engagement in energy efficiency and devices to manage energy use and our desire is that our customers will embrace this concept. We conducted several activities and participated in community events to help educate customers about the benefit of energy use management and home improvements. A weatherization theme was incorporated into all of our community engagement contacts. We were pleased with the number of customers requesting energy audits. Our goal is to double that number in 2020.

The Commission also understands that there are times when customers may need a little extra time to pay bills. Our policy allowed a customer meeting certain guidelines to request two extensions per year. In 2019, the policy was amended to allow 4 extensions.

Improvements were made to our official website that have afforded us the ability to allow customers to interact with us in a more efficient manner. Customers may apply for service and upload new service documents, pay bills on-line, sign up for our alert messages, and see our rates and our annual financial reports. Feel free to visit our webpage and share your thoughts. [www.fvutil.com](http://www.fvutil.com).

### *Looking Forward*

We are looking forward to 2020 with plans for grander things in the upcoming year. Our focus will remain in line with our mission .. “To provide quality utility service to all users in the Fort Valley customer service area at the best possible rates, provide long range planning for upgrades and modernization of utility facilities, infrastructure, and equipment, take advantage of the latest usable and practical technology.”

Happy Holidays!

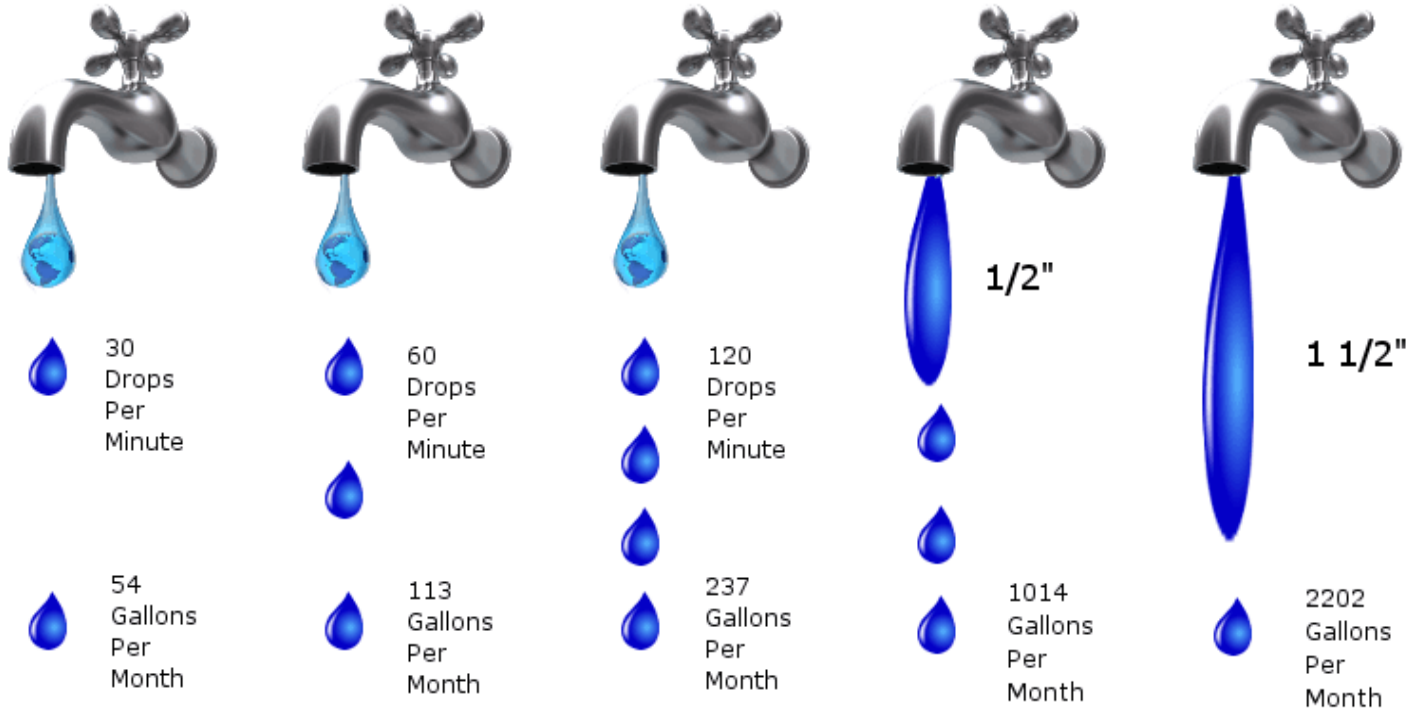


On December 12, 2019, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) announced that the Fort Valley Utility Commission has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its 2018 comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

The CAFR was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential user groups to read the CAFR.

GFOA advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources and practical research for more than 20,500 members and the communities they serve.

# Check for Water Leaks!



Water leaks often contribute to the cost of water bills. This includes leaky faucets, running and leaking toilets, and underground leaks. Seasonal or occasional increases in consumption also contribute.

Your toilet may be your greatest enemy! Depending on the type toilet you have, it can use between 6—32 liters a flush. Over the course of a month, it accounts for over 25% of your indoor water use. Newer toilets offer a much lower number of liters per flush. A leaking toilet could waste up to 330 liters per day. Please check your toilets for leaks frequently particularly if you notice an increase in your water bill that does not correlate with your routine.

How many times have you heard that annoying drip, drip, drip from your sink or bathtub? Besides getting on your nerves, it also gets on your bill! Leaking faucets happen due to being improperly closed or a worn out washer. Your outdoor faucet may be leaking too. Make the repairs as soon as possible.

Underground leaks are harder to detect. In fact, you may not notice it until you receive a bill. That's why you should keep track of your usage and if your water use goes up significantly but your routine hasn't changed much, you may need to have a professional check underground leaks.

Seasonal or occasional increases in consumption are related to your activities. These may include things such as watering your garden in the summer time during very dry seasons or having visitors. Take these matters into consideration before panicking about a higher than normal bill.



## Employee Milestone Awards



Mike Massengale—25 Years

CONGRATULATIONS!  
APPLAUSE  
HOORAY!  
WONDERFUL NEWS  
GREAT  
EXCELLENT  
WELL DONE



George Gibbs—20 Years



Mary Adamson—20 Years



Pam Lee—20 Years



Karina Ceballos—15 Years



Parker Reed—10 Years

Not Pictured:  
Tracy Martin  
30 Years  
Marquis Johnson  
5 Years



Luis Torres—10 Years

### Natural Gas and Your Safety

Natural gas, America's most popular home heating fuel, is increasingly popular for use by homeowners, schools, businesses, factories and electric power-generation plants because it is efficient, clean, reliable and a relative bargain compared to alternative energy sources.

In our community, *Fort Valley Utility Commission* provides natural gas to more than **3891** customers through a network of underground distribution lines. Main gas lines, typically 2-inch in diameter, 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.

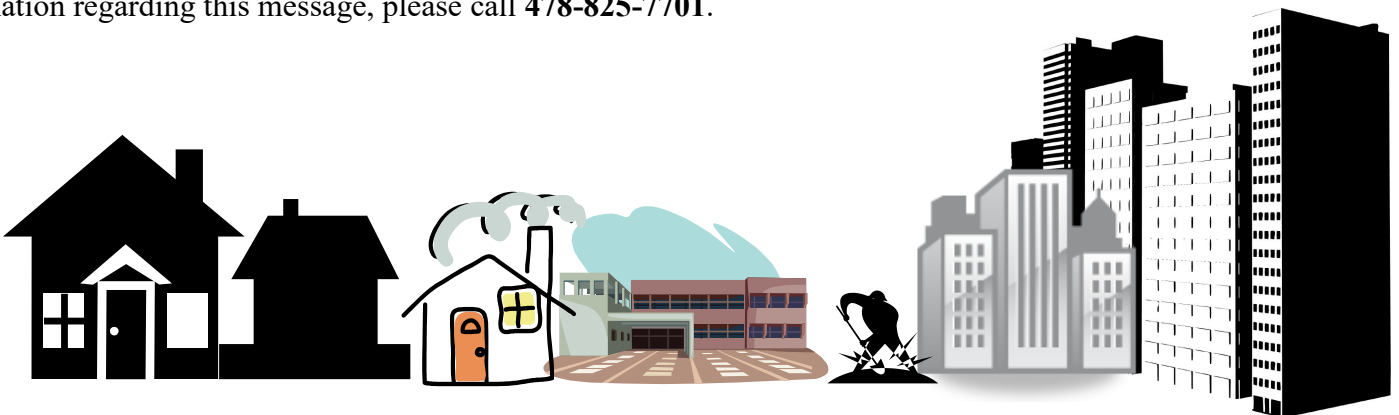
To protect you and others in the community; federal and state government, along with the Commission have made your safety a high priority. Any time you dig or move earth in any way, you are required to "Call Before You Dig" 48 hours before beginning any digging. When you call **811**, they will contact utility owners who will locate all buried utility lines on your property, so you can safely dig and prevent a potentially hazardous condition. Failure to use the **811** system is a known cause of pipeline accidents. Calling before you dig can prevent a costly or even deadly mistake.

Natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas; however, a chemical that smells like rotten eggs is added to help detect a possible leak. 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.

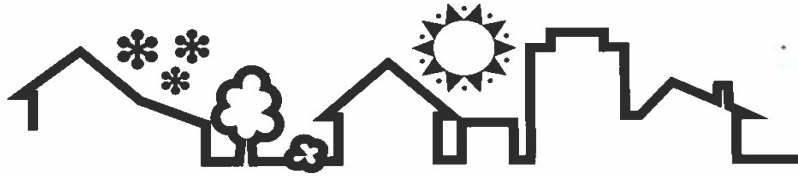
If you smell gas, or just think you might have a gas leak, leave the area immediately and call *Fort Valley Utility Commission* at **478-825-7701** or **911** from a neighboring home or business. Never turn on or off switches, open or close garage doors, use a flashlight or phone/cellphone in the presence of the gas smell, as these devices may be a source of ignition, causing an explosion.

Do your part to familiarize yourself and your family with these natural gas safety tips and continue to enjoy the value, comfort and benefits of America's cleanest, most efficient energy source!

This message is brought to you by *Fort Valley Utility Commission* as a public service. For additional information regarding this message, please call **478-825-7701**.







## WINDOW-WISE

According to the U.S. DOE, heat gain and loss from windows accounts for up to 30 percent of home energy costs. But energy-efficient replacement windows are expensive, and despite their extra benefits, from reducing noise to protecting interior fabrics, they seldom pay for themselves through energy savings alone. Here are some ways to get new-window benefits for less cost.

Sometimes **replacing a deteriorated window** is the only answer. But older homes that have wooden windows may benefit from restoration, typically costing half as much and lasting 50 to 100 years, with minimal maintenance, such as **changing weather-stripping and repainting** every five to ten years.<sup>3</sup>

Low-emissivity (low-e) glass **storm windows** may be mounted outside the window, or more easily on the inside. They offer some of the same fabric-protection, noise reduction and energy-saving benefits as new energy-efficient windows, for as little as one-quarter the cost.

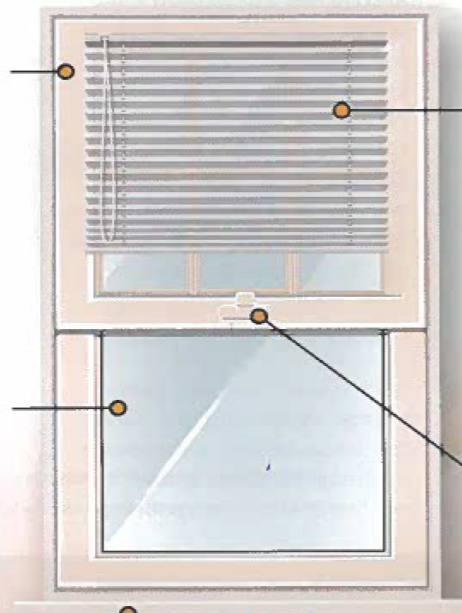
**Interior plastic wraps** on windows offer a super low-cost solution for renters. The Energy Star website provides do-it-yourself tips.<sup>4</sup>

**Weather-stripping** between the upper and lower sashes and along the edges of the window will stop drafts, minimize moisture condensation and quell street noise.

**Thermal shades**, combined with low-e storm windows can provide nearly the same year-round savings as a full window replacement. Double or triple honeycomb shades are among the most attractive and effective options. Thermal drapes can help, too.

**Shade screens** can replace storm windows in summer, or simply purchase a roller blind made of shade-screen material. Secure the bottom with elastic loops and hooks, to keep it from blowing on windy days.

Simply **keeping windows locked** pulls the panes together tighter to reduce drafts.





Celebrating National Public Power Week and National Natural Gas Week was a hit!







## Find Savings in Every Room

*Whether you are looking for savings on your energy bills, or to get more comfort and ease for your energy dollar, or simply to do something good for the environment—you can start at your own front door. Take notes as you make a quick room-by-room tour of your house or apartment. Plan to make these easy, low-cost improvements now and bigger energy-saving changes in months to come.*

**Entrance.** Change outside lights to warm-colored energy-saving LED lamps. Add a photo sensor, and the light will automatically come on to welcome you after dark.

**Windows.** In summer, block direct sunlight using screens, blinds, or outdoor awnings, vines, and trees. In winter, reverse your thinking and let the sunshine in for free heat during the day. Always cover windows on cold nights for comfort and savings.

**Ceiling Fans.** Raise your summer air conditioner settings by three to five degrees with no loss of comfort by using ceiling fans. Turn fans off when you leave the room; their benefits are minimal if you are not there to enjoy them.

**Air Leaks.** A typical home has a half-mile of cracks and gaps around windows, doors, attic hatches, and edges where walls and floors meet! You can buy low-cost supplies to fix this problem from your local home store.

**Fireplace Flue.** Leaving the damper open after the fire is out can draw out conditioned air and increase energy bills by 15 percent or more. Close the damper whenever the fire is out.

**Refrigerator.** If you have an old refrigerator or freezer that you barely use, unplug it. Old appliances can add up to 15 percent to your electric bill. Save energy with your working fridge by placing it in a well-ventilated spot and keeping your fridge and freezer full but not overloaded.

**Save Hot Water.** You can wash most clothes in cold water, and always rinse cold. You may save hundreds of dollars on water heating each year.

**Cool the Dryer.** You may air-dry dishes and dry clothes on a cooler setting. These steps will cut drying costs and put less waste heat into your house in summer. For added efficiency, keep that lint trap clean.

**Furnace.** Change the air filter regularly—once a month in the heating season. Buy multi-packs of replacement filters, so you always have one on hand.

**The Switch.** Turn lights, appliances, electronics and especially all kinds of heaters off when they are not in use.

# Safety First

The Commission has received notice of approval for the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) Safety Grant award. The preliminary award for \$12,900 will allow us to stretch our local budget dollars further and provide a safer work environment for our employees.

GMA implement the program in 2000 to provide a financial incentive to assist members in improving their employee safety and general public liability loss control efforts through training and the purchase of equipment or services. The funds are made available to member of GMA's property and liability insurance program and GMA's worker's compensation insurance program, both of which the Commission are members. GMA is based in Atlanta and is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to its over 500 member communities.



## Commission Receives the 2019 Jeff Cook Safety Award

The Commission was awarded the 2019 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 recognizes 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, employee safety awareness, employee procedures, training & education documents, all aspects of training such as first aid/CPR, regularly documented safety meetings, certifications, rescue training, accident investigation procedures, supervision and job planning, use of personal protective equipment, protective devices, and availability of automated external defibrillator (AED), facilities and availability of safety equipment on site.

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!





## Happy Holidays

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CANDLES	CHARITY	CHRISTMAS	DINNER	FAMILY	FOOD
FRIENDS	FROSTY	GIFTS	HAPPY	HOLIDAY	HOLY
JOLLY	JOYOUS	LAUGHTER	LIGHTS	MERRY	NEW
NOEL	ORNAMENTS	PEACE	RESOLUTIONS	RIBBONS	
RUDOLPH	SANTA	SLEIGH	STAR	STOCKINGS	
TOYS	TREE	VACATION	WREATH		



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Published by the  
Fort Valley Utility Commission  
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  
(6:00 pm on Payment Due Dates)



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## **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.