

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

Alre' Horton

Chairman

Bob Hunnicutt

Vice Chairman

Linda Johnson

Secretary

Rose Marie Huff-Thompson

Mayor Barbara B. Williams

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



April 2020

Editor: Martha McAfee

Commission Approves COVID-19 Payment Assistance Program

To help lessen the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fort Valley Utility Commission established a COVID-19 Payment Assistance Program to assist customers who may have trouble paying utility bills. A limited amount of funds will be made available, and the program will expire when the funds are depleted.

"According to several models that are being discussed, the effect of COVID-19 on our customers has the potential to be financially life changing for some," stated Commission Chairman Alre' Horton. "We want to do something to help mitigate some of the stress that our customers may face," further said Horton.

The Commission has dedicated \$240,000 towards funding payment assistance for eligible Utility Commission customers. The funds are being administered through the current Fort Valley Cares program and through a newly formed partnership with the Middle Georgia Community Action Agency (MGCAA). "We have already experienced an increase in the number of our customers who are in a nonpayment status. We anticipate that the number will rise without some assistance being provided," stated Craig Mims, the Commission's General Manager/CEO.

Funds were made available starting on Monday, April 13, 2020, and eligibility is based upon several criteria including income guidelines currently used in the HEAT/LIHEAP program. The applicant must be the account holder. To determine eligibility, please call 800.525.4972 or 478.825.6025.

Customers who are having trouble paying their bill should reach out to Customer Service at 478.825.7701 Option 3 to discuss other available options.

**For COVID-19 payment assistance
call 800.525.4972 or 478.825.6025**

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



Conducting Business in the COVID-19 Environment

Throughout the world, COVID-19 has forced businesses to reevaluate methods by which goods and services are provided. The Commission is not immune to the situation. We continue to actively monitor COVID-19 and follow guidance from state, federal, and local agencies. The safety and health of our customers and employees is our top priority.

We have implemented several measures to facilitate a safer environment for our customers and employees. These include:

- ♦ **Closing the lobby at our Customer Engagement Center.** Traditionally, approximately 60% of our customers choose to conduct business with us in person, face to face. We appreciate this interaction with our customers as this affords us the opportunity to give a more personal customer experience. However, during this pandemic, it became a necessity that we limit the number of persons entering and exiting the building. Our drive thru window has proven to be a very valuable asset to our operations and we have been able to provide in person service to those who choose to come to our facilities. We also accommodate face to face, in person service to those requiring this by appointment.
- ♦ **Work Crew Adjustments.** We are making every effort to ensure that we maintain a healthy workforce that is capable of providing the reliable service that our customers expect. To facilitate this, we implemented a plan that adjusted the way that our employees engage each other during the work day. This includes multiple reporting areas, practicing social distancing, tailoring our work assignments, teleworking, and providing all employees with the appropriate personal protection equipment.
- ♦ **Training and Travel.** The Commission operates in an industry that is continually changing with emerging technologies and environmental concerns. Our staff is actively engaged in making sure that we stay abreast of recent trends and best practices in the industry. COVID-19 facilitated a change in the manner in which we engage in external and internal training activities but we are managing the flow of information in a satisfactory manner.

“The Commission operates in an industry that is continually changing with emerging technologies and environmental concerns.”

Our staff of dedicated employees remain committed to providing our customers with top-notch, reliable service even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please protect yourself and your family. Information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones against the COVID-19 virus can be found at www.cdc.gov. Rest assured that we are committed to continuing to provide you with the reliable services that you have come to expect.

Fort Valley Utility Commission Recognized as Organization of Ethics

FORT VALLEY – The Fort Valley Utility Commission has been recognized as a Certified Organization of Ethics by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). The Ethics program, implemented by the GMA in 1999, was developed by a panel of business and government leaders to encourage cities and organizations to adopt and adhere to a set of key ethical principles and adopt a local ethics ordinance.

According to a press release from GMA, the ordinance must contain definitions, prohibited conduct and due process for officials accused of violations in areas such as financial disclosures, conflicts of interests and outside employment. The ordinance must also contain penalties for officials who violate the ordinance.

“We acknowledge that the purpose and intent of a Code of Ethics is that all of our organization’s representatives adhere to high levels of ethical conduct, honesty, integrity and accountability so that the public will have confidence in those of us who act for their benefit,” said Craig Mims, General Manager/CEO of the Commission. “To serve the public well, it is important to have the public’s trust. Embracing the Organization of Ethics recognition demonstrates the Commission’s commitment to ethical principles,” further stated Mims.

The Commission Ethics Ordinance includes a pledge from the governing authority members that each member will commit to:

- **Serve Others and Not Ourselves**
- **Use Resources with Efficiency and Economy**
- **Treat All People Fairly**
- **Use the Power of Our Position for the Well Being of Our Constituents**
- **Create an Environment of Honesty, Openness, and Integrity**



GMA requires organizations with the designation to recertify for the program, ensuring that ordinances maintain the standards of the program and officials are regularly reminded of their ethical obligations as individuals and as a governing body. Each city/organization is required to apply for recertification every four years.

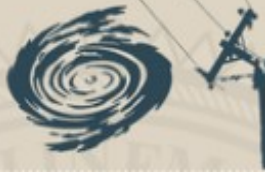
Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to its 538 member cities.



LINEMEN: Pride, Camaraderie, & Spirit



115,000
linemen in the
United States



67,000
Approximate number
of line personnel responding
to Superstorm Sandy

Power lineman Trade
begins **1879** with the
invention of the Edison
lightbulb.



Average cost of installing
powerlines per mile:



Overhead = \$40,000
Underground = \$210,000



First lineman in the
United States: **Ezra Cornell**,
who built the Morse Telegraph
line and later founded
Cornell University.



Approximate weight of
lineman tools and
equipment worn: **30 lbs.**



Hot sticking began in **1905**

Barehanding began in **1915**



Rubber gloving started in the **1920s**



Median Annual Wage
(not including overtime):
\$63,250

9 Million Miles of wire
in service in the U.S.



Henry Miller: Founder
and first president of
International Brotherhood
of Electrical Workers

Number of years training to achieve journeyman status: **4**



170 Million
Number of wood poles in
service in the U.S.



2.7 Million
Number of transmission
towers in service in the U.S.

Estimated number of
electric customers
in the U.S.
155,000,000



Sources: US Department of Energy; North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority;
Electric Light and Power Magazine; Northwest Lineman College; NRECA; EEI and others.



Powered by Northwest Lineman College

#ThankALineman Month



Defending Against COVID-19 Cyber Scams

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) warns individuals to remain vigilant for scams related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Cyber actors may send emails with malicious attachments or links to fraudulent websites to trick victims into revealing sensitive information or donating to fraudulent charities or causes. Exercise caution in handling any email with a COVID-19-related subject line, attachment, or hyperlink, and be wary of social media pleas, texts, or calls related to COVID-19.

CISA encourages individuals to remain vigilant and always take the following precautions.

- **Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments.** Email is easily circulated – Forwarding email is so simple that viruses can quickly infect many machines. Most viruses do not even require users to forward the email—they scan a users' mailbox for email addresses and automatically send the infected message to all of the addresses they find. Attackers take advantage of the reality that most users will automatically trust and open a message that comes from someone they know.
- **Be wary of unsolicited attachments, even from people you know.** Just because an email message looks like it came from someone you know does not mean that it did. Many viruses can "spoof" the return address, making it look like the message came from someone else. If you can, check with the person who supposedly sent the message to make sure it's legitimate before opening any attachments.
- **Trust your instincts.** If an email or email attachment seems suspicious, don't open it, even if your anti-virus software indicates that the message is clean. If something about the email or the attachment makes you uncomfortable, there may be a good reason. Don't let your curiosity put your computer at risk.
- **Save and scan any attachments before opening them.** If you have to open an attachment before you can verify the source, take the following steps:
 1. Be sure the signatures in your antivirus software are up to date.
 2. Save the file to your computer or a disk.
 3. Manually scan the file using your antivirus software.
 4. If the file is clean and doesn't seem suspicious, go ahead and open it.
- **Turn off the option to automatically download attachments.** To simplify the process of reading email, many email programs offer the feature to automatically download attachments. Check your settings to see if your software offers the option, and make sure to disable it.

If you receive correspondence of any kind from the Fort Valley Utility Commission, whether via email, phone, or mail and you have questions about the source, please contact us directly at 478.825.7701, and choose Option 3.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORNER

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 new chat feature on our website!

Visit www.fvutil.com.



DCF
Offices.org



THANK YOU MGCAA and DFACS for your partnership with the COVID-19 Payment Assistance Program!
We appreciate YOU!

FORT VALLEY UTILITY COMMISSION

COVID-19 PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

STARTING MONDAY
APRIL 13TH



**1-800-525-4972 or
478-825-6025**

Please call Monday - Friday
8:30 am - 12:30 pm
to schedule an appointment

Eligibility Criteria Considered:

HEAT/LIHEAP
Income
Guidelines

Account
Owner

Emergent
Hardship

Medical
Emergency

Exhausted
all other
Resources

No
Assistance
From FV
Cares or
MGCAA
since
3/15/2020



WWW.FVUTIL.COM

0%
**Financing
Available**

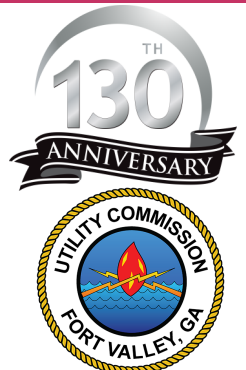
Need a new NATURAL GAS stove, furnace
or another major home appliance?

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

Find out how you can make your whole house more energy efficient—the building, insulation, heating and cooling system, appliances, electronics, and more. Check out the Energy Star website at EnergyStar.gov.





The **Utility Commission** is very focused on providing safe and reliable utility service during these challenging times. In keeping with our commitment, while our service methods have changed, we remain available to assist our customers and continue to serve the citizens of Peach, Crawford, and Macon Counties.

Below is some information on our operations, programs, and services.

Our **customer service lobby** remains closed to the general public, however, our drive-thru remains open. If you need to meet with a customer service representative, please call to make an appointment, 478-825-7701 Option 3.

COVID-19 Payment Assistance Program: To help lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Utility Commission has established the COVID-19 Payment Assistance Program to assist customers who may have trouble paying their utility bill. A limited amount of funds will be made available, and the program will expire when the funds are depleted. Please call 1-800-525-4972, Monday – Friday, between 8:30 am – 12:30 pm or 478-825-6025 for more information.

The Utility Commission has temporarily suspended service disconnections for nonpayment. If you are having trouble paying your bill, we encourage you to contact Customer Service by phone or email to make **payment arrangements**. Our email address is customerservice@fvutil.com. **Late fees and penalties will be waived for accounts that have established a payment arrangement.** Customers are encouraged to pay what they can to avoid larger bill amounts. There are multiple ways to pay your utility bill: Online at fvutil.com, by calling 478-825-7701 Option 3, using one of our six drop box locations, or by visiting our drive thru.

Fort Valley Utility Commission On-Bill Financing Program

Having your furnace or another major home appliance go out is a stressful situation! It's one of those events that households hardly ever plan for and often means using dollars that were saved for a vacation or another special purpose on a new appliance. Fort Valley Utility Commission can help you through this situation with our Main Street On-Bill Finance Program. This program can be used to finance the purchase and installation of new natural gas appliances by simply adding a small monthly payment to your utility bill.



LOAN TERMS UP TO 60 MONTHS

The Main Street Finance Program offers a variety of financing options, including zero percent interest and the freedom to choose your own loan term, up to 60 months! Loans are available for qualified natural gas appliances including most residential natural gas home appliances. Payments are easily and conveniently added to your monthly utility bill.

If you're interested in learning more about this program or taking advantage of the benefits it offers, contact us at 478-825-7701.

SWITCH TO NATURAL GAS AND SAVE

Not a natural gas customer? Did you know you can save more than \$250 year by switching from electric to natural gas water heating? A natural gas tankless water heater will provide even more savings! Natural gas water heaters also give you more hot water in less time because they recover so much faster than an electric water heater. With a natural gas tankless water heater you never run out of hot water!

Natural gas furnaces can last longer than electric heat pumps and they deliver heat up to 25% warmer. One those cold winter days a natural gas furnace keeps your home nice and warm! By choosing clean natural gas you're making the best choice for comfort, savings and reliability.



FORT VALLEY UTILITY COMMISSION

478-825-7701
www.fvutil.com

Be Safe. Dig Smart. Call First.

Call before you dig! When you plan to dig or move dirt with mechanical equipment, call **811** at least 48 hours before you dig. Your call to **811** will be directed to the local One Call Center who will then contact affected utilities to have the facilities in your area marked.

Failure to use **811** is a known cause of pipeline accidents. Calling before you dig is the law and can prevent a costly or even a deadly mistake. Striking an underground pipeline may result in fire, explosion and/or asphyxiation.

Here are some simple steps to damage prevention:

- ✓ **Survey and Mark** – Survey proposed excavation areas and mark the dig sites in white paint
- ✓ **Call Before You Dig** – 48 hours prior to digging, call **811** to have underground facilities located. It is the law in Georgia.
- ✓ **Wait the Required Time** – Allow utility owners time to locate and mark the lines
- ✓ **Respect the Marks** – Maintain visibility of the marks and safely follow them when digging
- ✓ **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 using mechanized equipment, use a shovel and carefully hand-dig to expose the lines.

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 Your Equipment Contacts a Gas Line:**

- **Leave equipment;** jumping clear and shuffling away – DO NOT turn off the engine.
- **Warn others and leave** the area quickly; DO NOT congregate around natural gas facilities
- **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, 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.

To protect yourself and this community, federal and state government, along with **Fort Valley Utility Commission** has made reliability and safety high priorities. For additional information regarding this message, please call us at **478-825-7701**.

112013

Just For Fun!

Electrifying

B I S M A C O N J R P N N F K C T P N S
 P N H A H M A S O H O J L M V A I B C T
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 INSULATOR
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 NEUTRONS
 OHMSLAW
 PARALLEL
 POSITIVE
 POWER
 PROTONS
 RESISTANCE
 RESISTOR
 SERIES
 STATIC
 TRANSFER
 TRANSFORMATION
 VOLTAGE
 WATT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Who do I call to report a power outage, water leak, sewer backup, or gas leak?** During normal business hours, call customer service at 478.825.7701, option 3. After hours, please call 478.825.5482.
- When is my bill due?** Customers are assigned a billing cycle based on service location. Your bill will identify your due date. General dues dates for each cycle (subject to change depending on holidays or weekends):
Cycle 1: 7th of the month Cycle 2: 13th of the month Cycle 3: 19th of the month Cycle 4: 25th of the month
- Where can I make payments?** Payments can be made at the Customer Engagement Center, 902 Knoxville St, via phone, mail, online (www.fvutil.com), Roberta City Hall or at one of the following drop box locations: AP Mini Mart (702 Orange St), City Hall (204 West Church St), Community Plaza (1200 State University Dr.), Jason's Mini Mart (402 S. Camellia Blvd) or Neighbors Food Mart (412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr.)
- Who do I contact regarding my trash pickup?** The Utility Commission bills sanitation on behalf of the City. Any questions regarding trash services should be directed to City Public Works, 478.825.2615 or Advanced Disposal 478.746.7230 for county residents.

New Faces Around the Commission



Rose Marie Huff-Thompson, Commissioner



Clay Walker, Operations Manager
Water/Wastewater



NEWSLINE

Published by the
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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
(6:00 pm on Payment Due Dates ONLY)



On December 27, 1890, the Board of Commissioners of Water and Sewers was established with full power to make all contracts necessary to employ labor for the construction of and proper keeping of the water works and sewers. In 1953, the board was renamed the Utility Commission and given the same powers, duties, and rights as prior boards and at this time was operating all public utilities including sewer, water, electricity, and natural gas. Telecom services were added in 1999. The Commission has 130 years of working to fulfill its mission:

- **Provide quality utility service to all users in the Commission's 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.**

1890

..... HAPPY
Birthday
..... TO US !!!



2020