

# NEWSLINE

ELECTRICITY • WATER • NATURAL GAS • WASTEWATER • TELECOMMUNICATIONS

## Fort Valley

### Utility Commission

Since 1891

500 Anthoine Street

Fort Valley, Georgia 31030

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

After hours: (478) 825-5482

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811 or (800) 282-7411

### Elected Commissioners

**Alre' Horton**

*Chairman*

**Marvin Crafter**

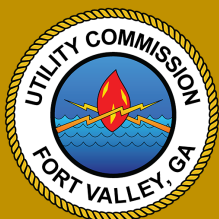
*Vice Chairman*

**Rose Marie Huff-Thompson**

**Stephen Lindsey**

**Mayor Barbara B. Williams**

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



January 2021

Editor: Martha McAfee

## Emergency Preparedness with a Twist

Utility companies have long had a strong track record when preparing for emergency situations. Events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods, and yes, health emergencies, all impact an organization when developing and implementing business continuity plans. These plans must be easily adaptable to meet a variety of situations including pandemics such as the ever changing health crisis, COVID-19. These plans are developed to ensure that the organization can continue to operate effectively in such events as those noted.

COVID-19 inserted distinctive twists into the Commission's emergency preparedness plans. While our plans typically addressed allocation of resources and restoring services, the pandemic added another level to our contingency plan. The most significant steps included:

1. Identifying resources that are available in the event of a widespread quarantine amongst our own employees. Utility companies have a long tradition of resource sharing and mutual assistance and the pandemic is no different.
2. Obtaining sufficient personal protection equipment and operational supplies to ensure that adequate resources are available to keep our employees and our customers safe and our critical infrastructure operational.
3. Staying engaged in internal and external communications and keeping abreast of relevant pandemic information. Our procedures include ensuring that employees remain diligent about keeping safe, even as COVID 19 fatigue becomes more and more a reality.
4. Cybersecurity is always a high priority and the pandemic created additional threats and vulnerabilities. Our heightened use of more remote systems, flexible work arrangements, and increased automation requires continuous training and reminders to our employees to remain diligent as well as making sure that our systems are supported effectively by emerging technologies.



The coronavirus outbreak is causing far-reaching concern and economic hardship for consumers, businesses, and communities across the globe. The Commission will remain diligent in implementing measures to lessen the overall impact on our customers.

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

### What's All That Jumble on The Poles?

Ned Watson, Interim General Manager



When you ride down the street, or practically any road in the nation, there is a part of the landscape that is so common it's hardly even noticed anymore. It is the poles, mostly made of wood, but some of concrete and some of metal, but they all have one primary thing in common; they support the wires that carry electricity from one point to another. Other utility providers use them too, such as the phone and cable TV company. The common practice is for the owner of the poles to charge annual pole rental fees to other users. This allows the owner to re-coup some of the cost of the poles; it is a good deal for the renters because they don't have to maintain the poles, and the community gains because the number of poles along the streets is reduced.

At first glance, the poles around town appear to be a hodge-podge of wires of different shapes and sizes strung haphazardly from the top of the pole downward. Actually, there is order to the wires and a certain priority of where each company's wires are located on the pole. Typically, there are three wires (for three phase service) located on a cross-arm along the top of the pole. These are the electric company's energized 7,200 volts electrical wires. There are five feet dedicated below the primary lines where transformers are hung. If no transformers are necessary, then 6 feet below the three phase lines is the neutral (or ground wire) which feeds back to the sub station. One foot below the neutral wire is another energized wire, called a secondary, that branches off poles to provide 120/240 volts current to each home.

Two feet below the secondary wire is the telephone company's line. Usually, it's a large, bundled wire containing many phone lines. Eighteen inches below the phone line is the local cable TV company's line. And lastly, a foot below the TV cable is the fiber optic line. The above is a typical outfitted pole. There are some exceptions, of course, and the distances between the different lines may not be exact. But the order is correct in that electrically energized lines are always on top and phone, cable, and fiber optic lines are always lower on the pole. This allows the phone and cable company employees to work on their lines without interfering with or being exposed to the electrical lines. Phone and cable lines are only attached to local electrical system poles. Major electrical cross-country transmission poles do not have other utility lines on them.

**"Please do not attach lost pet signs, garage sales, or other flyers to the poles; it's dangerous to linemen when they must climb poles."**

The Utility Commission spends thousands of dollars a year tree trimming to keep limbs out of their energized lines. It is money well spent. During the last few thunderstorms and heavy winds that came through the city, there were very few outages caused by limbs interfering with the power lines. When tree trimming is being done, only the power lines are cleared of limbs. Tree trimming maintenance on the phone and cable lines is not the responsibility of the Utility Commission. When lines are observed completely enclosed by limbs, especially on the lower part of the poles, it is the phone or cable lines affected.

And finally, please do not attach lost pet signs, garage sales, or other flyers to the poles; it's dangerous to linemen when they must climb poles, and it's illegal.

## 2020 Highlights

The onset of COVID-19 presented major challenges to organizations across the nation. The Commission was not exempt. Changes in the way we conducted business were implemented and we sought to implement these changes in ways that had the least impact on our customers. Through it all, we were still able to provide our customers with the reliable service that is expected and completed several projects that were in our annual work plan. Here are a few highlights of our 2020 accomplishments....

*Website:* We continually look for ways to improve and expand options for customer engagement. Our COVID-19 protocol called for us to close our Customer Engagement Center lobby for the health and safety of our customers and employees. The 2020 roll out of a new chat feature option on our website was very timely and greatly enhanced our ability to communicate with our customers. Have a question? Visit our website at [www.fvutil.com](http://www.fvutil.com) and look for the “chat with us” feature. And don’t forget to check out our Customer Service page that has answers to the most frequently asked questions as well as most of our forms. Our on-line portal allows you to not only pay your bill but also start a new service, make changes to your account, review your usage and many other features.

*Recognition:* The Commission received recognition as a Certified Organization of Ethics by the Georgia Municipal Association. This designation required that the Commission adopt an Ethics ordinance that outlines prohibited conduct and provides due process for governing authority members who violate the ordinance.

*Operations:* Several neighborhoods throughout our Fort Valley service area have been identified as needing upgrades to the gas lines. We were able to complete a project on Westview Drive this year. We also installed electric lines to the residences established on Ronald Pride Boulevard and relocated the wireless access point for the Plane Living Subdivision.

We were pleased to obtain the electric customer choice load for the new Peach County High School and are working to establish that service as well as complete the water, wastewater, gas, and telecom services to their new location. Financing was also secured for the USDA Water System Improvement project to serve Fort Valley State University and surrounding areas.

We completed upgrades to all of our services to accommodate the new Vallihi Apartments and are excited about that redevelopment of the old Fort Valley High School into senior apartments. Extension of our waterlines in the Lakeview/Sullivan Road area allowed us to obtain some new customers. We also upgraded our Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) program. SCADA is our system that gives us the ability to remotely control and monitor our wells and sewer stations in real-time.

### *Looking Forward*

We are moving forward in 2021 with plans for grander things this year. As always, 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.”



## Commission Receives Excellence in Financial Reporting Award



The Fort Valley Utility Commission is once again the recipient of the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). Awarded by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada, 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 the organization and its management.

“Our Director of Financial and Administrative Services Cathy Johnson and her team go that extra mile to prepare our annual financial report and we are pleased with the results,” said Alre’ Horton, Chairman of the Commission. “They spend tireless hours throughout the year ensuring that our finances are in order.”

The CAFR was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards. The panel includes financial statement preparers, independent auditors, academics, and other finance professionals. GFOA established the CAFR program in 1945 to encourage and assist state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal.

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## Commission Receives Safety Grant Award



The Commission has received notice of approval for the Georgia Municipal Association’s (GMA) Safety and Liability Management Grant program. The preliminary award of almost \$9,500 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.





## Employee Milestone Awards

CONGRATULATIONS!  
YOU DID IT! APPLAUSE! HOOORAY!  
WONDERFUL NEWS  
CLAP GREAT  
EXCELLENT  
WELL DONE  
FAB  
SUPERB



Ricky Dawson—40 Years



Keith Spillers—30 Years



Marcus Tabor—20 Years



Gary Moncrief—30 Years



Roy Woodson—15 Years



Jennifer Lumley—10 Years



Johnathan Wiggins—10 Years

**THANK YOU** for your service!

**Not Pictured:**

Zac Gowen-20 yrs

Craig Mims-5 yrs

Penny Burch-5 yrs

### 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!

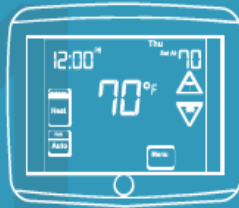
This message is brought to you by *Fort Valley Utility Commission* as a public service. For additional information regarding this message, please call **478-825-7701**.





# SAVING ENERGY *Saves Money*

Looking for ways to save energy and money at home? Check out the 8 things all homeowners should do to cost effectively lower their energy bills.



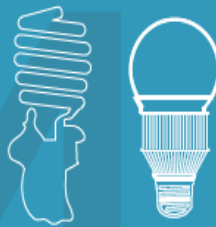
**Install and set a programmable thermostat.** Save an estimated 10 percent per year on heating and cooling costs by using a programmable thermostat.



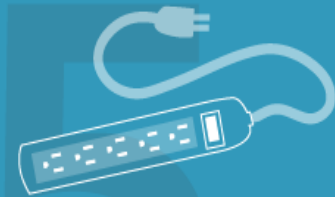
**Use sunlight to your advantage.** Choose window treatments that allow you to use natural light while reducing heat loss and gain.



**Switch to ENERGY STAR appliances, fans and electronics.** Using ENERGY STAR certified products throughout your home could save nearly \$900 over the lifetime of the products.



**Choose energy-saving lighting.** Replacing 15 traditional bulbs with energy-saving bulbs will save you \$50 a year and more than \$600 in energy costs over the life of the bulbs.



**Use an electronic power strip for your electronic equipment.** Help reduce phantom loads -- and save up to \$100 a year -- by plugging electronic devices into a power strip and turn it off when not in use.



**Reduce energy for water heating.** Take simple steps -- like lowering your water heater's temperature and installing low-flow showerheads -- to reduce your water heating bills.



**Hire a professional to maintain your heating and cooling system.** Check and replace your air filters regularly and arrange for annual maintenance with a qualified technician.



**Consult a home performance contractor to achieve large savings.** These professionals will do a comprehensive audit of your whole house using special tools to measure home energy efficiency.



### **It Was Still a Season to be Jolly!**

We always look forward to the Christmas Holiday Season! We especially look forward to participating in the community parades, building creative floats, and for sponsoring our annual “Sip, See, Selfies” visit with Santa. COVID-19 and social distancing protocols dictated that most communities cancel the annual parades but we still wanted to give the children an opportunity to see Santa.

We held a Drive-Thru Santa event and it turned out to be a hit! For several hours, our employees stood out in the cold and passed out goodies and assisted Santa in spreading Holiday cheer. Cars drove by and the children’s faces were pushed up against the windows in anticipation of a chance to wave to Santa. The looks on the little faces were priceless! Hopefully next year we can resume our regular Christmas festivities.

A special thanks to our friends at Valley Fresh Market, Dollar Tree, and Advance Auto for letting us set up in their parking lot!



### **Guess who won our employees ugly Christmas sweater contest!**





# CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORDER

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



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**Financing Available**

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



Ask Customer Service  
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Loan terms up to 60 months  
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*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](http://EnergyStar.gov).*



## FORT VALLEY UTILITY COMMISSION

### COVID-19 PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



**1-800-525-4972**

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

#### Eligibility Criteria Considered:

Laid Off or  
reduction in  
hrs due to  
COVID-19

Lack of  
Childcare  
resulting in  
loss of  
income

Positive  
COVID-19  
Diagnosis  
  
Medical  
Hardship

Reduced  
income due to  
COVID-19  
  
Applicant must  
be account  
holder



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Offices.org



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

## **Water**

Did you ever wonder about where your water comes from? Well just in case you were wondering..... The water provided by the Fort Valley Utility Commission comes from six deep wells approximately 500 feet deep. These wells pump water to three water treatment plants where the water is disinfected to ensure no organisms are present, fluoride added to strengthen the teeth of young people, and pH adjusted to make the water non-corrosive to customers' pipes and tanks.

From the treatment plants, more than 5,000 gallons of water per minute are pumped to the distribution system. Additionally, six elevated water tanks located throughout the system provide 1.3 million gallons of storage capacity and ensure adequate water pressure to all customers. Additional ground storage tanks bring the system storage capacity to 1,975,000 gallons.

The distribution system is comprised of 150 miles of water mains ranging in size from ¾" to 22" diameter which provide water to citizens of Fort Valley, as well as many residents of Peach County and some residents of Macon County.

The Fort Valley Utility Commission has one of only 35 certified water testing laboratories recognized by EPD in the State. Three of our water plant operators have Class I licenses, the highest rating from the State Professional Board and three hold a Class III license. In addition, six plant operators have water laboratory licenses.

Every community water system is required to provide a Consumer Confidence Report, also called a Water Quality Report. You can always find our report on our website at [www.fvutil.com](http://www.fvutil.com).

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## **Waste Water**

Fort Valley Utility Commission maintains a return activated sludge extended aeration reclamation (waste water treatment) plant. This means that as the sanitary waste passes through the treatment process, a portion of it is continually returned to the beginning of the treatment plant process for further aeration and treatment. The treatment plant is permitted by the State of Georgia, which allows discharge of the treated water to a receiving creek.

Before discharge, the water is tested to make sure it meets stringent discharge requirements as prescribed by the plant's permit. Professional operation of the plant by its operators, daily testing, and vigilant inspection by state regulators all work in concert to ensure the discharged water is safe and healthy for aquatic life downstream, which has been reinforced by watershed assessments.

The sewer collection system is comprised of 67 miles of wastewater lines that vary in size from 4" to 12" in diameter. These lines are maintained by a sewer collection crew, who constantly clean and inspect the lines.



**Jennifer Lumley has served at FVUC for 10 Years**

## Public Utility

I A W Z T N G L G T V Y Y R D D N T E T  
 I N N W G J O M A R N Z E A E F O E L E  
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**JUST - 4 - FUN**



### NEWSLINE

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### Emergency Service

Nights and Weekends  
478-825-5482

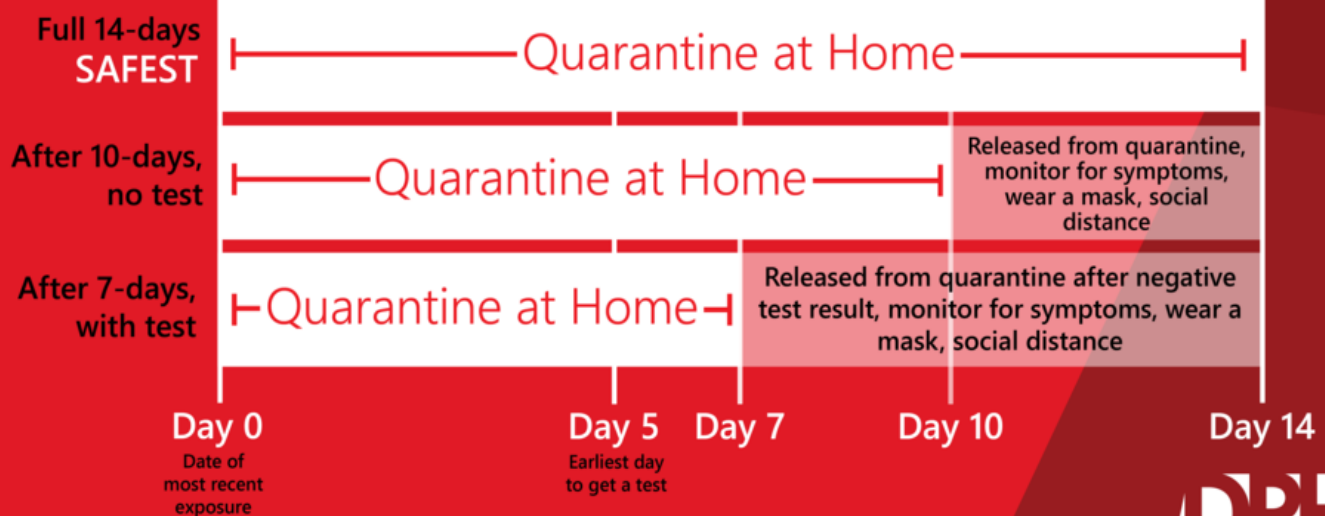
### Office Hours

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

## COVID-19



## QUARANTINE for people with no symptoms



dph.georgia.gov

