



AB 1975 (Fong)

Water Metering and Sub-metering for new multi-family residential and mixed-use buildings

The Issue: California's water supply is under intense pressure from climate change, increasing population and development. The financial demands from communities around the state for additional water and wastewater infrastructure currently exceed the available state and federal budgetary resources. Thus, it is essential that all California communities use existing water supplies as efficiently as possible.

Water metering and volumetric pricing are paramount to giving Californians an accurate price signal about their water use. However for most multiple dwelling housing units, like apartments and condominiums, water agencies do not provide meters to individual units. Instead, there are master meters for a group of dwelling units. The cost of water use is included with the cost of rent, charged as a flat fee, or allocated in some way among the residents connected to the master meter. Residents in such dwelling units will not know how much water they use unless their units are submetered.

California's population is 34 million people and growing. Currently forty-six percent live in multi-family housing. Of the 15.6 million apartment residents, fewer than 20% (3.1 million) are billed for their water use. In other words, for 80% of California's apartment renters, or 12.5 million Californians, there is no correlation between water usage and cost.

Sub-metering encourages water users to be more aware of their usage, giving them a financial incentive to conserve. Sewer charges are also based on water use, increasing the financial incentive. Furthermore, leaks may be reported and fixed more promptly if occupants are paying for water based on actual usage.

Studies have shown that water sub-meters are associated with decreased water usage. A 2004 Aquacraft Inc. study showed water savings of 15.3% when comparing sub-metered properties with rental properties that do not bill water separately from rent ("in-rent" properties). Another study showed water usage in sub-metered properties to be 18% to 39% less than in-rent properties.

Solution: AB 1975 would:

- Require individual water meters or sub-meters in new multiunit residential structures (apartments, condominiums, etc) and mixed use residential and commercial structures for which the first occupancy permit is issued or after January 1, 2012 as a requirement for new water service to that property.
- Require the property owner or operator to charge occupants for water and sewer service based on the actual volume of water delivered to the unit as measured by the water meter or sub-meter.
- Exempts structures whose plumbing configuration incorporates multiple points of entry in each dwelling unit that renders the installation of sub-meters infeasible.

For more information, contact:

Maria Garcia, Office of Assemblymember Paul Fong
Jim Metropulos, Sierra Club California

(916) 319-2022
(916) 557-1100, ext. 109