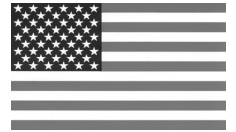




# Water



**N E W S**

**July 2003**

## Water Quality Report Follow-up Yields Good Answers

A recent article in the Express-News noted the low-level presence of radioactivity reported in SAWS Water Quality Report — the water report card required by law each year. The report showed levels were just above the detectable level for Gross Alpha and Gross Beta Emitters, as well as for Combined Radium. All of these substances occur naturally in the Edwards Aquifer, as well as in most other underground water sources.

While the levels of these substances were only detected in trace amounts, this was the first time results appeared in the Water Quality Report. SAWS Resource Quality Management Department has been following up with the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to verify results. Follow-up by SAWS staff with TCEQ has confirmed that the Quality Assurance/Quality Control procedures were followed. But follow-up also brought to light a difference in the sampling methods used.

In anticipation of the new Radionuclides in Drinking Water Rule — which is effective in December 2003 — TCEQ changed the sampling location from the distribution system to the water's point of entry.

“Previously all results of analyses for radionuclides prior to 2002 were distribution samples,” noted TCEQ scientist Kenneth May. “The radionuclide levels would be reduced through dilution in the distribution system. A change in sampling points located trace levels not previously detected from further out in the system.”

“Given that the first detects have occurred with the change in sampling procedures,” continued May, “we can expect to see low levels in future analyses. The levels detected are not a public health threat, and will not result in increased monitoring by the TCEQ.”

“Radionuclides are common in limestone formations like the Edwards Aquifer,” noted Veronica Godley, SAWS Director for Resource Quality Management. “TCEQ’s standard for acceptable levels is quite conservative, and the levels found in SAWS are just barely in the detectable range. We’ve already contacted TCEQ and will follow-up with additional testing in this new method to get a better profile of what to expect, but we’re still very happy about the quality of water that SAWS provides.”

For additional information on radionuclides and the changes to the Radionuclides in Drinking Water Rule, go to the EPA’s website at [www.epa.gov/safewater/radionuc.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/radionuc.html).

## Avoiding High Summer Water Rates

*By Calvin Finch; Director, SAWS Conservation Department, and Horticulturist*

You may not have noticed, but SAWS seasonal water rate increase took effect on June 1. What it means for SAWS customers is that, if you use over 17,200 gallons in a month during the summer, you pay about \$0.35 per 100 gallons for the water instead of about \$0.25 cents in May.

SAWS water rates are what is called an inverted rate. The more water you use, the more money per unit it costs. For the first 7,500 gallons you pay the basic water rate of \$.07/100 gallons. For the next 4,500 and 5,500 gallons it goes up to \$.11 and \$.14 cents per 100 gallons, respectively. An inverted rate provides water for basic needs at a very reasonable rate. If you move past 17,200 gallons per month, the rate escalates greatly. The idea is to discourage excessive use. You also have to know enough about the rate, and your water use, for you to be able to adjust your water use to avoid the highest rate.

Here is how to avoid higher rates if you are a customer that has a high water bill because you

*Continued on page 2*

## Local WaterSavers Honored



San Antonians gathered June 25 to honor those who are taking extraordinary measures to save water. The 2003 WaterSaver Award winners have developed excellent — and frequently innovative — approaches in technology, education, and business.

Those honored through the WaterSaver Awards program over the past seven years

have reduced water consumption in San Antonio by an astounding one billion gallons per year.

Proceeds from the WaterSaver Awards Breakfast go toward the Water Conservation Scholarship Fund for students interested in pursuing studies in a field that assists in securing future water needs.

Special thanks go to KENS Meteorologist Paul Mireles for lending his talents to announce at the breakfast.

WaterSaver Awards are sponsored by SAWS, San Antonio Business Journal, KTSA Radio, and KENS 5.

### 2003 WaterSaver Awards

#### Leadership Award Recipients:

- State Senator Kenneth Armbrister &
- State Representative Robert Puente

#### WaterSaver Awards

- Frito-Lay
- River Center Mall
- San Antonio Coca-Cola Bottling Company
- H.E.B.
- City of San Antonio Fleet Maintenance and Operations Division
- Drury Southwest

#### WaterSaver Too Awards

- Dreamhill Estates Homeowners Association
- High Country Homeowners Association
- San Antonio Library Foundation
- Northside ISD Environmental Seminar
- Driscoll Middle School

#### WaterSaver Scholarship Recipient

- Brenton Parker

### Infrastructure Series, Part II

## Infrastructure Dialogues Going on Throughout the City

SAWS representatives are busy spreading the story of the city's aging infrastructure. The speakers are meeting with neighborhood and community groups across the city to bolster awareness on critical infrastructure issues.

"It's easy to understand the need to repair and upgrade streets and buildings — things we can see and point at," says Estela Bonacci, Community Relations Representative and coordinator for the Infrastructure Presentations. "It's not always so easy to grasp the need to fix or maintain things that we can't see like all the pipes, pumps, sewer mains, that we have underground. More than anything, this is a huge educational process between us and our ratepayers that will continue throughout the rest of the year."

SAWS maintains more than 9,000 miles of water mains and sewer mains throughout Greater San Antonio. Roughly 20% of our system is more than 50 years old and some of the pipes have been around almost 100 years. Currently, we are replacing our infrastructure at a rate of 200 years, when optimally it should be done every 50 years.

Jeff Haby, SAWS Engineer, explained that it's clearly advantageous for San Antonio to be proactive when it comes to maintaining water and wastewater infrastructure than it is to be reactive. "It usually costs us three or four times as much to make emergency repairs than it does to complete routine, scheduled projects," he adds. "Delaying needed maintenance, putting off the inevitable, never benefits anybody."

What it will take to fund the rehabilitation of the city's infrastructure has yet to be determined. SAWS is conducting a comprehensive Cost of Service and Rate Review Study with a nationally recognized rate consultant and a group of local citizens serving as the Rates Advisory Committee. Meetings are expected to last through the summer.

### Interested in finding out more?

If you'd like more information on the infrastructure issue, visit our website at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org). Or if your neighborhood group or civic organization would like a presentation from a SAWS representative, call 704-7548, to schedule a speaker.

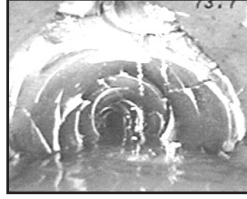
## Summer Water Rates (cont.)

use over 17,200 gallons in a month. Look on a recent water bill to see how much water you used in the wintertime. Check the graph, for most people water use in December, January, and February is about the same, probably between 5,000-7,000 gallons per month. That is your essential water use, the water used in the house for drinking, washing, and the toilet. Everything above this 5,000-7,000 per month base use is probably for lawn watering.

The next thing you must determine is how much water you use every time you sprinkle the lawn. The easiest way to make that determination is to call and request a free SAWS irrigation audit (704-7354). The audit takes about 45 minutes. In addition to determining how much water your irrigation system distributes every time you use it, the auditor will identify any leaks and other problems with your system.

When you know your regular in-the-house water use rate and you know how much water your irrigation system applies, it is relatively easy to control water use to avoid the 4<sup>th</sup> tier and the seasonal increase in rates. If you normally use 6,500 gallons in the house and each time you irrigate uses 3,500 gallons, the key is to only irrigate three times in any one month (6,500 gallons + 3 x 3,500 gallons = 17,000 gallons). If you cross the 17,200-gallon threshold, your last irrigation costs \$12.25. If you stay below 17,201 gallons per months, your last irrigation costs less than \$5.

The easiest way to reduce indoor water use is to replace high-flow toilets with low-flow versions. In an average family, a low-flow toilet uses about 1,000 gallons less per month. SAWS gives out free premium low-flow toilets to its customers. Call 704-7354 for the application.



*An example of an aging sewer pipe.*

## Upcoming Events

Plan to get out and visit your neighbors during the **20th Annual Night Out Event**

Tuesday, August 5, 2003; 6pm to 10pm.

This event encourages people across the country to become involved in crime prevention. So get in touch with your community group and plan to turn on your porch lights, lock your doors, and spend your evening outside with your neighbors.

For more information, contact SAPD at 207-8927 or log onto [www.savip.org](http://www.savip.org).

### July is Recreation and Parks Month...

...So join the fun! Wednesday nights 6-8 pm at San Pedro Pool (220 N. Flores) are Family Nights with entertainment, recreational games, and family relay activities.

Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8pm at Arneson River Theater are performances of "Bravo! An Evening of Song and Dance."

For more info call 207-3000.

## Watering Reminder

Remember, year-round, landscape watering is not allowed after 10 a.m. and before 8 p.m. every day, except with a hand held hose or five gallon bucket; charity car washes are permitted only at certified commercial car wash facilities; and water waste is prohibited at all times.

### Affordability Programs

SAWS offers a number of programs to help customers having financial hardship with their water bills. To determine if you qualify, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

### SAWS Vision: SAWS will be the best water and wastewater utility in the United States by 2006.

Water News is published for customers of the San Antonio Water System. For more information regarding Water News, contact the Public Relations Department at (210) 704-7320.

#### Numbers to Know

Business Office	704-SAWS
Customer Account Information	704-SAWS
Jobline	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

#### 24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/	
Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS

Visit our website at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org)