

# Morrisville Water & Light

## Welcome Owner's Manual

The Morrisville Water and Light Department (MW&L) welcomes you as an owner of Morrisville's municipal electric, water, and wastewater utility. We've put together this "Owner's Manual" to acquaint you with the programs and services available to you as an MW&L customer. Please take a few moments to go over the section on electrical safety with the rest of your family. There is important information that could help protect your home and property, and may even save your life. In addition, a statewide *Energy Efficiency Utility* ("EEU") will be offering energy efficiency services in Morrisville's service territory. Whether you are building or remodeling your home or business, expanding your business operations, or simply replacing a motor, light bulb, refrigeration or air conditioning system, the EEU may be able to help you incorporate energy efficiency into your choices. The programs offered by the EEU will provide financial incentives and rebates, financing, technical assistance, and project management for a wide array of energy efficient products and services. The EEU operates under contract to the *Public Utility Commission*. The EEU's toll-free number is 888-921-5990. We hope you'll use this manual and refer to it when needed. As always, your comments, questions, and suggestions are appreciated.

## Starting and stopping your electric and/or water service

You may start your electric/water service by stopping by our office between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please have the following information available: Social Security number, photo ID (driver's license), and the address you are moving into, including apartment number if applicable.

## Moving? Plan ahead and save time!

Electricity and water are usually the last things you remember to have turned off before you move out, but the first thing you want turned on when you move in. Around the end of May we disconnect and/or reconnect electrical service for a lot of our customers, most of whom have camps. A similar busy time occurs again in late October. To make things easier, we suggest planning a week ahead of time to schedule a date to have your electric/water service disconnected or reconnected. To stop your service, please let us know the date you want the electricity/water shut off (Monday through Friday). On that day, the services can be shut off as early as 7:30 a.m. Your forwarding address is also requested when you stop service, so that you can receive the bill for the remaining amount due (or any possible refund) on your account.

## Your utility bill

Making payments: Your bill payment is due upon receipt. You may enclose your payment with the remittance stub and mail it to Morrisville Water and Light, 857 Elmore Street, Morrisville, VT 05661. You may pay your bill in person at our Elmore Street office located at 857 Elmore Street, Morrisville. You can call us at 802-888-3348 to make a payment over the phone with Visa, Mastercard, or Discover. For your convenience, we have a drop box in the entryway of the Union Bank on Main Street in Morrisville. After-hours payments can be left in a drop box in our parking lot at 857 Elmore Street, Morrisville. **When paying your utility bill in cash, please don't put cash in our drop boxes.** We can't be held responsible for cash left overnight in the drop boxes. For cash payments, visit us during our regular business hours (7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.). You can have your bills charged directly to your Visa, Mastercard, or Discover on a monthly basis by filling out our AutoPay Form. You can set up access to your account through this website and make payments any time you want with Visa, Mastercard, or Discover. You can always pay your bills ahead, if you know you will be away for an extended period of time. Please write your customer account number on all checks and correspondence sent to us.

## Budget payment plan

If you would like to spread your utility costs over 12 equal monthly payments, our budget plan may be for you. A customer service representative will calculate your monthly budget payment based upon your previous year's usage. You must be current to become a budget customer. Once you begin the budget payment plan, you are required to make 12 monthly payments of equal value. The plan makes it easier for you when doing your budget at home. Each month you'll make the same payment on your utility bill no matter what—that means no more monthly surprises! After 12 months, if

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you owe MW&L or you have a credit, it will be reflected in the following year's budget payment plan. For more information on our budget payment plan, contact our office at 888-3348.

## **Payment problems?**

Any time you cannot pay all or part of your utility bill, please call Customer Service at 888-3348. We will help you make arrangements to pay your bill over time.

## **Fuel assistance**

If you ever need help paying your home heating costs during the winter, we encourage you to see if you qualify for fuel assistance funding. Please call one of the following numbers for more information and applications: If you are over 60 or disabled, call 1-800-642-5119. All others call 1-800-479-6151. You can also call one of the following numbers:

*Central Vermont Community Action Council - 802-888-7993*

*Vermont State Social Services - 802-888-4576*

## **Why your bill may change from month to month.**

The most likely reason for a change in your bill may be due to a change in how you use energy. Typically, a home is equipped with many energy-using appliances that are not always used the same amount each month. You may have had guests, which could have contributed to higher water usage (causing your electric water heater to run more), more lights being used (or being used longer), more laundry, cooking, etc. The time of year is another possible reason for the changing bills. During the summer months, there are appliances that run a great deal more such as dehumidifiers, air conditioners, fans, and swimming pool pumps. In the winter, most heating systems use electricity to circulate the heat. You also tend to spend more time indoors, running appliances and lights for longer hours. Finally, a bill may be higher or lower because there was a difference in the number of days between our readings of your meter. Generally your meter is read every 30 days, but there are times when your billing period may be for less than 30 days or more than 30 days. It will state on your electric bill the number of days the bill covers and your average daily usage. If you think your bill has changed drastically and none of these factors seem to apply, call our Customer Service at 888-3348. One of our representatives may be able to offer an explanation or make arrangements to have a recheck done to make sure your meter was read properly. We will also test your meter once a year free of charge to make sure the meter is recording properly. Please remember that meters are mechanical devices and usually slow down with age.

## **Estimated readings**

Sometimes our meter readers may not be able to read your meter because it is inside a locked building or the meter is blocked by snow, ice, bushes or other objects. In these rare cases we must do an estimated reading. An estimated reading is based on last year's bill during the same month and the previous month's usage. An estimated reading is indicated on your electric bill with a "CE" in the code column under Meter Readings. We prefer not to estimate your bills, as they tend to be higher than actual readings, so please make sure your meter is accessible to our meter readers. If access to your meter is a continuing problem, we will contact you to try to make some type of arrangements.

## **Energy diversion**

Stealing electricity by tapping electric lines and interfering with meters, or willful injury to the structure or equipment of an electric power company, is a crime in Vermont. If you suspect an electric meter or equipment is being tampered with, please call us immediately.

## **When your electricity/water is about to be shut off**

Your electric/water bill payment is due upon receipt. After 30 days, your account becomes overdue and you may receive a pink disconnect notice indicating that your service will be shut off on specific dates unless you have paid your bill. New regulations that went into effect in 1990 allow more flexibility for people facing disconnection:

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## **Bad health:**

If losing your electric service would be an *immediate and serious health hazard* for you or someone in your home, you should ask your physician to write a letter to MW&L explaining the situation. This letter is good for 30 days, for a total of three 30-day periods in a calendar year. A physician's letter will only extend the disconnection of your electricity, it does not remove the financial obligation.

## **Winter Disconnect Rules:**

These guidelines are in effect from November 1st through March 31st each year. If you or someone in your home is 62 or older, your electric service will not be shut off for non-payment if the weather forecast calls for the temperature to drop below 32 F during the 48 hours starting the morning of the shut-off date. You must provide advance written notice to MW&L that the household qualifies to remain with power under these conditions and, if necessary, provide proof. No one's service can be disconnected if the 48-hour forecast is predicted to fall below 10 F.

## **Renters:**

It is illegal for a landlord to use termination of utility services as a means of eviction. If a landlord discontinues service for the rental unit that is in his/her name, MW&L must give the tenant a chance to continue the service in the tenant's name. A deposit or credit reference will be required to sign up for an account. There is a booklet available from the Department of Public Service called "Utilities and You- What Vermont Consumers Should Know About Disconnections and Deposits." Call DPS toll free at 1-800-622-4496 to request a copy.

## **Special services:**

### **Life support equipment:**

If someone in your household relies on electrically operated life support equipment, please ask us for a Medical Emergency form to fill out. We will place you on our confidential Emergency Notification List to inform you of any planned power outages affecting your area. If you have any questions about the life support list or if your information changes, please call us at 888-3348. In the event of a planned power outage, we will try to contact you to give you an estimate of how long you'll be without power. No utility can guarantee that you'll have electricity available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Therefore, we strongly urge customers who need life support equipment to have a backup plan:

- Obtain an alternative source of electric power for your life support equipment. This might be a battery-operated backup system, an uninterruptible power supply, or generator. We recommend a minimum of 24 hours of back up.
- Keep all emergency telephone numbers in a convenient location. Include your physician, fire department, police department, and ambulance.

## **Siding your home**

If you are planning to have your home re-sided, please have your contractor contact MW&L to have your electric meter and related equipment removed before any work is done on your home. A MW&L employee will remove and replace the equipment. Overhead wires may only require us to place protective sheathing over it. Because your electric meter is MW&L property, only MW&L personnel are authorized to remove it.

## **Electrical safety**

### **Storm outages:**

Storms are a fact of life in Vermont. To help prepare your family for power outages caused by storms, make sure you have the following items available:

- Flashlight and batteries

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- Battery-powered radio
- Candles and matches
- Extra food and water
- First aid supplies and medicine
- Fire extinguisher

Here are some additional tips:

- Check the breakers in your house as the outage may only be affecting your house and may be an internal problem for only your house.
- Avoid opening your refrigerator or freezer (your food should stay fresh for at least 24 hours if the door is seldom opened).
- Turn off all lights except for one (so you and our line crews will know when power is restored).
- Unplug all unnecessary appliances and electric equipment such as stereos, TV's, and computers. This will protect this equipment from any possible power surge during restoration of the power.
- Do not plug a backup generator into an outlet in your home without first disconnecting from our system. If you don't, the power from your generator will flow backwards into our distribution system and may seriously injure or kill our lineworkers.
- Do not burn charcoal for heat- it gives off dangerous fumes. In addition, a fireplace may pull more warm air from a house than it gives out.
- Stay tuned to local radio stations for important information from MW&L.

## **Down power lines! What should you do?**

- Call MW&L at 888-2162 or the police at 911.
- Don't touch downed lines or tree limbs on lines. Even the ground around a downed wire can still be electrically charged and deadly.
- If you're in a car and wires land on top of your car, stay there until help arrives. If the car is on fire and you need to get out, do not touch the ground and the car at the same time- the electrical current could pass through your body and electrocute you. Jump as far from the vehicle as you can and then bunny hop or shuffle your feet until you are a safe distance from the car and wires. The key is to keep your feet as close together as possible.

## **If someone receives an electric shock:**

- Don't touch any person or thing that is still in contact with the electricity. Call 911 immediately.
- Shut off the circuit breakers before you touch the person.
- If necessary use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or CPR on the person and cover the person with a blanket.

## **Outdoor safety**

- Keep ladders, especially metal ones, away from power lines. Never use power tools or other outdoor equipment while it's raining or if the ground is wet.
- Avoid contact with electric wires running overhead when trimming branches, cutting down trees or picking fruit.
- Be careful when installing satellite dishes and TV or CB antennas.
- Never fly kites near power lines.
- Don't hang signs on utility poles. Our lineworkers wear special rubber gloves to insulate them from electricity. Nails, staples and other fasteners can snag or puncture their gloves and endanger their lives. Posting signs on MW&L's poles is against the law.
- Before you dig, call the Dig Safe Center toll free at 1-888-DIG SAFE (1-888-344-7233) to prevent damage to telephone, gas or electric underground facilities. Vermont state law requires that you call Dig Safe at least 48 hours before you start digging operations. In all digging emergencies, call Dig Safe immediately.

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## **Tree trimming**

When you see MW&L crews out trimming trees, we are working to keep the power on. To reduce the risk of a tree or limb falling on a power line and causing an outage, we cut trees away from power lines. Clearing a power line right-of-way is part of our commitment to provide you with safe, reliable electric service all year round. This also allows us to NOT USE any pesticides or herbicides in the maintenance of our Right of Ways. Contact MW&L if:

- If a tree has grown closer than 25 feet to power lines.
- A limb has the possibility of coming into contact with power lines.
- If you are removing a tree or limb that is within 25 feet or less to power lines, it has the potential to make contact with overhead lines. Remember to determine the length of the tree or limb and add 25 feet extra to determine if 25 feet is left between it and the power lines before removing it.

## **Indoor safety**

- Install plastic protective caps on your outlets to keep your children from sticking objects or curious fingers into them.
- Always unplug appliances not being used. Even if the switch says "off", the power could still be flowing.
- When bathing your child, make sure all nearby appliances are unplugged. Electricity and water are a deadly combination, so teach your children about these hazards.
- Don't overload an outlet with too many plugs. Wires can overheat and cause a fire.
- Replace electric cords that are frayed or cracked. Roll up cords when not in use and keep them out of the reach of little hands and mouths.

## **Keep your family safe during the holidays**

- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for hanging indoor and outdoor light displays.
- Keep greenery safe and fresh with frequent watering.
- Do not run extension cords under carpeting.

## **How to reset a breaker**

1. Identify the breaker that needs to be reset. It usually appears red on the toggle handle, and is not in the OFF position.
2. Move handle to OFF position.
3. Push handle past OFF position.
4. Return handle to ON position. If the breaker does not reset, contact an electrician.

## **Voltage protection**

A brief, sudden increase or decrease in voltage (spike) can at the very least cause a loss of data on computers, and on a few occasions damage sensitive electronic equipment such as microwaves, VCRs and televisions. Prolonged increases (surges) or decreases (sags) in voltage can cause significant damage to the equipment if not properly protected. Computers are very sensitive to variations in the power supply. While these "glitches" are rare, they can damage your computer's hardware, crash programs or scramble data. To guard against power glitches, you should:

- Copy and file data periodically (save your work at least every hour). It is also wise to back up your system periodically, such as once a month.
- Make sure your home or business is properly "grounded" to send "stray" voltage into the ground, not into the computer.
- Buy a quality voltage surge protector to help protect against spikes in voltage. Ensure that the product is UL-tested and labeled as a surge-protection device.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Can I pay my bill on-line?

Answer: Yes. You need to set up access to your account on-line through our e-Care at **On-Line Account Access (click here)**. Once you have set up access, our system will email you a password. Using that password, you can go back online and change the password to one of your own choosing. You can even elect to receive an e-notification that your bill is available online if you no longer wish to receive a paper copy.