

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Municipal Utilities General Questions

Q: What areas does the Municipal Utilities Department cover?

A: The Municipal Utilities Department consists of Water Services and Sanitary Services and provides Water and Wastewater services to the citizens of Ceres.

Q: If I receive water, sewer and garbage from the City of Ceres, who do I contact for electric, gas and telephone service?

A: Electric - Turlock Irrigation District (TID) 883-8222
Gas - P G & E 800-743-5000
Telephone - SBC 800-310-2355

Contact info for Ceres Utility Services

- Municipal Utilities Department telephone number is 538-5732.
- The Water Division telephone number is 538-5797.
- The Sanitary Services Division telephone number is 538-3269.
- To report water wasting please call 538-5732 or 538-5797.
- To report a water related emergency call 538-5732 or 538-5797 (between 6:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.).
- To report a sewer related emergency please call 538-5732 or 538-3269 (between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.).
- For after hours water or sewer related emergencies please call 538-5712.

SIGN-UP QUESTIONS

Q: How do I sign up for utility services?

A: For businesses and residents with existing service:

1. Sign ups are taken at the Finance Department 2720 Second Street from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Monday through Friday. Just complete and sign an application form (Name, service address, billing address, social security number, customer phone number, drivers license number, beginning service date, requested utility services)
2. Property owner must provide proof of ownership and tenants must provide a rental agreement
3. Pay a security deposit (property owner \$50, renter \$100) For businesses and residents that need connection to City services, contact the Engineering Department at 538-5791 for more information

Q: What are the utility service rates?

A: The rates vary based on the type of service. The basic monthly residential flat rate is shown below:

Water \$15.30
Sewer \$20.90
Garbage (one Container 60 gallons) \$14.75
Garbage (one Container 90 gallons) \$18.70

For information on multi-family, industrial, commercial, service connections outside of the city limits, and low income rates call the finance department (538-5769).

BILL PAYMENT QUESTIONS

Q: Where can I pay my utility bill?

A: There are three ways to pay your utility bill:

1. Mailed to the City by using the envelope included in the utility bill
2. Left in the drop box located at the corners of Second and Magnolia Streets at City Hall located at 2720 Second Street.
3. Paid in person at the counter of the Finance Department located at 2720 Second Avenue. The Finance Department is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Q: How does the billing cycle work?

A: Utilities are billed for the previous month of service. The listing below outlines a typical billing sequence:

- Bills are sent out by the 8th of the month, and due on the 1st of the next month
- If payment is received by the 5th (5 grace days after due date) of the next month, then the billing cycle would continue normally
- If payment isn't received by the 5th of the next month, a 10% penalty is added
- If payment isn't received by the 15th of the next month, a final(pink) notice is mailed.
- If payment isn't received by the 24th, a \$34 service charge is assessed and the services are scheduled to be shut off.
- To reconnect the service, payment for past due charges (including the \$34 service charge) plus a deposit must be received

Q: What is a tampering penalty?

A: If a customer's service is shut off for nonpayment and the customer tampers with the service by reconnecting it, a tampering charge of \$35 is assessed. For each additional occurrence the charge is increased to \$100.

GARBAGE QUESTIONS

Q: How does the City Garbage collection program work?

A: Customers are provided a green container for garbage and a blue container for items that can be recycled. The green waste-wheelers are picked up on a weekly basis. The blue recycle-wheelers are picked up bi-weekly. Customers are assigned a pick-up day depending on their location.

Q: Does Ceres have a leaf pick-up program?

A: Yes, loose leaves and limbs are collected every other week. Collection of leaves and limbs occurs on the same day as your recycling day. Please refer to your colored recycling schedule for dates. If you have misplaced your colored schedule, contact the Public Works Department, at 538-5789.

In order for your leaves and limbs to be collected, place leaves and limbs (in lengths of 4' or less and no larger than 6" in diameter) on the street, one foot from the gutter at least one day before your collection day. Do not place leaves and limbs in blue recycling toter.

- Q:** Does Ceres have a program for curbside pick-up of bulky items?
- A:** Yes, the program is for Ceres residents living in single family homes, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. The program is not for apartment complexes, businesses, industries, schools, churches, or residents living outside of Ceres. The program provides a convenient way to get rid of certain items that cannot fit into waste-wheelers. The program can be used twice each calendar year, and has specific requirements.

SEWER QUESTIONS

- Q:** What does a Sewer Collection System consist of and what are some of the common causes of Sewer Overflows?
- A:** **See Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) Fact Sheet**
- Q:** My sewer line is backing up in my house. Will the City unplug my line?
- A:** The City will confirm the blockage is not in their own main line; however, the homeowner is responsible for any lateral line that runs off the main line to their homes or businesses.
- Q:** I've had a plumber come several times and said there are tree roots in my sewer line. What can I do to help this problem without replacing the line?
- A:** Once the line is clean there are products at your local hardware store that you can put down your sewer lateral to prevent the tree roots from returning.
- Q:** Where is my house lateral line located?
- A:** With homes built within the last 25 years there will be an "S" or "L" stamped on the curb in front of the house. Those will be located within 1'+/- on either side of where the line is located behind the sidewalk.
- Q:** Where are the clean-outs for my house lateral line located?
- A:** With homes built within the last 25 years there should be two clean-outs. One should be just behind the sidewalk and one should be next to the house.

WATER FAQ'S

- Q:** Where does our water come from?
- A:** The City of Ceres drinking water is 100% groundwater. It is pumped from an aquifer, an underground reservoir of water stored in sandy soil, by our wells.
- Q:** Is the City of Ceres water tested on a regular basis?
- A:** Yes, The California Dept. of Health Services, Office of Drinking Water requires the City to monitor the water supply on a weekly basis for disease-causing or pathogenic, bacteriological contamination.
- Q:** Does the City have a water conservation program and how does this impact me?
- A:** Ceres has established a water conservation program and is committed to an ongoing effort to protect our water resources. Customers with even-numbered street addresses are permitted to water lawns on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Customers with odd-numbered street addresses are permitted to water lawns and landscape on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. No watering is allowed on any day between the hours of 12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m. No watering is allowed on Monday. For additional water conservation program questions [click here](#).

- Q:** What types of water use do I need a water waiver for?
- A:** You must request a waiver to water new landscape every day, to test your sprinkler system on your non-watering days if doing a repair, to wash down your driveway or building exterior, and to drain your pool into the storm drain system. To obtain a waiver you may contact the Municipal Utilities Department at (209)538-5732, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- Q:** My water has a bad smell, like something rotten. Will the City come out and check the problem?
- A:** Yes, we will come to your home and advise you. A large percentage of the time it is from the hot water heater Anode Rods which collect calcium and minerals from the water.
- Q:** Will the City come and repair a leak by my meter box?
- A:** The City staff will come out and determine if it is the City's or the homeowner's responsibility.
- Q:** My water is a milky color. What could be wrong with it?
- A:** Milky looking water is from air in the water. Pour a glass of water and let it set. The water color will clear up if air is present.
- Q:** Will the City repair my leaky or broken water service?
- A:** The City's responsibility is only up to and including the meter box.
- Q:** Can I turn my water on or off at the meter valve?
- A:** No, that meter and valve is under City staff control. You can call (209) 538-5732 during normal office hours and staff will come out at no charge to turn your water off or back on.
- Q:** What happens to the water after it goes down the drain?
- A:** The water flows through a system of underground pipes from your house, to under the street where it is combined with water from other households and enters the wastewater collection system. The collection system then conveys the water to the City's Wastewater Reclamation Facility.
- Q:** Why would my water bill go up a lot in one month?
(Only for metered, mostly commercial accounts)
- A:** You may have a leak in your fixtures or toilets. Note: A dripping faucet or fixture can waste three (3) gallons a day for a total of 1,095 gallons a year.

Water Waste figured per quarter at 60 PSI water pressure

Size of drip	Gallons of Wasted Water
1/4"	1,181,500
3/16"	666,000
1/8"	296,000
1/16"	74,000

- Q:** My water pressure is low. What can I check myself before calling the City?
- A:** Make sure your gate valve is fully open. Clean the screens in your faucets. If you still have a problem with low pressure, the City will come out and check