

General

What are digital meters?

We're attaching small digital data loggers to existing customer water meters across the region. The loggers record the volume of water consumption at the water meter and transmits data to a central database for billing, problem identification, reporting and analysis.

When are Coliban Water installing data loggers?

Since 2018 we've installed digital data loggers on household, business and community water meters across our region. As of August 2020, data loggers will be installed on meters in most towns except those in Bendigo, Marong, Sebastian, Axedale, Huntly and Strathfieldsaye.

We'll start those towns in late 2020 and we aim to be finished by 2023.

Why are Coliban Water installing digital technology?

Digital data loggers are part of Strategy 2030, our plan to lead the way on combatting and reversing climate change and meeting the water demands of our communities.

We will primarily be using data loggers for customer billing. The digital data we receive will enable us to identify network efficiencies, manage and maintain our assets, and make informed decisions on repairs and decisions on capital works.

Data loggers can also provide us with a better understanding of customers' water use and play a role in reducing wastage.

How will data loggers benefit customers?

Data loggers will help us understand our customers' water use, help detect leaks, ensure accurate meter reads, and identify abnormal water use patterns.

Water leaks can be detected earlier, which means you won't have to wait until the next quarterly bill to discover if you have a costly leak.

We've already been able to use the data to quickly discover water leaks in a number of residential, community and commercial properties across the region.

Digital data loggers will also mean we won't have to enter your property each quarter to manually read the meter. This eliminates the need to estimate reads when it's not possible to access the meter, so there will be no surprises when an actual read is taken.

A key future aim is to use this data to help you monitor your own water use online, and help us continue to innovate, plan for, design and deliver water services with climate change in mind.

Where is digital technology being used?

Digital technology for water meters is being used by other water corporations in Australia and has been successfully trialled on commercial customer meters in our region before the commencement of this region wide program.



Are data loggers safe?

Data loggers do not pose a health risk to customers or the community. Data is transmitted once a day through low level radiofrequency waves, which are well within Australian safety standards.

In fact, the signal is weaker than a single text message from a mobile phone.

The data transmitter spends the majority of its time in 'sleep' mode and is typically on for less than half a second each hour.

How do they work?

We attach a small logger to the existing meter. Data is transmitted to our IT infrastructure, connecting the required software systems to record use at the property and safely store the information for billing purposes.

The data logger will record hourly water consumption and transmit the data daily for billing and data analysis purposes.

What happens to my usage data?

All data is collected and is held on secure servers in accordance with national privacy policies.

Can the data logger be tampered with?

The data that the digital device collects is encrypted and does not contain any personal information. All data is collected and is held on secure servers in accordance with national privacy policies.

Is the digital technology reliable?

The data loggers will be verified after our contractor installs it. We will periodically verify that the device is operating accurately.

Manual water meter reads will still continue as we monitor verification of the device with the rollout of data loggers across our network.

There will not be job losses as a result of our digital meter rollout. Meter readers will still be required for meter maintenance, servicing and checking.

Installing your data logger

How will I know when my data logger is being installed?

We will provide customers with a notification letter with the period for the installation identified at least seven days before your data logger is installed. On the day it will take less than 30 minutes to install the device on your water meter.

Our contractors will be recognisable and have Coliban Water authorised identification on them.

You may continue to see contractors in your area a week or so after your device has been installed as they verify the network and signal operations.



Do I have to be home for installation?

No. You don't need to be home when your data logger is installed but you must ensure there is safe and clear access to your water meter.

What if I have concerns about accessing my water meter?

Please call us on 1300 363 200 if you have any concerns about access to your water meter or property. If required, we can work with you on an agreed time and date for the data logger to be installed due to a locked gate when you are not home or dogs on the property for example.

Will I be without water when my data logger is installed?

No. There will be no impact to your water supply during the installation of your device.

What will happen to my old water meter?

A digital data logger is added to the existing water meter so your old water meter will remain in place.

How much will this digital technology cost?

The digital data logger will be installed on your existing meter at no cost to you. There will be no other costs other than your normal access and usage charges.

The data logger is battery operated, with the battery having a lifespan of 10 years. Coliban Water will maintain or replace the device when required.

Who is responsible for the maintenance of the data logger?

Just like your water meter, the data logger is the property of Coliban Water. Customers are not required to perform any maintenance on the meter and should be mindful not to damage it when mowing or landscaping.

It is important that Coliban Water staff have safe and clear access to your water meter and that it is not covered by any rubbish, landscaping or debris.

Can I still place protection over the water meter for frost?

The operating temperature range of the digital device, including the batteries, is -20 degrees Celsius to +65 degrees Celsius.

The signal from the meter can be interfered with if there is a metal cover or cover containing metal, such as an old tyre, over the meter.

If you have your own meter cover, please ensure you have removed it from the meter prior to the installation period.

Suitable meter covers will be provided for each town as we move through the rollout of the program.

Are data loggers being installed when coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are in place?

Yes. Our contractors are permitted to work and will comply with current restrictions to help contain the spread of coronavirus and keep our communities safe.



Customer bills based on digital meter reads

When will my bill start using the information from the data logger installed?

Since March 2018 we have undertaken a detailed verification process to check the network is operating effectively.

You will receive a confirmation letter from us saying your bill is ready to be read digitally.

What process is undertaken before a digital read is applied to my bill?

On the day your next meter read is required, we will check to see if your data logger is reliably transmitting data. If it is, then we will use the reading from your data logger instead of a manual read. If there are any issues with the transmission of data from your logger, we will use a manual meter read for your bill.

When will other towns start receiving bills based on digital meter reads?

Our Digital Metering Program aims to install data loggers on all existing customer water meters across our region by 2023.

Following installation of the data logger, a detailed verification process will be undertaken in these areas to check the network is operating effectively. Once this process is completed, we will be able to begin digital reads of water meters for billing purposes in these townships.

The verification process can take between six and 12 months following installation. Customers will receive notification prior to billing based on digital meter reads taking place in their area.

How will I know that my bill was based on a manual or a digital meter read?

Prior to billing you will receive notification that your next water bill will be based on a digital meter read. There will also be a note on your water bill stating that digital reads are now taking place in your area.

If you are unsure if your account was read digitally or manually for the billing period, please contact our Customer Support Team on 1300 363 200. We will be able to identify if a digital read was used.

Can I still dispute my bill if I think my water consumption is incorrect?

Yes. Even with a data logger installed you can still continue to check the numbers on your water meter as normal. If you have any concerns regarding your consumption, please contact our Customer Support Team on 1300 363 200.

Where is my data stored?

All data is collected from data loggers is held on secure servers in accordance with national privacy policies. The digital read from your data logger is only connected to your customer data and billing history when used for billing purposes.

Why is there a meter reader in my town if we have digital meters?

Manual meter reading will still be required where we have been unable to install a data logger on an existing customer meter or we have not been receiving sufficient transmissions in an area.



Further information

How can I find out more about digital meters?

Further information is available on our website – www.coliban.com.au or call our Customer Support Team on 1300 363 200.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this document was correct at the time of publication (August 2020). Coliban Water reserves the right to alter or amend these Frequently Asked Questions and Answers at any time.