

All About Water

Our water supply

In Missouri, the Mississippi River, the Missouri River, as well as several smaller rivers and creeks provide access to quality water supplies. In addition, Missouri sits on top of aquifers that provide water for drinking, and for use on farms and for other agricultural needs.

So why, if we have all of these resources, do I have to pay for water?

It costs money to gather the water from its various sources. Water must be pumped from its original source, treated so that it is safe for human consumption then distributed to customers. Thus there is an intensive capital investment in the infrastructure that is constructed to deliver that water to your home as well as daily expenses to the utility so that you have the convenience of potable water 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

What role does the Public Service Commission play regarding water?

The Public Service Commission (Commission or PSC) regulates the rates and service of investor-owned utilities. Typically, the rates charged by a utility under Commission jurisdiction cannot change until a rate case is filed. Once a rate case is filed, the PSC Staff performs an audit of the costs of providing you with service as well as a review of the utility's overall operations. After that audit and review, the PSC Staff recommends to the Commission what increase, if any, should be granted to the utility company.

Other entities provide recommendations to the Commission during the course of the rate case. The Commission ultimately decides whether the rates should be changed and by how much based upon a thorough review of all of the information filed in the rate case.

The PSC also establishes billing and service rules under which the utility company must operate. If you have an issue regarding your service, you are encouraged to contact the utility company to see if you can work out a solution to your issue. If, after that contact, you still have an issue, please call the PSC's Consumer Services Unit at 1-800-392-4211.

Who does the PSC regulate?

The PSC regulates approximately 28 water and sewer utilities in Missouri. Missouri-American Water Company is the largest water and sewer company regulated by the Commission.

Missouri-American provides water service to approximately 474,000 customers and sewer service to almost 16,500 customers. The remaining companies that are under PSC jurisdiction have fewer than 8,000 customers with the vast majority having less than 500 customers. The PSC does not regulate municipal systems or public water supply districts.

Does the Public Service Commission regulate water quality?

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulates the quality of water to ensure safety, not only for consumers, but for the environment as well. The PSC has jurisdiction over the safety of water and wastewater systems.

For a utility, a change in a requirement from DNR can mean upgrades in treatment systems or other improvements. Thus DNR requirements often drive investments by utilities, which those utilities will seek to recover in rates from customers. These improvements must be considered with other needs, such as equipment that has reached the end of its useful life, equipment that has deteriorated or been damaged, or in response to population growth requiring larger facilities.

DNR Staff conducts inspections of drinking water and sewage treatment facilities for compliance with their regulations. DNR employs scientists and engineers trained to evaluate a facility's performance, and they share those findings with the PSC Staff. The PSC Staff also performs periodic inspections of regulated water and sewer utilities and shares the results of its inspections with DNR. In this way, the two agencies work closely to ensure that the utilities regulated by the PSC maintain safe and adequate service.

Saving water can save you money

How much water you use at home depends on the size of the home, usage habits, water using appliances, and the type of plumbing fixtures in the home.

Some of the largest uses of water are lawn sprinklers, automatic irrigation systems, toilets and washing machines. Some estimate that nearly 14 percent of the water a typical homeowner pays for is never used--it leaks down the drain. There are several things that can be done to conserve water and at the same time save money on your utility bills. Here are some easy steps:

- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Take shorter showers.
- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool.
- Install a water saving showerhead; they use one-third the amount of water that a regular showerhead uses.

What you can do

At Home

- Scrape, rather than rinse dishes before loading them into a dishwasher.
- Wash only full loads of clothes or use the appropriate level or load size selection on the washing machine.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator overnight; do not use water to defrost foods.

Outdoors

- Sweep driveways, steps and sidewalks rather than hosing them off.
- Control the flow of the hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
- Water the lawn or garden during the coolest part of the day and only as needed.
- Cover outdoor pools when not in use to avoid evaporation.



Missouri Public Service Commission

200 Madison Street • P.O. Box 360 • Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0360
Website: psc.mo.gov **Email:** pscinfo@psc.mo.gov **Phone:** 1-800-392-4211