

This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

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Alerting Our Customers: Leak Notifications

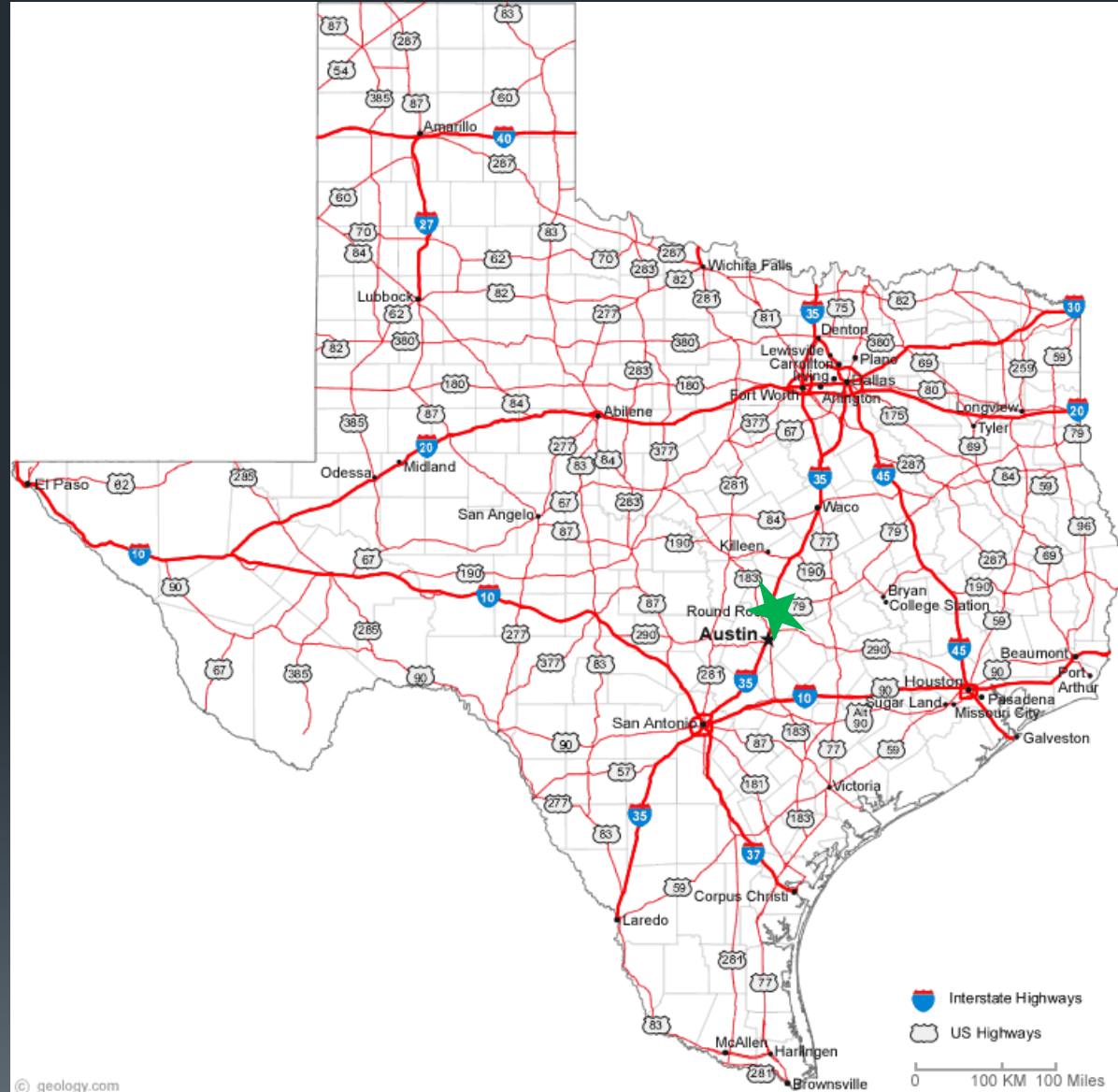
Jessica Woods
Water Conservation Coordinator
City of Round Rock



Round Rock, TX

Where?

- Williamson County
- north of Austin
- IH-35 corridor
- Avg rainfall = 34"



City Stats

Rapid population growth:

- 1990 = 30,923 residents
- Current Estimate = 106,462 residents in city limits
- Service area population ~ 150,000

~32,000 direct water connections

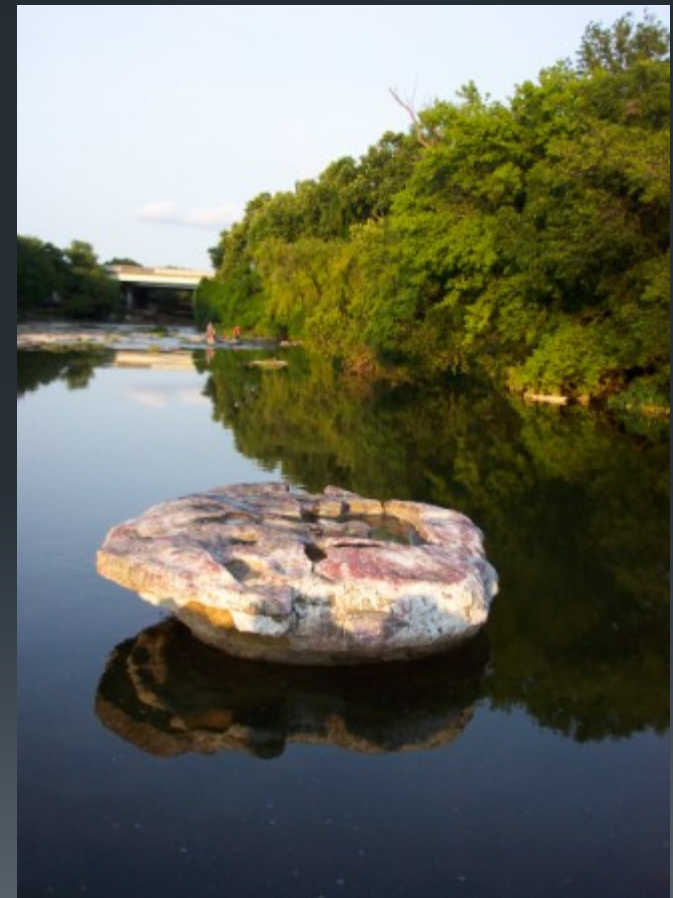
- Of those 29,000 are residential

Wholesale to 8 MUDs

Own & Operate WTP / WWTP

Diversified Water Sources:

- Lake Georgetown/Lake Stillhouse Hollow System
- Edwards Aquifer (<8 mgd)
- Lake Travis (*future*)



Metering Retrofit *(a history)*

- 2014 began upgrade to AMI fro AMR
 - New meter lids
 - Additional \$800,000 & 1-yr
 - Registers changed out in-house
 - By 2016 considered **done**
- Signed contract with portal provider in 2017
 - Customer portal live in March 2018





So, how's this helping with
customer service?

Current Procedure *(not glamorous)*

1. UB pull a report once a month of all accounts with leaks;
2. Go tag property w/ level 2 & 3 leaks;
3. WC follows-up doorhanger with postcard;
4. Follow that up with an email, if known.
5. Follow up in about 2 weeks to see if fixed/not and send another email or letter (not postcard)
6. After about a month, send strongly worded letter that cites ordinance.

Residential Notices

Between April 2018 – April 2019:

- 362 properties notified *at least once* of a leak.
 - Of these 362 customers:
 - 44% fixed leak within 7 days!
 - 64% in 14 days
 - 83% in a month
 - 92% in 2 months
 - 93% in 6 months
- Total of **300 leaks fixed within a month** time frame!
 - Hand-full still not fixed (about 8).

Several customers very appreciative, some not so much, others wanted to know why they weren't notified sooner...



Commercial Notifications

- 39 different customers notified
 - 21 leaks fixed
 - 16 of those irrigation meters
 - 2 of those normal business operations (not leaks)
 - 18 customers *never heard* from
- Sent some notices to physical address



What IS working:

- **Notifying people in general!**
 - Emailing got a much faster response in having the leak stopped than mail.
 - I suspect texting may even be faster.
- Getting people to use the customer portal

Leak Alert

Dear Round Rock Water Customer:

Round Rock Utility Billing office wanted to provide you with a courtesy message regarding your water use. Our water metering system has alerted us that **there has been water flowing through your water meter for several days, without stopping**. This could indicate that you have a water leak at your property. If you are aware of water being used, please disregard this message.

If you are not aware of any water being used for this time, we encourage you to check your property for leaks. Some places to check are toilets for leaking flappers, swimming pool automatic fills, and sprinkler system line breaks or leaking valves; however it could be anything that uses water at your home.

City staff are not able to come locate the source of the water use.

For Water Billing Questions, contact:
Utility Billing at 512-218-5460

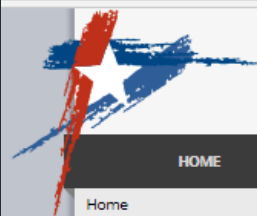
For water conservation information, contact:
jwoods@roundrocktexas.gov or 512-671-2872



What's NOT working (aka: lessons learned):



1. Residents wanting City to come out
 - Revised notifications to say we can't
 - Created a webpage to give customers ideas about where to look
 - Used *WaterSmart* "fix a leak week" info heavily (still do)
2. Renters
3. Several on-going leaks, no response from owner
4. Time consuming, tedious, at times got side-tracked & not timely follow ups at times.
5. Issues with commercial properties, knowing what is "normal" use, what isn't, even internally with staff.

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Water Leaks

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If you suspect you have a leak, follow these steps:

1. Make sure no water is running inside (washers are off, etc.)
2. Go outside and locate your water meter, typically it's on the edge of your property, near the sidewalk or street, in a box with a black plastic, rectangular lid;
3. There are usually two meters inside, yours and your neighbors. Yours is the one closest to your property. If you are able to, open the lid, look at the face of the meter; it is digital and similar to a car's odometer.
4. Watch it for five minutes to see if any of the numbers move or if an arrow symbol appears in the upper center square (*where the red circle is on the meter face to the right*).
5. If an arrow symbol appears in the upper center of the meter, then water is going through the meter, which means something is "using" water on your property.
6. You will need to call a professional to locate the leak and repair it, or attempt to find it yourself.



[Click here for common places to check for a leak.](#)

Watch this video on instructions on how to check your meter for a leak:



You can call the City's Utility and Environmental Services Department at [512-218-5555](tel:512-218-5555) to request a leak check on your meter. *Please note, the City **will not** repair any leaks located on private property, only of the City side of the meter.*

To view your monthly, daily, or hourly water usage, register at our customer portal at www.BRTXwater.com. (Please note

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Where to Check for Leaks

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Tips and Hints

Think you may have a water leak? Here's some common places to check out:

- **Toilets-flappers** are a huge source of leaks inside the house. Use dye tablets or food coloring to see if the flapper isn't sealing properly.
 1. Drop a tablet or several drops into the tank (back part) of the toilet. Do not flush. Just wait.
 2. After at least 10 minutes, look to see if the coloring has appeared in the bowl of the toilet. If it has, then you have a leaky flapper.
 3. The flapper simply needs to be replaced. Make sure you know the brand of the toilet when you purchase a new flapper to replace the old one.
 4. *See video below on how to do this!*
- **Hot Water Heaters**-look to see if there is water in the pan under the hot water heater. If so, there is a leak in the heater and it will need to be replaced or repaired.
- **Irrigation Systems**—
 1. Hire a licensed irrigation company to come check the system for leaks, or manually run though each station for several minutes looking for problems in the system.
 2. Sometimes a line break is easy to spot, as water will be pooling into the street or on the sidewalk. Often leaks aren't visible thanks to the rocky, karst limestone area we live in. The water flows down through the rock and we don't see a pool of water on the yard. You'll need to look for signs of low water pressure, such as sprinkler heads not popping up.
- **Water Softeners**-listen for signs of recharging of the unit. Typically they only recharge at night, if you constantly hear it, or hear it during daytime hours have a service company come check it.
- **Faucets**-constant running water or drips coming from bathroom or kitchen faucets, the bathtub, or outdoor hose bibs are leaks that need repairing.
- **Water Meter**-if you see water coming out of the water meter, or in the meter box, call [512-218-5555](tel:512-218-5555) to have the City come check the meter for a leak.

Need to check your toilet for a leak? Watch me show you how!

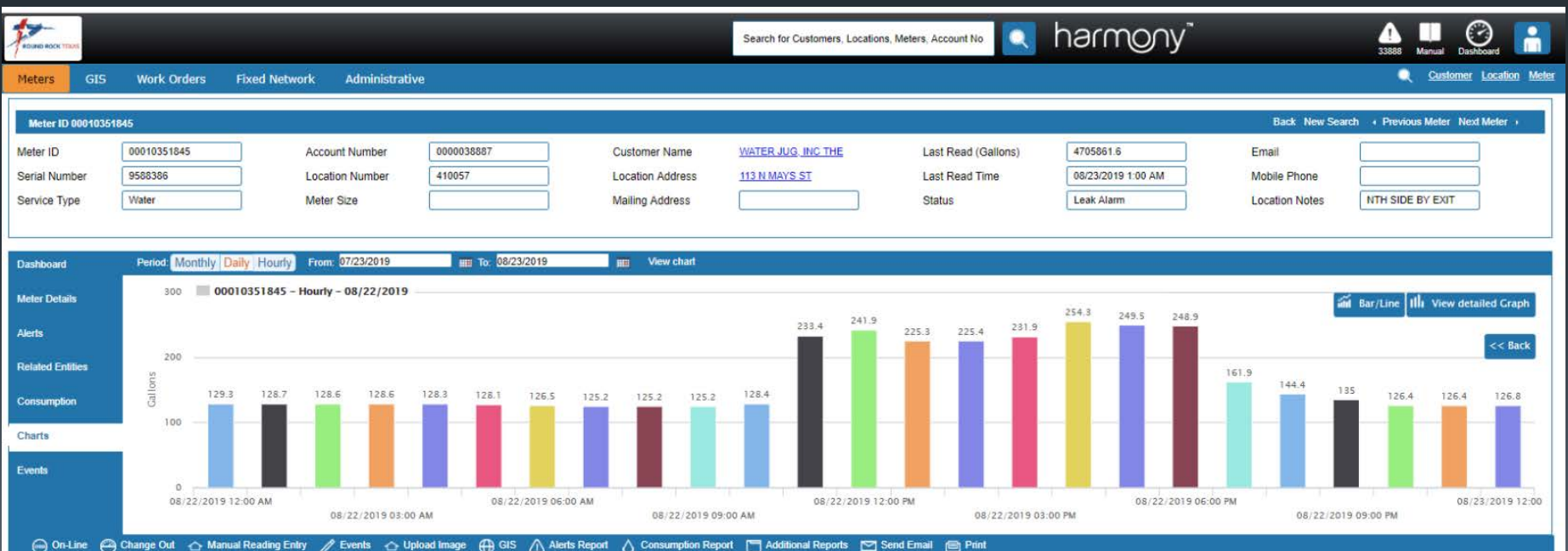


Have Not:

- Ask what was causing leak;
- Fine anyone or shut-off anyone's water that was domestic use (did turn off some irrigation meters);
- Pushed the customer portal

Moving ahead...

- No customer notifications from portal yet (soon?)
- Reduce time spent on leak notifications (testing out new methodology September 2019)



Thank you!

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