

Answers in Response to July 31st Meeting Questions

To see a broader list of questions answered by Aqua Illinois prior to the meeting, [click here](#).

WHAT HAPPENED?

Customer Service

1. How were/are inbound calls handled by Aqua Illinois?

During normal business hours, customers calling 877-987-2782 (Aqua Customer Service Number), can reach Aqua Emergency or Customer Service contacts who are trained to address most customer service inquiries. During afterhours (including nights, weekends, and holidays), customers will reach our afterhours service representatives who are briefed and prepped to respond to customer inquiries.

We understand that our customers have very specific questions about this event. So, we created an email address (aquahawthornwoods@aquaaamerica.com) that goes straight to our Aqua IL team. We will respond to questions on a first come, first served basis as quickly as possible.

Standard billing questions should continue to be addressed through our contact center at 877.987.2782 or custservreply@aquaaamerica.com.

2. What is being done to correct your phone system as it relates to emergency calls? During the service disruption, your automated attendant sent customers to a digital dead-end.

In July we became aware of an intermittent telecom error with our afterhours vendor. The error was resolved, and the correction verified by our Aqua team. We apologize for the confusion and frustration that this caused.

Incident Response

1. Was there a delay in Aqua Illinois' response because it was a holiday weekend?

No. As with all after-hours, weekends and holidays, our team was on call during this event. In addition, our senior staff was available to assist, as needed.

2. When did Aqua Illinois notify local fire departments of a water pressure issue?

Hawthorn Woods Director of Public Safety, John Malcolm, took the lead and contacted all appropriate fire departments in the area at the beginning of the incident.

We are grateful to Hawthorn Woods officials for their leadership. And, as we improve our processes, fire departments have been added to our critical contact list.

Water Quality

1. Were there any violations of the EPA Safe Drinking Water Act?

No. There were no violations of the EPA Safe Drinking Water Act.

2. I have a personal home water treatment system. Do I need to do anything special to my system?

For all personal home water treatment systems, please refer to manufacturer instructions or contact the manufacturer directly.

Bad Information

We sincerely apologize for the missteps and bad information that we gave to you during this service interruption. Specifically:

- We mistakenly told you the issue was resolved in short order when it hadn't been. When we found the first water main leak, we thought we solved the issue but we communicated prematurely.
- We said the \$100 gift card we were sending would cover 50% of your monthly bill for two months. It will not.
- We told you to conserve water as increased usage was the cause of this service interruption. It was not. Although several small leaks were found, the root cause of this situation was a large break on a 10" main that was in a marshy area making detection difficult.

1. What is Aqua Illinois doing to correct the links on your website and in your communications that do not work?

We have redoubled our efforts to publish accurate and helpful information to our website and in customer communications in near real-time. We have tested the links on our site, and all are working properly now.

If you have difficulty accessing any content via the website or links, please contact us at: aquahawthornwoods@aquaamerica.com, and provide your contact information. We will investigate and make sure you have access to the necessary information.

Lastly, you should opt-in to receive system alerts – such as interruptions – via our [WaterSmart Alerts](#).

RATES

1. What can be done regarding the high rates we pay? Why are the rates so high?

Conscientious water conservation remains the best solution for reducing water consumption and the size of your monthly bill.

Aqua bills reflect the full cost of providing service including prudent investment in water infrastructure and efficient operating expenses. All rates and charges are approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Some municipalities provide funds to subsidize the true cost of service resulting in artificially lower bills. The bills vary based upon usage and meter size. The largest driver is consumption. We see higher rates in the summer months due to increased usage coming from irrigation, pools, and other seasonal activities.

Larger meters also carry a higher monthly Customer Charge that does not include the usage component. Plumbing codes in the State of Illinois specify the required meter size. The Fire Protection Charge is also dependent on meter size.

Usage rates are consistent for all Hawthorn Woods and Kildeer residential customers at \$7.57 per 1000 gallons of usage. Lake County Public Works customers have a separate billing structure that is not controlled by Aqua.

More information regarding the meaning of each line item can be seen below in the response to question #3 below.

Bill type	Average Monthly Cost
Water only – Winter (Nov-Mar)	\$92.94
Water and Wastewater – Winter	\$156.67
Water only – Summer (May-Aug)	\$131.25
Water and Wastewater - Summer	\$180.57

- 2. There are maintenance fees listed on our monthly bill. Where are the reserve funds from the collection of this money? How much money is in reserves from this maintenance fee?**

There are no maintenance fees on the monthly bills.

There is an infrastructure surcharge that enables us to defray the cost of replacing any existing equipment/assets including but not limited to mains, meters, hydrants, pumps, etc. that have reached the end of their useful life.

- 3. Can you provide detailed information on what all the various charges are on the water/sewer bill?**

Please [click here](#) to see a sample water/sewer bill.

ONGOING OPERATIONS

- 1. Are we dealing with an aging system? If so, what needs to be done to resolve this?**

No. The majority of the Hawthorn Woods water network consists of ductile iron pipe 20-30 years old. For context, the typical expected life of ductile iron pipe is 80-100 years.

Ductile iron is a standard material in the water industry, and it is one of the most common materials installed today for water transmission and distribution. Ductile iron is a metallic material and is susceptible to corrosion over time. Initial investigations suggest corrosion is the root cause of the premature failure.

Given the premature nature of the failure, an assessment of the Hawthorn Woods distribution network is planned.

Results of this assessment will be used to determine where there may be remaining areas at higher risk of failure and to evaluate and select the best mitigation approaches. We are investigating the soil properties in the area where the break occurred as well as analyzing a piece of the main where the break occurred to determine if further actions need to be taken.

2. What is the basis of Aqua Illinois' ownership of the infrastructure in Hawthorn Woods? Who paid for this system? Who was the other entity when the system was constructed and their relationship to Aqua Illinois?

Aqua acquired the water and wastewater systems serving the Hawthorn Woods Country Club area from Toll Brothers, the original developer. This included the plant and underground infrastructure,

At that time, Aqua IL, Toll Brothers and Hawthorn Woods also entered into agreement to ensure that Toll Brothers' obligations to Hawthorn Village would be honored. Other developers have since added on to the system. Some infrastructure was paid for and installed by Aqua, and some was paid for and installed by the developer.

3. Why are the water meters in Hawthorn Woods being changed out after five (5) years when other meters last 15-20 years? Is there a problem with our meters?

Most meters are being replaced on a 10-year cycle per requirements laid out in Illinois Administrative Code (Title 83 Section 600.340). This regulation requires that all meters be inspected/tested for accuracy according to the below schedule. Timely replacement of helps ensure meter accuracy.

Our process is to test in place meters sized 2.0" and above. We only replace them if they fail. If they pass testing, we leave them in place. All meters changed to date in 2023 were in service for greater than 5 years.

Size	Threshold
5/8 inch	10 years
3/4 and 1 inch	6 years
1.5 inch and above	4 years

4. How are meters calibrated and checked for accuracy?

We require that all of our manufacturers provide new meter calibration test results per Illinois regulation and that these test results demonstrate that the meters meet or exceed American Water Works Association (AWWA) Standards and testing thresholds set by Illinois Administrative Code Title 83 Section 600.310. New meter calibration and testing is a decades old industry practice. Every new meter installed is calibrated and has a certification test result provided by the manufacturer.

As a result, we do not calibrate meters in the field. To ensure Aqua meters maintain the required accuracy, Aqua exchanges, or tests meters according to the schedule outlined in Illinois Administrative Code Title 83 Section 600.340. And as noted above, when a meter fails, it is replaced with a newly calibrated meter.

5. Does Aqua Illinois conduct strategic planning?

Yes. Aqua IL does conduct strategic planning with the primary focus on improving the customer experience and operational efficiency. It is renewed on an annual basis.

Key customer experience initiatives include: improving the customer service portal; improving customer communications; and ensuring that customers in need have access to assistance programs.

Key operational efficiency programs include remote monitoring/access, continued implementation of asset management tools, conducting building energy audits, water main replacements, and implementing continuous improvement practices across our state operations.

For additional information about Essential Utilities strategy across all our states, you are welcome to access the annual report, found at www.essential.co, and you can see our [Illinois-specific report here](#).

6. What more can be done to address the midge fly issue near the WWRR system?

We have a contract in place for midge larval control with a firm called Black Lagoon, and treatments are being completed twice monthly. Applications are made to the wastewater lagoons monthly for six months during the spring/summer time period. (May-October).

If there is a nuisance due to the presence of midge flies, please contact us (aquahawthornwoods@aquaamerica.com) so that we can investigate and, if necessary, arrange for additional remediation from our larval control contractor.

RESOLVING THE ISSUE

- 1. How much money is Aqua Illinois expending in 2023-2024 to resolve this issue? Could not find anything on your website.**

Aqua Illinois does not report this level of operational detail, but you can review more information in our [Aqua Illinois State of the Company Report here](#).

- 2. What if anything did Aqua Illinois do regarding backflow concerns with this issue?**

Illinois Administrative Code Title 35 Section 604 and Title 77 Section 890 jointly require Aqua to have an active cross-connection (back flow) program with the goal of preventing any “unsafe substances” from entering the distribution system. As part of Aqua’s backflow program, annual testing is currently required at 119 premises in Hawthorn Woods. Aqua continues its state-wide effort to identify and prioritize potential backflow hazards across Illinois.

Backflow events are always a concern when system pressures drop dramatically, and it is important to note that we did not identify any specific backflow incident(s) during this outage. More importantly, the Hawthorn Woods system was protected from the risk of back flow contamination, specifically at those 119 premises, that conducted the required tests to ensure their backflow devices are working effectively. These actions continue to highlight the importance of a strong backflow program.

Lastly, the actions required to mitigate the impacts of a backflow event (i.e., flushing, sampling, and establishing proper chlorine residual) were performed when bringing the Hawthorn Woods system was brought online.

- 3. Can the Village of Hawthorn Woods hire a third party paid for by Aqua Illinois to assess what happened?**

We have been working directly with third party consultants to provide a number of services aimed at gaining a better understanding of the cause of the water system disruption.

We worked with several leak detection firms to perform an extensive leak detection survey. This work commenced in the evening of July 2 and continued throughout the disruption period. Though small in size, the leak detection firms identified several leaks that have been repaired or isolated until repairs can be performed.

We also submitted a pipe sample to a laboratory to perform analysis that will help determine the underlying cause of the main break. Aqua has also submitted soil samples for analysis to determine the corrosivity of the soils in the area of the main break. Additional soil testing and water main inspection will occur throughout the water system in the weeks ahead. We are currently developing plans for this work and identifying an expert consultant to assist.

4. What is the plan to reimburse local businesses, the Village of Hawthorn Woods Aquatic Center and the Hawthorn Woods Country Club for their lost revenues?

We will consider claims on a case-by-case basis. Claims can be submitted to claimsil@aquaamerica.com.

Customers should visit: <https://www.aquawater.com/iljuly2023claims.php> to find information regarding the claims process.

Once a claim has been prepared with the required information, it can be emailed to claimsil@aquaamerica.com.

MOVING FORWARD

1. What can Aqua Illinois do to ensure that the residents don't bear the cost burden of adding an additional well in 2024? How much did this issue cost?

Rates are determined by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Additionally, Aqua Illinois has a unified rate structure for all of its customers in Illinois so the cost of improvements is applied across all of our water customers in the state, www.essential.co, and our [Aqua Illinois State of the Company Report here](#).