

NEWSLINE

ELECTRICITY • WATER • NATURAL GAS • WASTEWATER • TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Fort Valley Utility Commission

Since 1891

500 Anthoine Street
Fort Valley, Georgia 31030

(478) 825-7701

(478) 825-7704 FAX

www.fvutil.com

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CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

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*The Commission meets the second
Monday of each month at
6:00 p.m.*



December 2024

Editor: Martha McAfee

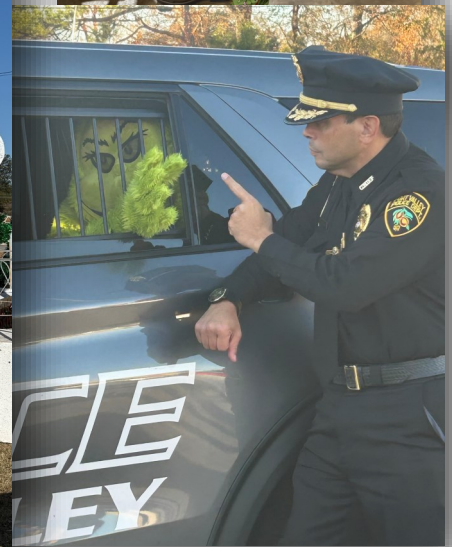
Happy Holidays

As the holiday season is upon us, we at Fort Valley Utility Commission would like to take a moment to thank you, our valued customers, for your trust and support throughout the year. Your partnership drives our commitment to provide reliable, high-quality utility services to our community.

This time of year reminds us of the importance of connection and service. We are proud to be part of a community that works together to make our community a wonderful place to live and work.

As we look forward to 2025, we are excited about the opportunities to continue serving you with excellence and innovation.

From all of us at the Fort Valley Utility Commission, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a happy, prosperous New Year!



From the General Manager's Desk...



Clay Walker
General Manager

As we approach the close of 2024, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made this year at the Fort Valley Utility Commission and share my gratitude for your continued trust and support. This has been a year of significant milestones, all aimed at enhancing the reliability and efficiency of our services to better serve our community.

Here are a few of the key accomplishments from 2024:

1. **Fleet Vehicle Improvements:** We entered into a lease agreement with Enterprise to modernize our fleet vehicles. This partnership ensures our team has the tools they need to respond to your needs more effectively and efficiently.

2. **Natural Gas System Upgrades:** To improve reliability and service, we approved a project to close the loop on the natural gas system. This investment will strengthen our infrastructure and ensure more consistent delivery of natural gas across our service area. We also completed gas main replacements in several neighborhoods.

3. **Enhanced Vegetation Management:** Recognizing the importance of reducing outages caused by falling trees, we adopted a vegetation management plan and approved an increase in vegetation management efforts. By clearing more trees near power lines, we're proactively working to improve the reliability of your electric service.

4. **Personnel Policy Updates:** We updated sections of our personnel policy to reflect modern standards and ensure our workforce remains engaged, supported, and equipped to deliver excellent service.

"We continuously look for ways to enhance reliability and efficiency of our services."

5. **AMI Meter Installations:** We are continuing our goal of installing additional Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters in an effort to continue to improve our ability to monitor and manage utility usage. These meters provide more accurate readings and better service for our customers.

6. **Screw Press Installation and New Water Lab:** The screw press is a piece of equipment that is highly effective at dewatering sludge and leads to drier solids and clearer effluent. A new water lab was approved. We are looking forward to bringing it on line.

These and other achievements are a testament to our commitment to providing safe, reliable, and forward-thinking utility services. They also reflect the hard work of our dedicated team and the trust you place in us. As we look forward to 2025, we remain focused on continuing to invest in infrastructure, technology, and people to ensure that we meet the needs of our growing community.

Stay Safe Online: Cybersecurity Tips for Protecting Yourself

The increase in social media engagements and shopping creates opportunities for families and friends to connect and celebration—but it’s also a prime time for cybercriminals looking to take advantage of distracted or unsuspecting individuals. With online shopping, digital communications, and virtual events on the rise, practicing good cybersecurity has never been more important.

Why Cybersecurity Matters

Cyber threats, such as phishing scams, identity theft, and malware, are on the rise as scammers prey on busy and generous people. According to cybersecurity experts, online scams often disguise themselves as deals, charitable donation requests, or delivery notifications. Falling victim to these scams can lead to financial losses, compromised personal information, and even identity theft.

Tips for Staying Safe Online

Be Wary of Deals Too Good to Be True. Cybercriminals often lure victims with fake offers. Stick to reputable websites and avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails or text messages.

Verify Before You Buy or Donate. Ensure that the online retailer or charity is legitimate by checking reviews or using trusted directories. Look for “https” in the web address to confirm a secure connection.

Use Strong and Unique Passwords. Create complex passwords for your online accounts and avoid reusing them across multiple sites. Consider using a password manager to keep track.

Enable Two-Factor Authentication. Add an extra layer of security by enabling two-factor authentication on your accounts whenever possible.

Beware of Phishing Attempts. Be cautious of unsolicited emails or messages asking for personal or financial information. Scammers may impersonate companies, delivery services, or even friends.

Monitor Your Financial Statements. Regularly check your bank and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions. Early detection can minimize damage.

Secure Your Devices and Networks. Keep your software updated and use antivirus protection. Avoid using public Wi-Fi for financial transactions unless you’re connected to a secure VPN.

Spread Cheer, Not Your Data.

While online sharing and social media posts are popular, remember to share wisely online. Be cautious about posting travel plans or personal details on social media, as this information can make you a target.

By staying vigilant and adopting good cybersecurity practices, you can ensure a safer online experience for you and your loved ones!



**Want to lower your home energy bills and be more environmentally friendly?
Here are 10 simple ways to reduce energy waste, at home and at work:**

1. Make the switch to LED

LEDs are a great example of how innovation and technology can make your life easier. They last at least 25 times longer and consume up to 90 percent less electricity than incandescent bulbs.

Tip: By switching five of your home's most frequently used bulbs with ENERGY STAR® certified LEDs, it's possible to save \$75 on energy costs annually.

2. Seal Those Leaks

On average, heating and cooling account for almost half of a home's energy consumption. In fact, all the little leaks can be equivalent to leaving open a 3-foot-by-3-foot window.

Tip: Take simple steps like caulking windows, sealing leaks around chimneys and recessed lighting, and sliding draft guards under your doors to save up to 20% on heating costs.

3. Heat and Cool Efficiently

Don't waste money heating or cooling an empty home. Install a programmable thermostat and in colder weather schedule your home's heat to lower when you are away or asleep, and increase when you are returning home or waking-up. In warm weather, schedule the thermostat to raise the temperature when you are away or asleep, and lower it at other times.

Tip: Follow the U.S. Department of Energy recommended temperatures and be energy-efficient all year.

4. Maintain Your HVAC System

Make sure to clean or change your furnace filters regularly. A dirty furnace filter will slow down air flow, making the system work harder to keep you warm (or cool) and costing you more money.

Tip: Consider getting a winter tune-up. Just as a tune-up for your car can improve your gas mileage, a semi-annual or yearly tune-up of your heating and cooling system can be vital to improve efficiency, saving you money and making your home more comfortable.

5. Look for the ENERGY STAR® Label

ENERGY STAR® labeled windows can cut heating costs by as much as 30% compared to single-pane windows, while increasing indoor comfort and lessening fading of home furnishings.

Tip: If you are undertaking a major home remodel or new build, consider installing ENERGY STAR® qualified HVAC equipment and appliances.

6. Turn the Electronics Off

That sounds easy, but too often we forget and leave electronics plugged in that are not in use.

Tip: Turn off unnecessary/idle lights, appliances and electronics. A power strip can help turn off multiple items at once. (Sometimes the simplest things are really effective!)





7. Winter Tip: Invite the Sun In

It feels like the sun abandons us during the winter, but that doesn't mean we should ignore it during the shorter days.

Tip: Open curtains/shade on your west-and south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home, and save **2%-12%**.

8. Summer Tip: Close Blinds and Shades

This tip is easy to forget, but vital: excess sunlight will make it harder to keep your home cool and comfortable.

Tip: During the day, keep your **blinds and shades** closed to prevent warm air from building up in your home.

9. Clean Your Clothing Efficiently

That's an easy one. A washing machine spends 90% of its energy to heat water.

Tip: Consider using cold water instead. In addition, try to run full loads as much as possible, because the machine uses roughly the same amount of energy regardless of the load size. Also, consider air-drying.

10. Clean Up Your Dishes Efficiently

If there's one thing that has the power to unite people, it's food. And with food comes dishes to clean. Fear not – there really is a more efficient way to **use your dishwasher**.

Tip: Avoid the "rinse hold" cycle and skip heated drying – simply open the door at the end of the washing cycle and let the dishes air dry!

We are honored to be recognized as the Business of the Month by the Peach County High School Local School Governance Team. This acknowledgment highlights our commitment to supporting the students of Peach County.

At Fort Valley Utility Commission, we are proud to provide school supplies to all elementary schools in the county, ensuring students have the tools they need to succeed. Additionally, we are a proud supporter of Peach County High School's annual Trojan Fest, an event that brings the school community together to kick off the academic year with energy and excitement.



We believe that investing in our students is an investment in the future of our community, and we are grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact. Thank you for this recognition—it inspires us to continue supporting education in Peach County!



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORDER



Customer Engagement Center:
902 Knoxville St, Fort Valley GA 31030

Hours:
Mo - Fr 8AM - 5PM

Main Office Location:
500 Anthoine Street, Fort Valley GA 31030

Hours:
Mo - Fr 8AM - 5PM

Phone:
478-825-7701
Email:
customerservice@fvutil.com

Customer Service Fax:
478-822-9183
Main Fax:
478-825-7704

▶ Customer Service Forms

▶ Pay Bill Online

▶ Report an Outage



Customer Service

Be sure to visit our website at www.fvutil.com. Go to the Customer Service tab where you will find almost all of the information you need to start, discontinue, and reconnect service as well as bank draft, new service application, customer information and more!

WE'VE INCREASED OUR FINANCING AMOUNT!

FROM \$7,500 → TO \$10,000 👍

GAS APPLIANCE FINANCING

Did you know that the Commission offers 0% interest financing up to \$10,000 to cover the cost of a new natural gas appliance and installation? The loan is simply added to your natural gas bill each month.



Steps to Take:

- ✓ Contact a contractor for an estimate. You can find some local contractors on www.ProvideBetter.com
- ✓ Submit your application to the Commission. Blank application can be found at www.ProvideBetter.com
- ✓ After approval, installation is verified and the contractor is paid by the Commission. The entire cost of the project will be added to your monthly natural gas bill for as long as 60 months!

WE'RE OPEN

Monday - Friday
8:00am - 5:00pm

**More Info:
Call Us:**

 478.825.7701

902 Knoxville Street
Fort Valley, GA 31030
www.fvutil.com

Sign Up

SIGN UP for e-bill! Call us at 478.825.7701 Option 3 or email customerservice@fvutil.com
You can also sign up by logging into your account on-line. Visit www.fvutil.com

You can now pay by phone 24/7 at 478.825.7703

An Important Message About Damage Prevention Prior to Excavating

This message is brought to you by **Fort Valley Utility Commission**. There are thousands of dig-in damage incidents in the United States every year. Striking an underground pipeline may lead to expensive fines, serious injury or death. Gas pipelines are built with safety and reliability as top priorities. Over the past 20 years, risk exposure has been rising through increased populations, energy consumption and pipeline miles. At the same time, the number of serious pipeline incidents involving death or injury has declined by 50%. Natural gas leaks do happen and may result in fire, explosion, and/or asphyxiation. Natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas; however, a chemical that smells like rotten eggs is added to help detect a possible leak. It's a bad smell. That's good!

Some of the signs of a gas leak include seeing bubbling water, hearing a hissing or blowing sound from a pipeline or appliance, dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area, or dirt or dust blowing from the ground, or the smell of rotten eggs.

If you smell gas, or just think you might have a gas leak:

- **Leave** the area immediately; **Do Not** congregate around natural gas facilities.
- **Call 478-825-7701 or 911** from a neighboring home or business
- **Never** turn on or off switches, open or close garage doors, use a flashlight or phone/cellphone in the presence of the gas smell, as these devices may be a source of ignition, causing an explosion.
- **Stay** in a safe location until the Emergency Responder arrives and gives you clearance to return to the area.

Here are five easy steps to damage prevention:

1. **Survey and Mark** – Survey the proposed excavation area and mark the dig sites in white paint.
2. **Call Before You Dig** - 48 hours prior to digging, call 811 and get free staking of underground utility lines which helps reduce the chance of injury and unneeded expense. It is the law in Georgia.
3. **Wait!** Wait the required time to allow utility owners to locate and mark the lines.
4. **Respect the Marks!** Maintain visibility of the marks and safely follow them when digging.
5. **Dig** – Dig with care. Hand excavate within 24-inches of each side of the locate marks. If you plan to dig anywhere near a marked area – especially when using mechanized equipment – use a shovel and carefully hand dig to expose the lines.

If your equipment contacts a gas line:

- **Leave** the equipment; jumping clear and shuffling away – **DO NOT** turn off the engine.
- **Warn other and leave** the area quickly.
- **Do Not operate** any gas pipeline valves or stop the flow of gas or try to fold over plastic pipelines.
- **Leave the excavation open.**
- If gas is escaping the pipeline, **call 911**, then **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**
- If the line is nicked, scraped, gouged, dented or otherwise damaged but not leaking, call **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**; these may appear to be minor but can lead to future leaks if not properly repaired.

Natural gas is America's most popular home heating fuel and is increasingly popular for use by homeowners, schools, businesses, factories and electric power-generation plants. Natural gas is efficient, clean, reliable, and a relative bargain compared to alternative energy sources. Natural gas flows through a network of underground main lines that serve approximately 3891] customers in our system. These main lines are typically 2-inch in diameter and branch into household service lines which are typically half-inch to three-quarter-inch in diameter and buried 12- to 18-inches below the surface. The service lines end at each customer's meter where gas is delivered.

This message is brought to you by Fort Valley Utility Commission as a part of our Public Awareness Program. For additional information regarding this message, call 478-825-7701.

Este es un Mensaje Importante Sobre Prevención de Daños Antes de Excavar

Este es un mensaje de **Fort Valley Utility Commission**. En los Estados Unidos ocurren cada año miles de incidentes por excavación de tierra. Golpear una tubería subterránea puede ocasionar costosas multas, heridas graves o la muerte; por lo cual, es de máxima prioridad fabricar los gasoductos con seguridad y confiabilidad. En los últimos 20 años, la exposición al riesgo ha estado sabiendo a través de aumento de la población, el consumo de energía y de tuberías millos. Al mismo tiempo, el número de incidentes serias que involucran las tuberías de gas que tiene que ver con muerte o heridas ha bajado el 50 por ciento. Fugas de gas natural corren y pueden resultar un incendio, una explosión y hasta la asfixia. El gas natural no tiene color ni olor; por eso, se agrega un químico que huele a huevos podridos para ayudar a detectar un posible fuga de gas. ¡Este es un mal olor que trae algo bueno!

Algunas seña de escape de gas pueden ser ver agua burbujeante, escuchar un silbido que viene del gasoducto, ver la vegetación descolorida o sin vida en donde debería haber un área verde, ver polvo que sopla del suelo o sentir el olor a huevos podridos. Si huele gas, o cree que puede haber una fuga de gas:

- **Salga** del área inmediatamente. **NO** se quede cerca de las instalaciones de gas natural
- **Llame al 478-825-7701** o al **911** de la casa de un vecino o negocio.
- **Nunca** encienda o apague interruptores, no abra ni cierre las puertas del garaje ni use una linterna, teléfono o celular el la presencia del olor a gas, ya que estos dispositivos pueden ser una fuente de ignición, causando una explosión.
- **Quédate** en un lugar seguro hasta que llegue el servicio de Emergencia y le indique que puede regresar al área.

Estos son cinco pasos fáciles para prevenir daños:

- 1 **Inspeccione y Marque:** Inspeccione el área que planea excavar y marque con pintura blanca dónde vas a trabajar.
- 2 **Llame Antes de Excavar:** Llame 48 horas antes de excavar, a 811 para que le marquen las líneas subterráneas de servicios para a reducir las posibilidad de daños o gastos que no sean necesarios. Es la ley en Georgia.
- 3 **Esperar!** Dele tiempo a los proveedores del servicio para localizar y marcar las líneas de gas
- 4 **Respete las Marcas:** Mantenga visibles las marcas y seguir con seguridad cuando empiezas excavar.
- 5 **Excavación** – Excave con cuidado. Excave a mano unas 18 pulgadas a cada lado de los sitios marcados. Si planea excavar cerca del área marcada, especialmente con un equipo mecánico, use una pala y cave con la mano cuidadosamente hasta que se vean las líneas de gas.

Si la máquina que está usando hace contacto con una línea de gas:

- **Déjela** y aléjese del área. **NO** apague el motor
- **Adviértale a los demás** y **salga** del área rápidamente
- **No encienda ninguna válvula de gas** ni detenga su fluido, tampoco trate de doblar los conductos plásticos
- **Deje abierto el lugar de excavación**
- Si hay un escape de gas, **llame al 911**, después a **Fort Valley Utility Commission** al **478-825-7701**
- Si la línea de gas tiene algún corte o está, raspada, arrancada, abollada o tiene algún otro daño pero no hay un escape, llame a **Fort Valley Utility Commission** al **478-825-7701**; estos daños parecen menores pero pueden ocasionar escapes en el futuro si no se reparan apropiadamente.

El gas natural es el combustible de calefacción de hogar más popular en América. El gas natural en cada vez es más popular con propietarios, escuelas, negocios, factorías y plantas eléctricas. El gas natural es más eficiente, limpio, fiable y una ganga relativa en comparación con otras formas de energía alternativa. El gas natural fluye a través de una red de líneas subterráneas que surten aproximadamente 3891 usuarios en nuestro sistema. Estas líneas principales suelen ser de 2 pulgadas de diámetro y se ramifican dentro de las líneas de servicio doméstico que suelen ser de media a tres cuartos de pulgada de diámetro, enterradas de 12 a 18 pulgadas bajo la superficie. Estas líneas de servicio terminan en cada uno de los meter de los usuarios donde se distribuye el gas.

Este es un mensaje de **Fort Valley Utility Commission** como parte de nuestro Programa de Concientización Pública. Para más información relacionada con este mensaje llame al **478-825-7701**.

**Congratulations to our Team Members celebrating milestone work anniversaries!
We appreciate you!**



Mike Massengale—30 Years



George Gibbs—25 Yrs



Karina Ceballos—20 Yrs

Not pictured:

Luis Torres—15 yrs

Marquis Johnson—10 Yrs



Maurice Towns—5 Yrs



Devin Randle—5 Yrs



Clay Walker—5 Yrs

Just For Fun!

Happy Holidays



Back Yard Cricket Gingerbread Decorations Celebrate Tradition
 Christmas Presents Reindeer Stocking Swimming Wrapping
 Blitzen Festive Holiday Prancer Rudolph Scrooge Singing
 Lights Spirit Carols Dancer Dasher Family Tinsel Turkey
 Bells Holly Elves Angel Cards Comet Cupid Donna
 Feast Gifts Happy Merry Santa Vixen Star Tree Box
 Ivy Ham



Team FVUC!



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Published by the
Fort Valley Utility Commission
P.O. Box 1529
Fort Valley GA 31030

Emergency Service

Nights and Weekends
478-825-5482

Office Hours

8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Monday - Friday



Don't make a bad situation worse

Help prevent any further damage to key utility services by always contacting 811 prior to digging during storm clean-up efforts.



Call or visit 811.com or your state 811 center's website.