# GURRENTS

Lead Service Line Reimbursement is Available Now!

At the beginning of October, PWSA announced a new addition to its Community Lead Response. We will reimburse up to 100% of eligible costs for a private lead service line replacement. By following a few easy steps, PWSA's water service customers can work with a private plumber to complete private side lead service line replacements and receive a minimum of a \$1,000 reimbursement.

Those who are concerned about a lead service line at their property can complete the work quickly while PWSA works towards its goal of systematically replacing all lead service lines by 2026. This program is an expansion of our existing private lead service line replacement offerings, with more income eligibility tiers available.

Water service lines are a joint responsibility, with the portion between the water main and the curb box belonging to PWSA and the portion from the curb box to the home belonging to the homeowner. Our Reimbursement Program will reimburse the costs of a privately-owned lead service line replacement. If your private plumber discovers a publicly-owned lead service line attached to the private line, they will coordinate with us to replace the public line at the same time.

#### **Reimbursement Process**

- Contact Dollar Energy Fund at 866-762-2348. Dollar Energy Fund will confirm your income to determine your reimbursement amount.
- 2. Hire a plumber. You can choose from PWSA's list of approved plumbers, who have agreed to PWSA's program guidelines, making the process easier for you.
- Complete and submit estimate.
   Meet with your plumber so
   the plumber can complete an
   estimate form to submit to our
   PWSA Lead Help staff.
- Replace the lead service line. Your plumber will complete the work and then the PWSA Lead Help staff will provide you with flushing instructions, a pitcher filter, and a test kit for your water after construction.
- Complete and submit invoice. Your plumber will submit the final invoice to PWSA for reimbursement of the eligible costs.

To simplify the process, PWSA has coordinated with local licensed plumbers to compile a list of companies that will complete the work on the terms set out by PWSA. If customers work with an approved PWSA plumber, the plumber will agree to hold off on any charges until reimbursement. This means customers will not have to pay for eligible costs up front while waiting to be reimbursed. While we believe working with these plumbers will make the process easier, customers may work with any licensed plumber they choose.

For more information, visit lead.pgh2o.com/ LeadReimbursement.

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#### **COMING UP:**

**2020 Board Meetings**November 20
December 18

Meetings begin at 10:00am and are open to the public. Due to COVID-19, meetings will be held via teleconference until further notice. Visit pgh2o.com/events-meetings for the most updated information.

Due to restrictions on events from COVID-19, meetings may be tentative or postponed. For the most updated information, please visit our website at pgh2o.com/eventsmeetings

"We hope that homeowners and tenants will take advantage of this process to receive reimbursement for replacing their private lead service line and improving water quality at their homes."

PWSA Executive Director, Will Pickering



# DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Executive Director Will Pickering



# Rate settlement prioritizes customer assistance and enhances programs for those that need it most.

Our recent rate settlement proposal submitted to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) on September 30th strikes a balance between the needs of our most vulnerable customers and the improvements we need to make to our water and sewer systems.

The proposal prioritizes our lower income customers by expanding customer assistance programs to help make bills as affordable as possible for those that need it most.

This is the right thing to do. During these challenging times, customer protections and the affordability of our rates cannot be ignored. No one should have to choose between paying their water bill and other essential expenses. While the PUC is still reviewing our settlement, this is what customers can expect to see on their bill in early 2021 if it is approved.

The settlement includes a 5.7% increase in base rates for water and wastewater charges, and 5% distribution system improvement charges (DSIC) for both water and sewer. This equals a \$6.85 increase for the average residential customer using 3,000 gallons of water per month. Additionally, customers enrolled in our income-based Bill Discount Program using up to 5,000 gallons of water per month would see a reduction in their total monthly bill compared to existing rates.

The proposal also includes enhancements to existing customer assistance programs. The discount available through the Bill Discount Program would increase from 75% on fixed charges to 100% and our very low-income customers could receive a 20% reduction on water usage. Additionally, more customers would be protected from water shutoffs during the winter by increasing eligibility to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. Under our expanded customer assistance outreach program, we hope to increase enrollment in our programs and help customers reduce their bills.

The rate increase, which would go into effect on or after January 14th with approval from the PUC, would result in an additional \$14,150,000 in water revenue and an additional \$4,850,000 in wastewater revenue. This additional funding would go towards improving our drinking water treatment and distribution system, rebuilding aging sewer lines, and designing innovative stormwater mitigation projects. In addition to large construction projects, this increase

will allow for the routine replacement of water mains throughout Pittsburgh and to continue replacing lead services lines.

We have learned from the past that we cannot put off investing in our water systems. To provide customers with an uninterrupted water supply and to deliver the safest water possible, we must move forward with this investment.

This rate settlement is a thoughtful compromise between investing in our aging infrastructure while also addressing affordability concerns for our lower income customers. As a publicly owned and managed water and sewer authority, every dollar we receive from ratepayers is reinvested back into our infrastructure and the improvements we are making to provide high quality, reliable water and wastewater services.

If your family is having a difficult time staying current with your water bill, please contact us as soon as possible. Our suspension of water shutoffs will continue into 2021. If you are not able to pay your bill, your balance will continue to accrue. By contacting us now, you can enroll in a payment plan and begin making payments that fit your budget. For more information about our Customer Assistance Programs, please visit <a href="www.pgh2o.com/CAP">www.pgh2o.com/CAP</a>. To enroll, please contact Dollar Energy Fund by calling, (866) 762-2348.

is a thoughtful compromise between investing in our aging infrastructure while also addressing affordability concerns for our lower income customers."

# Getting Stuff Done (GSD): Going above and beyond!

Earlier this month, we celebrated our outstanding Customer Service Department during Customer Service Week. The accolades our representatives received from a variety of customers illustrate the critical role they play in our success.

## **Thank you, Customer Service!**



Customer Service week 2019

#### Awesome Autumn

We received a call from a customer sharing that Customer Service Representative, Autumn Graham listened very well and walked her through what she needed to do next regarding a meter issue.

"She was so wonderful she made me cry!" the customer said.

Thank you, Autumn, for your commitment to quality customer service!

## Billing Brilliance

A customer called to say she was satisfied with the excellent customer service she received from Customer Service Representative, Janine Garlicki.

The customer said that Janine was "patient, kind, and sweet," as she worked to resolve a billing-related matter. "She made my day and made me smile."

Keep up the great work, Janine!



#### Patient Public Service

Customer Service Representative, Rebecca Copney received praise from a customer that took the time to answer several billing related questions. The customer especially appreciated Rebecca's patience as they worked together towards a solution. Thank you for getting stuff done, Rebecca!

## Superb Service

A customer called to share her satisfaction with Customer Service Representative, Michael Anania.

"I was very pleased with the level of service I received," wrote the customer.

Thank you, Michael, for your excellent work!

### Polite and Professional

"Polite, professional, and caring," were the words a customer used to describe the service that Customer Service Representative, Aileen Evans provided during a call.

"I wish I could work with more people like Aileen," he said.

Thank you, and keep making us proud, Aileen!

## **Amazing Amber**

One of our customers gave us a call to thank Customer Service Representative, Amber McNeal for a job well done.

"Amber took her time to explain and deserves kudos and a free lunch!" wrote the customer.

Great job earning this well-deserved praise, Amber!

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# PWSA Receives Award for Community Lead Response Program

PWSA was awarded Special Project of the Year at the October 5th March of Dimes Pittsburgh Transportation, Building & Construction Award Ceremony.

The March of Dimes Awards highlights local leaders and innovative projects in the labor and industry arena. Presented virtually, the Special Project of the Year award recognized our Community Lead Response Program.

The program has become a model for other U.S. cities by achieving several initiatives such as:

- Creating a comprehensive community engagement strategy
- Replacing almost 8,000 public and over 5,000 private lead service lines over the past four years
- Providing, on average, over 10,000 free lead testing kits and 4,000 free water filter pitchers on an annual basis

The Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority thanks the March of Dimes for recognizing our Community Lead Response as Special Project of the Year.

PGH2O

We remain committed to replacing all lead lines by 2026 and assuring that safe, clean water is one less worry for Pittsburgh moms.

For more information, visit lead.pgh2o.com.

March of Dimes is an organization that promotes the health and welfare of moms and babies through advocacy, education, and research. Learn more about the March of Dimes mission on their website at marchofdimes.org.

"I am honored to accept the Special Project of the Year award for our Community Lead Response Program," said Executive Director Will Pickering. "The project title is fitting as this has been a community-led effort from our employees, elected officials, consultants, contractors, and customers. Thank you to the March of Dimes Event Leadership for recognizing our commitment to continue to provide safe drinking water for moms and babies."



# PGH2O IN THE COMMUNITY

Due to restrictions on events from COVID-19, in-person meetings have been suspended to protect public health.

Allegheny West Civic Council Community Meeting October 13 Virtual events

Bunkerhill Street Water Main Replacement Project Meeting October 13 Virtual meeting

MonOakland Mobility Public Meeting October 21 Virtual meeting

To schedule a future presentation in your community, go to: pgh2o.com/request-us-event

# Imagine a Day Without Water

On October 21, 2020, PWSA joined the sixth annual 'Imagine a Day Without Water,' to raise awareness and educate America about the value of water to our communities.

On this nationwide day of advocacy, we recognized the importance of maintaining our water infrastructure. The investment we will make over the next several years will improve water quality, safety, and the reliability of our water system for current and future generations of Pittsburgh residents and businesses. <a href="https://www.pgh2o.com/value-water">www.pgh2o.com/value-water</a>.

**#ValueWater** 



# 10th Street Reopens After Nearly One Year of Repairs

10th Street, between Penn Avenue and Liberty Avenue, reopened to traffic after a major sinkhole that collapsed in October of last year.

The effort to repair all underground infrastructure and rebuild the street was an extensive coordination effort taken on by the City of Pittsburgh, PWSA, Duquesne Light, Pittsburgh Allegheny County Thermal (PACT), Peoples Gas, and Comcast. PWSA quickly took on the roll of clearing the debris from the sinkhole and rebuilding the street.

We cleared approximately 2,500 tons of debris from the 48-inch sewer running down 10th Street to the Allegheny River outfall point, utilizing a vactor machine sitting on a river barge and a diver to remove debris from the river bed.

A PWSA contractor then took the lead on removing all debris from the sinkhole, giving space for other utilities to repair damaged infrastructure. As part of the rebuilding process, we also installed a new

bulkhead to the sewer manhole that was damaged when the street collapsed. After all repairs were complete, they filled the hole with stone, replaced bricks, and poured new concrete to reopen the street to car and pedestrian traffic.

At the end of the project, crews completed the following:

- Added approximately 746 tons of stone backfill to the sinkhole
- Replaced 2,097 square feet of bricks
- Poured approximately 395 tons of concrete
- Logged over 1,100 hours of work to complete the project

We would like to thank the businesses, residents, and visitors to the Cultural District for their patience and understanding while we worked to bring 10th Street back!



BEFORE: PWSA construction crews clearing out the

AFTER: 10th Street reopened to traffic.



# Media and Press Releases

#### MEDIA COVERAGE

Low-income customers will get help with their bills in PWSA proposal for a rate increase, Post-Gazette

PWSA is now offering new lead line reimbursement program, South Pittsburgh Reporter

Audrey Murrell to Serve on Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority Board of Directors, Pittwire

Why Does Frick Park Have Fire Hydrants?, WESA

Covid-19 Challenges & Investing in Infrastructure, Water and Wastes Digest

Schenley Park plan touted as 'project of a generation'; residents can weigh in on controversial electric shuttle, Post-Gazette

#### PRESS RELEASES

PWSA Announces Rate Settlement with Public Utility Commission, September 30

PWSA Unveils New Lead Service Line Reimbursement Program, October 1

PWSA Receives Award for Community Lead Response Program, October 5

Water Education Keeps Your Class Engaged, October 6

Imagine a Day Without Water 2020, October 21

# **Employee Spotlight**

Our water quality and compliance teams provide water of the highest standards to customers.



Compliance Team pictured from left: Environmental ompliance Coordinator, Frank Davis; Administrative Assistant, Aimee Butch; Scientist I, Adam Votedian; Senior Manager, Water Quality/Environmental Compliance, Faith Wydra; and Scientist II, Daniel Thiessen.

Water Quality Team not pictured: Chemist I's, Erich Schafrick, Paris Bundrige, Robert Gomez, and Jonathan Seward; Chemist II, John Carroll; Project Manager, Linda Leopold; and Water Quality Data Manager Michael Czvoinski.

The scientists and chemists that make up the team are integral to safeguarding the quality of drinking water for all customers. Made up of two distinct divisions, compliance and water quality, the team has eleven members.

The water quality division is tasked with laboratory testing and research to monitor chemical balances in the water. Critical duties require conducting field sampling tests, lab analysis, and investigation into our water infrastructure. The compliance team assists with water sampling and testing but mainly focuses on compliance reporting to oversight agencies.

Erich Schafrick, who works as a Chemist I, recognizes the importance of testing levels in water. Erich primarily conducts quality control on our Highland Park Reservoir to routinely test pH levels.

Senior Manager, Water Quality/ Environmental Compliance, Faith Wydra stated,

"We have the most important and most rewarding job at PWSA. We have to ensure the safety of our population by providing safe water through rigorous testing and monitoring of our systems." Dan Thiessen, Scientist II, at PWSA specializes in writing compliance reports and agrees that the water quality and compliance teams have one of PWSA's most rewarding jobs.

"The data that we track and report makes sure the water that is distributed by PWSA is safe for people to drink and enjoy."

By recording and submitting data and information, PWSA is able to track and analyze those reports to help improve water quality.

Since PWSA is a public water provider, several government programs set specific standards with reporting requirements. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is our primary regulatory agency. To accommodate the DEP requirements, the compliance team routinely conducts inspections with agency members and submits reports and data to the review agencies.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the compliance team has conducted virtual inspections with DEP regulators at treatment sites to provide photographic evidence to the agency. These virtual inspections are an example of our compliance team's adaptability to meet requirements set forth by the oversight agencies and maintain a safe workspace at the treatment sites.

The water quality and compliance teams have several new and exciting initiatives to improve water quality. One example is a pilot plant. Here, the team can research and test new chemicals and trials for possible DEP and other governmental agencies' approval. These trials allow PWSA scientists to improve the processes and chemicals used to treat our water.

Considered by the team to be one of the most rewarding positions at PWSA, the water quality and compliance team aim to keep the public safe through testing and reporting. The abundance of testing that the team conducts should make customers feel safe knowing that the water provided by PWSA consistently meets requirements set forth by government regulators.

When problems arise with PWSA infrastructure the compliance and water teams are quick to respond and ensure that safe and healthy water is available to all residents.

"We ensure the safety of our population by providing safe water through rigorous testing and monitoring of our systems."

PWSA Senior Manager, Water Quality/Environmental Compliance, Faith Wydra

# **Job Postings**

Interested in working at PWSA? We are looking for dedicated and talented people to join our team.

**Director of Water Quality**Administration

**Senior Counsel - Environmental** Administration Law

**Senior Group Manager, Stormwater** Engineering & Construction

**Senior Group Manager, Wastewater** Engineering & Construction

**Project Manager**Engineering & Construction

**Associate Project Manager** Engineering & Construction

**Inspector II**Engineering & Construction

Plant Operator Water Quality & Production

**Electrician**Water Quality & Production

**Inspector II**Field Operations

**Steamfitter**Field Operations

**Plumber** Field Operations

Customer Service Representative (Full-time and Part-time)

**Customer Service** 









New Hires

WELCOME ABOARD!

Sammie Walker

Laborer

Promotions congratulations!

Austin Biondo
Sewer Service Foreman
Robert Hamilton

Laborer

Visit pgh2o.com/about-us/careers to learn more.

# District Report: Water Upgrades, Green Infrastructure, and Sewer Rehab in District 3

Allentown, Arlington, Arlington Heights, Beltzhoover, Central Oakland, Knoxville, Mt. Oliver, Oakcliffe, South Side Slopes, South Oakland, and St. Clair.

#### Water Upgrades

District 3, covering portions of the south end of Pittsburgh and portions of Oakland across the Monongahela River, has been the site of several lead service line and water main projects within the last two years. To determine the optimal locations to find and replace lead service lines, PWSA assesses historical construction records, Census data, and blood lead records from the Allegheny County Health Department. These data points are overlaid and weighted to ultimately determine which areas of Pittsburgh contractors should inspect and replace lead lines, where found.

This analysis resulted in several work areas targeting District 3 neighborhoods, like the South Side Slopes, South Side Flats, Allentown, and Oakland. Over the course of 2018 and 2019, PWSA has made the following investment in the District:

- Addressed a grand total of 2,063 locations for lead service line replacement, with a 71% response rate from residents to complete work at their properties.
- Of those approximately 2,000 sites, PWSA replaced 813 public lead service lines and 572 private lead service lines.
- This work combined to an approximately \$8.7 million investment

in the area, based on the average cost of a lead service line replacement. In 2020, PWSA continued work in the District in the form of water main replacement projects. Water main replacement is a more efficient process as it ensures the street is outfitted with a new water main and all lead service lines are also replaced during the work. An impressive 24 water mains have been selected in the South Side Slopes neighborhood, with many streets already completed! For more information on this project, visit pgh2o.com/SouthSideSlopesWaterMains.

In addition to the South Side Slopes, PWSA has made an important water main upgrade on Bates Street. Crews replaced approximately 1,500 feet of water main on this busy street during nighttime construction to ensure reliable water service for years to come.

#### **Stormwater Investment**

In collaboration with the City of Pittsburgh's South Side Park Stormwater Improvement Project, PWSA is providing stormwater management and green infrastructure within South Side Park. The stormwater management will consist of underground detention systems, natural grass swales and bio-retention facilities. These stormwater facilities will capture and detain the first 1.5-inches of stormwater runoff over nine acres of park impervious area. These facilities are anticipated to increase capacity in our downstream

sewer system and reduce combined sewer overflows (CSO) to the Monongahela River by 6-7 million gallons per year. PWSA and the City have just finished 90% design drawings with final design being completed in mid-December 2020. The anticipated construction start date is April 2021.

#### **Planned Sewer Rehabilitation**

PWSA's engineering and construction team are planning their sewer rehabilitation work for next year, which includes approximately five miles in the South Side Slopes area! While five miles are currently slated, televised footage of the sewers and other analysis will ultimately determine which sewers need investment.

Sewer rehabilitation involves a tailored approach to bring the sewer back into working condition while minimizing excavations. Methods include sewer lining, which involves curing a reinforcing sleeve inside the pipe to repair small cracks, as well as some limited excavations and repairs. Work on these sewers will begin in 2021.



Styrene sewer liner being installed via a manhole.



# 2020 Capital Spending

Looking closer at our Capital Improvement Program.

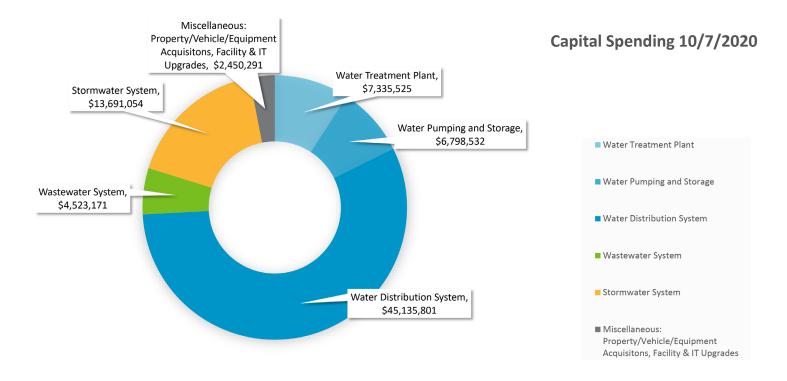


The chart below highlights the categories that make up our Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP is a strategic planning and budget document that describes the planning and construction projects we will advance over a five-year period. Most of the projects pertain to the improvements we are making to our water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. It also includes a small category for other miscellaneous projects that include vehicle and fleet management, property acquisition as well as facility and technology upgrades.

As of October 7th, we have spent \$79,934,373 on infrastructure improvements throughout the year. The projects in each category reflect the variety of work we are doing throughout Pittsburgh. Many of the projects within our CIP will help to improve safety and operational reliability and ensure that we are meeting or exceeding all water quality and regulatory requirements.

Some of the projects where the most amount of spending occurred in October include improvements to the Herron Hill Reservoir, sewer system improvements within the 31st Ward, replacing catch basins and storm inlets, and ongoing work to improve our water distribution and treatment systems. For more information visit www.pgh2o.com/CIP.

The photo to the left features the Herron Hill Reservoir and Tank prior to construction.



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# **Digging Into Development**

## Did you know that PWSA has a development services team?

This cross-departmental group handles a wide variety of functions that support private development within PWSA's service area. This new monthly article dig deep into what development services means to the organization and our customers.

Generally, the team specializes in guiding applicants through the permitting process. They verify a project meets PWSA minimum requirements by reviewing and issuing permits. They are here to help answer questions, resolve issues, and should always be your first stop when looking for information from PWSA for your project.

What do we mean when we say permits? Any new construction requiring water and/or sewer service, existing properties undergoing renovations that require new service or increasing service, and extensions of public water and sewer lines to serve a new development require permits from PWSA.

PWSA issues three basic permit types: over-the-counter, residential, and development. Our over-the-counter permits typically support a construction project such as fire hydrant flow tests and temporary meters to use on construction sites. Residential permits are issued for single-family homes. Development permits include projects like multi-family homes and large scale mixed-use and commercial developments. We will teach you more about permits but if you can't wait, visit our website at pgh2o.com/developers-contractors-vendors/permits

Over the next several months, we will introduce you to the development services team, their functions, and provide some interesting statistics. If you have specific topics you would like to hear about in this article, send an email to jtreaster@pgh2o.com.



PWSA crews working at construction site

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# **New Billing System Coming Soon**

As part of ongoing enhancements to better serve customers, we are planning to launch a new billing and payment system in January 2021. We are partnering with a new bill-pay vendor, KUBRA, to implement improved processes and platforms for mailed bills, online billing, and a variety of payment options. Our goal is to make receiving and paying your bill more streamlined, easy, and convenient.

Billing statements will look very similar to the current bill design, with a few small changes for improved processing. For mailed bills, statements with the same billing address will be bundled into larger envelopes for customers with multiple accounts.

The new cash payment system will work at more retail locations so that customers have more options for convenient cash payments. KUBRA's EZ-PAY portal will help customers make quick, one-time payments by credit card, debit card, or bank account. In addition, customers enrolled in paperless billing will be able to easily view their bill, make one-time payments, set up recurring payments, and manage notifications all on our new online billing and payment portal.







# Keep Leaves Out of Storm Drains

Autumn brings brilliant colors to Pittsburgh's trees, but fallen leaves can cause challenges for our sewers and streams.

Leaves left on the ground can block and clog storm drains, contributing to street flooding when it rains. Excess leaves can also cause nutrient pollution and oxygen depletion in our streams and rivers when carried there through storm drains and sewer pipes, which harms fish and other wildlife.

Do your part to help protect storm drains and streams

- Do not rake or blow leaves off your property into the street
- Do not pile leaves or other yard waste near storm drains.
- Place your leaves in a bag for curbside yard debris collection or compost them at home.
- If you have a mulching lawnmower, use it to recycle leaves and their nutrients into your lawn.
- If you see leaves or other debris on top of a storm drain grate, carefully remove them and dispose of them properly if safe to do so. However, never attempt to reach inside a storm drain or lift the grate.

If you see a clogged or broken storm drain, please cal our 24/7 Dispatch at 412-255-2423 (Press 1), contact us @pgh2o on Twitter, or fill out our Report an Issue webform so that we can send out a crew.



Learn more at pgh2o.com/reducing-stormwater-pollution and pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/leaf-waste.

#### **PGH2O CONNECT**



# **Customer Assistance** Program

Our Customer Assistance Programs are designed to provide financial relief for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their water and sewer bill.

For more information about our programs, including the Winter Shut-off Moratorium, Bill Discount, Cash Assistance, and Free Private Lead Line Replacements, please visit pgh2o.com/CAP or call Dollar Energy Fund at 866.762.2348.



# Do We Have Your Number?

Did you know that we call customers during water emergencies and outages? It is important to verify that we have the best number to reach you. You can even add multiple numbers for your account, so your entire household is informed about our work.

HOW DO I UPDATE MY CONTACT INFORMATION?

Call PWSA Customer Service: 412.255.2423 (Press 5)

Or visit our website: pgh2o.com/pay

PWSA is committed to maintaining and protecting the confidentiality and privacy of our customers and will not share your information with third party vendors.

Board of Directors

**PGHAO** 

#### **Currents Contributors**

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#### **Customer Service**

**T** 412.255.2423 (Press 5) **F** 412.255.2475

**Emergency Dispatch** 412.255.2423 (Press 1) Available 24/7