

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

Some water customers have complained about the assistance they received from Water Services related to unexpected high-water use. The department made significant investments in customer service over the past several years. It is important to know whether customer service resources meet customers' needs and whether there are areas for improvement.




Objective

Does the Water Services Department provide resources to customers to address unexpected high-water use?

Background

This audit of the Water Services Department focuses on resources the department provides to help customers understand and address unexpected high water use on their account.

Water Services' Resources to Help Address Unexpected High Water Use

-  Customer service representatives
-  Department website, kcwater.us
-  High water use email notifications

The report defines unexpected high water use as a significant increase in a customer's water use, but the customer is not aware of using additional water.

An unexpected, large increase in water consumption may signal a change in customer behavior, a failure in the water meter or a problem with service lines, outdoor irrigation systems, or household fixtures like toilets or faucets.

[Click here to view the full report.](#)

PERFORMANCE AUDIT – April 2023

Better Resources Needed to Assist Customers with Unexpected High Water Use

What We Found

Water Services' management should improve resources available for customers to understand and address unexpected high water use.



The department's customer service representatives (CSRs), who serve as a major resource to customers with unexpected high water use, need additional training resources. In the judgmental sample of customer service calls related to unexpected high water use we listened to, CSRs were inconsistent in communicating their training about water leaks and inconsistent in their decision making about whether to schedule a service call to a customer's property.

CSRs had difficulty effectively explaining to customers how they concluded that the high use was not the water meter or something for which the department was responsible. CSR's also need additional training materials describing decision making steps to follow when recommending a plumber. Finally, CSRs did not consistently use their training to encourage customers to monitor their own water use.



Water Services has an opportunity to improve the content and accessibility of information on its website related to unexpected high water use. Of the information topics we identified as helpful to customers experiencing unexpected high water use, more than half of the information was not addressed, or only partially addressed on the current website. About half of the related topics that are available on the website were at least somewhat difficult to find.



Water Services' customers can sign up on the department website to receive automated email notifications when they experience large increases in water use but the high water use notifications significantly under reported percentage increases to customers and the automated system inconsistently sent notifications within the expected timeframes, and some notifications were not sent at all.

What We Recommend (full list on back)

We make recommendations to assist customers who experience unexpected high water use by improving customer service representatives' performance through additional training resources; expanding and making it easier to find relevant information on the Water Services' website; and monitoring the accuracy and timeliness of high water use notifications.

Management agreed with nine recommendations and partially agreed with two recommendations.



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Recommendations	Management Agreement
1. The director of water services should expand CSR’s training materials about sources of leaks and how to identify them, and define “leak inspection” and “internal check.”.	Agree
2. The director of water services should develop a leak investigation standard operating procedure for CSRs’ reference when answering customer calls.	Agree
3. The director of water services should provide training to CSRs on the new training materials and standard operating procedure for leaks.	Agree
4. The director of water services should conduct periodic recurrent training for CSRs on identifying and resolving leaks.	Agree
5. The director of water services should develop a leak checklist that CSRs could provide as a reference to customers.	Agree In Part
6. The director of water services should outline a decision making process CSRs should follow when determining whether Water Services should schedule a service call to inspect customer locations for leaks or meter performance problems.	Agree In Part
7. The director of water services should train CSRs to describe their decision process for dispatching servicers to customers.	Agree
8. The director of water services should expand CSR training materials to describe a step-by-step process that CSRs should follow and discuss with customers before recommending a plumber.	Agree
<p>9. The director of the water services department should re-train CSRs on advising customers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register on Water Services’ website to view and monitor their water use. • Review their data online while on the phone with the CSR. • Sign-up for high water usage notifications. 	Agree
10. The director of the water services department should incorporate into the Water Services website the helpful topics and resources identified in the audit and ensure resources are organized in places on the website that are logical and easy to access.	Agree
11. The director of the water services department should develop a process to monitor the accuracy and timeliness of e-alert notifications sent to customers.	Agree

