

# Click Here to **Simplify** Your Utility Bill



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If you visit the city of Cedar Park, Texas' website, you will be warmly welcomed not only by an appealing design featuring earthy colors framed by cedar branch graphics, but also by a friendly mission statement that reads: "Our mission is to provide accurate water and wastewater billing information for our customers through a knowledgeable and friendly service staff."

This message is courtesy of Cedar Park's Utility Billing Department, which has made it its mission to ensure that its residents receive the best service possible for the maintenance of billing for city utilities.

The mission statement alone makes me want to say "Farewell, Chicago; hello, Cedar Park."

Mushy feelings aside, Cedar Park's customer service approach should be commended. And it is not alone.

Utilities all over the country are opting to provide better customer service in the form of personable websites featuring easy-to-navigate water and sewer billing. They enable customers to pay and manage their utility accounts over the Internet in an easy, convenient and secure environment. Some have expanded their services to include e-notifications, which inform customers

when their water bills are available, and allow them to review their daily water consumption.

Helping customers understand pricing and water use information, including how their use compares with that of the utility's average residential user, allows customers to make educated decisions about their water usage and helps promote smart conservation practices in general.

Smart phone applications also are gaining ground. Led by electric utilities, the trend is expanding to include water. A new app designed for iOS and Android helps users analyze their use of energy, water and gas, which also results in financial savings, according to [www.energyrefuge.com](http://www.energyrefuge.com).

The mobile trend is expanding beyond North America as well. As of last year, customers of Rio de Janeiro water utility company CEDAE can pay their water bills using smart phones.

CEDAE, which provides water services to approximately 9 million people in Rio de Janeiro, wanted to provide its increasingly mobile customer base with convenient online account services. A long-time innovator in Brazil's water utility industry, CEDAE saw more of its customers using mobile devices and decided to offer direct online access to the company's services.

According to CEDAE chairman Wagner Victor, "The mobile solution has enabled CEDAE to undertake a bold initiative that not only helps streamline our operations, but also gives our customers more flexibility in managing their personal business."

Technology innovations certainly have come a long way in just the last five years. I am happy to see that some of these advancements not only are starting to make waves in the water industry, but also are helping to simplify and solidify customer-utility relationships.



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*Water & Wastes Digest* is published exclusively for the 85,000+ decision makers in the municipal and industrial water, wastewater and water pollution industries. These individuals actively design, specify, buy, operate and maintain the equipment, chemicals and services used for water treatment. Editorial content in this audited publication highlights new products and technologies concerning the supply, collection, treatment and distribution of drinking water; the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and hazardous waste pollution control. A product directory is included in the annual June Buyer's Guide.

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