SERVICE AREA PROFILE

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND CLIMATE

The City of El Paso, the sociopolitical center of El Paso County and West Texas, has a distinct culture, climate and supply of resources that makes water consumption unique among similar municipalities in the desert southwest of the United States. El Paso is in the northern extreme of the Chihuahuan Desert, and lies on the frontier of three states, two countries and three diverse water supplies. The Upper Rio Grande Valley forms a natural crossing between the Chihuahuan Mountains to the south and the Franklin Mountains to the north. The region, consisting of El Paso, Texas; Ciudad Juárez, Mexico; and Las Cruces, New Mexico; is home to more than 2 million.

The city’s name may be traced to the Spanish El Paso Del Norte, or the “pass of the north.” During the 16th century, conquistadors such as Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and Don Antonio de Espejo led an expedition through the area in the name of the Spanish crown, and were met with resistance by natives. Most explorers passed through, searching for the fabulously rich Seven Cities of Cibola and chasing legends of lost gold. In 1998, the city marked the quadricentennial celebration of those who stayed, marking the 400th anniversary of Don Juan de Oñate’s crossing of the Paso del Norte, forming the first permanent settlement in the area.

That year, the El Paso settlers marked the first Thanksgiving in North America, about 23 years before the better-known feasts in Massachusetts in 1621. When the feasting ended, Oñate took possession of all lands watered by the Rio Grande. Oñate’s El Paso would become a major metropolis in Texas three centuries later. The “Sun City” nickname is well earned, as El Paso enjoys an average daily temperature of 70 degrees and more than 300 days of sunshine each year. The city plays host to the annual Sun Bowl college football game – second only to the Rose Bowl as the oldest continuous bowl game – as well as a college basketball tournament and parade also associated with the Sun Bowl. Low humidity and an average annual rainfall of 9 inches make the Sun City a yearlong attraction. El Paso – one of only two counties of the 254 in Texas located in the Mountain Time zone – is representative of several topographies.

The city’s average elevation is 3,762 feet above sea level, climbing as high as 7,200 feet. The nearly 250 square miles of incorporated land is part of the junction between Mexico, New Mexico and Texas, and also includes lush farmland along the Rio Grande. The river has been tamed from its historical might.
Called the Rio Bravo in Mexico, the Rio Grande originates with snowpack and snowmelt from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. It is also the natural boundary between the United States and Mexico from El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico. Two major treaties resolved disputes between countries and states over Rio Grande water rights.

The Convention between the United States and Mexico on the Equitable Distribution of Waters of the Rio Grande was signed May 21, 1906, by President Theodore Roosevelt. This agreement is administered by the International Boundary and Water Commission.

The Rio Grande Compact is an interstate compact signed in 1938 between Colorado, New Mexico and Texas and approved by the United States Congress to equitably apportion the waters of the Rio Grande Basin.

To meet the needs of the water allocations, the U.S. Department of Interior’s Reclamation Service (now Bureau of Reclamation) built the Rio Grande Project, capturing spring runoff and summer rains to be held in one of the world’s largest man-made lakes (Elephant Butte) and a major infrastructure system for water delivery. The project was authorized in 1905, and Elephant Butte opened in 1916. However, the project’s final features were not implemented until the early 1950s. The system is comprised of: a 300-foot tall Elephant Butte Dam and its smaller companion Caballo Dam, six diversion dams, 141 miles of canals, 462 miles of laterals, and 457 miles of drains. A small hydroelectric plant was part of the original project but sold to a private electric company.

The Rio Grande flows through narrow gorges requiring diversion and canal systems for three valleys: the Rincón, Mesilla and El Paso. The Rio Grande Project furnishes a full irrigation water supply for about 178,000 acres of land in Doña Ana, Sierra and Socorro counties in south central New Mexico and the City and County of El Paso. Sixty percent of project lands are in New Mexico, and the remaining 40 percent are in Texas. Supplemental drainage provides water for 18,000 acres in the Hudspeth County’s Conservation and Reclamation District.

**DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMICS**

As of 2018, El Paso is the sixth largest city in Texas and the 20th largest city in the United States with a population of about 680,000. El Paso County has an estimated population of 840,000 people with 1.3 million in El Paso’s sister city of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. With a population of more than 220,000 in Southern New Mexico, the El Paso region constitutes the largest international border community in the world.

At the end of 2019, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the total non-farm employment for the El Paso area at 324,700. Average median income was estimated at $44,431. Unemployment was at a record low of 3.7% at the end of 2019. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, El Paso payrolls grew at an annualized rate of .7 percent, or by about 1,940 jobs. The strongest contributor to employment was the educational and
health services sector. Infrastructure improvements and commercial developments boosted construction employment. However, trade and transportation saw declines.

The El Paso Tri-State region is the fifth largest manufacturing center in North America. Twenty-five percent of all trade between Mexico and the U.S. travels through the El Paso’s four international ports of entry. U.S. and Mexican production and manufacturing trends are important to the local economy because of cross-border manufacturing relationships. Roughly half of maquiladoras in Ciudad Juarez are related to the auto industry. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, U.S. and Mexico both saw declines in industrial production during 2019 (of 1.1% and 2% respectively). Economists are closely watching the auto sector, in particular, as U.S. auto and light truck production contracted from 10.9 million units in 2018 to 8.8 million units in 2019. Yet, Mexico’s maquiladoras continued to add jobs, although at a slower rate than earlier in the year.

According to Forbes Magazine, El Paso ranks among one of the best cities for income growth. The future of manufacturing in El Paso will benefit from the attraction of research and development opportunities created by significant events in military and health care that have changed the dynamics of the regional economy.

**Fort Bliss**

The Fort Bliss military installation continues to be a major force in the El Paso economy and is the single largest employer in the region. As a result of base realignment and closure (BRAC), the installation grew from 10,000 to 34,000 soldiers between 2005 and 2012. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts in 2017, Fort Bliss directly employed more than 48,000 employees (military and civilian personnel). Fort Bliss serves and supports all branches of the military. It is a major mounted maneuver training post and, in 2011, became home to the 1st Armored Division Fort Bliss’ Army Forces Command has three brigade combat teams, a combat support hospital, military police, training, network operations, reserve training and mobilization. Fort Bliss continues to make progress on the construction of the new William Beaumont Army Medical Center complex. Fort Bliss is a wholesale customer of El Paso Water and provides Fort Bliss with 25% of its water needs and all of its wastewater needs.

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**Major Employers (excluding retail & government)**
- T&T Staff Management L.P.
- The Hospitals of Providence/Tenet Healthcare
- Alorica
- Las Palmas del Sol Healthcare
- GS Services
- RM Personnel
- ReadyOne Industries
- Dish Network
- El Paso Electric

*Source: City of El Paso, Economic & International Development, December 2019*
The University of Texas at El Paso

El Paso is home to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the second oldest member of the University of Texas System. It was founded in 1913 and became part of the UT system in 1919. The UTEP campus architecture is derived from the temples in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. According to the UTEP website, the university offers 71 Bachelor’s, 74 Master’s and 20 Doctoral degrees. For the 2019-2020 school year, UTEP’s enrollment was 25,177.

UTEP has been recognized as a top minority degree producer by Diverse: Issues in Higher Education magazine. Eighty percent of the University’s students are Hispanic, and 83 percent are from El Paso. As of 2018, the school ranked Number 5 in awarding undergraduate degrees to Hispanics in engineering while the school ranked Number 1 in conferring both master’s and doctoral degrees to Hispanics in engineering. UTEP has also been named one of the top five Hispanic serving institutions to receive federal research money, according to the National Science Foundation. UTEP recently gained top-tier research institution status.

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center-El Paso

The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso is comprised of three schools: the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

- The Paul L. Foster School of Medicine is the first four-year medical school on the U.S./Mexico border. As of 2013, the school was estimated to have improved the local economy by $1.31 billion. It is expected to be among the catalysts for achieving first-rate medical care in the region, training more physicians and delivering quality health care to El Pasoans.
- The Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing was established in 2011 to counteract a long-term shortage of nurses to provide care in this medically underserved area. In 2013, the school received full accreditation for its baccalaureate degree program from the commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.
- The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences opened in 2013 to educate the next generation of scientists and health-related professionals by providing a dynamic research environment oriented to satisfy the learning needs of a multicultural group of students.
- Texas Tech announced in 2016, it would also open a Dental School in 2020 as part of an effort to address a critical shortage of dentists in West Texas.

For decades, El Paso has been ranked in the top tier of safest cities for similarly sized cities (over 500,000). In 2019, El Paso was ranked sixth by Safewise.

El Paso consistently ranks among the most affordable major cities by multiple sources with a cost of living that is approximately 81.4 percent of the national average (for 2019). Housing is the biggest factor in the cost of living
with a median home price of $130,700. In 2018 El Paso was ranked by Forbes magazine as first among 13 cities in the United States where you can live comfortably on less than $60,000 a year.

**Downtown Revitalization**

The City of El Paso's redevelopment and revitalization efforts of downtown El Paso have gained national recognition. Following the restoration of the Plaza Theatre (2006), and the opening of Southwest University Park (2014), new hotels, office buildings and even residential buildings have opened, and more are in store. In 2018, Downtown and Central El Paso saw the return of streetcar services. Construction barrels and cranes around downtown El Paso are signs that growth is underway.
UTILITY PROFILE

HISTORY OF EL PASO WATER
Although the utility has been around in some form or another for as long as the City of El Paso has, it was not until 1952, when the Public Service Board (PSB) was created, that El Paso Water (EPWater) took its present form. With the leadership and foresight of Mayor Fred Hervey to address El Paso's water demands and make water issues as apolitical as possible, the PSB was created through city ordinance. El Paso City Ordinance No. 752, adopted May 22, 1952, established a five-member board of trustees known as the PSB. It was given complete management and control of the city's water system. The ordinance was later amended to increase the size of the board to seven members. The board of trustees consists of the mayor of the City of El Paso and six residents of El Paso County, Texas. With the exception of the mayor, all other trustees are appointed by the City Council and serve staggered four-year terms. The PSB meets the second Wednesday of each month, except during holiday seasons, at the utility's administrative office.

For financial reporting purposes, EPWater is considered a component unit of the City of El Paso. With oversight of the PSB, EPWater operates and manages the utility on behalf of the City of El Paso. The PSB adopts an annual combined operating, capital and debt service budget with associated rates and fees for services; and also issues updates to its Rules and Regulations, which carry the force of law. The utility does not issue ad valorem property taxes against an assessed County of El Paso valuation (2017) of more than $50 billion. Instead, the PSB recovers the cost of providing water and wastewater services primarily through user charges. The utility endeavors to provide the highest quality water and wastewater services to its customers at the most reasonable cost possible.

SOURCE OF SUPPLY
El Paso uses groundwater and surface water for its potable supply. In 2019, the city produced about 116,000 acre-feet for the year of potable water for customers. The groundwater sources — underground aquifers tapped by wells — included the Hueco Bolson, which supplied 56 percent of total demand, and the Mesilla Bolson, with 21 percent. Bolson is Spanish for “pocket”. Twenty-three percent was supplied by surface water from the Rio Grande. El Paso also uses reclaimed water to supply non-potable demands. More than 7,600 acre-feet per year of reclaimed water was used for non-potable demands, including turf irrigation and industrial uses. The groundwater capacity is approximately 170 million gallons per day (MGD), including desalinated brackish groundwater, and surface water capacity is 100 MGD. The amount of surface water available each year varies, depending on drought conditions. In the event of limited surface water because of drought conditions, the city will pump more groundwater from its wells.
Historically, EPWater relied heavily on groundwater because it could be pumped virtually at drinking water quality standards, whereas river water requires treatment to remove sediment, naturally occurring organic matter and other compounds. However, because groundwater supplies are invariably finite, the PSB has engaged in a multipronged solution to address and ensure El Paso’s future water supply. The PSB owns land in the county and leases additional acres, both for the purposes of water rights. In addition, EPWater has third-party agreements with the El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which allows for the purchase of additional surface water to supply the Jonathan W. Rogers Water Treatment Plant. In addition, the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant is designed to treat brackish groundwater. The desalination plant, built in 2007 in far east El Paso, can produce up to 27.5 MGD of safe drinking water. A multiphase expansion plan has begun with the first phase designed to increase production capacity to 31 MGD and a second phase is planned for the future to potentially increase capacity up to 42 MGD.

Water Use

El Paso is in the Chihuahuan Desert, and water use fluctuates with the weather. It peaks in the summer when days are typically long, hot and dry. Weather also affects surface water flows, which provided only 42 percent of the municipal water supply in 2018. The surface water treated in El Paso comes primarily from snowmelt runoff in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. It is stored in the Elephant Butte Reservoir and released during the irrigation season. However, wind, above-average temperatures and below-average precipitation may reduce runoff. This affects the amount of water stored in the reservoir and what is available to EPWater. In 2019, an unexpected allotment increase in surface river water of 65,264-acre feet compared to the minimum allotment of 15,000-acre feet that was expected and budgeted. In comparison, only 10,000 AF of river water was used in 2013, a year of severe river drought.

Groundwater has been El Paso’s primary source of supply for many decades, and heavy pumping led to declining groundwater levels in the Hueco Bolson. Through a combination of water supply diversification and conservation, the rate of decline has been reduced.
WATER CONSERVATION

With its sunny days and mild temperatures, El Paso is a desert oasis. However, since rainfall averages only 9 inches per year, water conservation is essential to the city’s economy, environment and quality of life.

EPWater began an aggressive water conservation program in 1991 and has reduced water consumption from more than 200 gallons per customer per day (GPCD) to 125 GPCD in 2019, beating the 2020 target of 130 GPCD. El Paso’s population has grown by 170,000 since 1994, but it’s notable that overall potable water production is down even as population has gone up.

Under the state water plan, EPWater has set targets to reduce consumption by about 3 GPCD units per decade. The decrease in consumption achieved since the 1990s has been the result of education, enforcement of the city’s conservation ordinance, changes to the plumbing code and various incentives and rebates offered to residential customers by the utility. Rate increases have also contributed to customer water use reductions.

Water Conservation Ordinance

EPWater’s Water Conservation Ordinance was adopted by City Council in 1991. The ordinance encourages sound conservation practices and specifies:

- Landscape water days (odd/even)
- Watering restriction times (April – September)
- Limits for at-home car washing
- Requirements to repair leaks within 5 days
- Requirements for the installation of efficient plumbing fixtures

In 1995, the city established landscape requirements for commercial properties, including water conservation restrictions and beautification guidelines. Additional updates in 2001 prohibited sprinkler-irrigated turf areas in parkways. Landscape requirements for commercial properties may be found under Title 18 – Building and Construction, Chapter 18.46 Landscape and Chapter 18.47 Irrigation Systems.

Incentives

Over the years, EPWater has provided a variety of conservation incentive programs that have positively impacted residential water consumption with annual water savings shown below. Most of the residential programs have now ended given the gains achieved and new efficiency requirements for new homes. Through the Certified Water Partner program introduced in 2017, EPWater has shifted its focus to certain commercial and institutional sectors to recognize best practices in water efficiency and incentivize improvements among those customers identified as having low water efficiency based on sector assessments of local customers.
Education and Partnerships

An important part of the conservation program today is education and outreach to build a conservation culture in El Paso. The Carlos M. Ramirez TecH₂O Water Resources Learning Center offers visitors bilingual information and interactive exhibits to increase awareness of total water management in the Chihuahuan Desert. The TecH₂O Learning Center is a hub for teachers and students, with programs that include:

- Field trips and in-school classroom presentations that reach around 5,000 students annually
- Teacher workshops on water topics attracting about 100 local teachers annually
- Multiple family-oriented signature events attracting 1,000 people annually

The utility’s water conservation mascot, Willie the Water Drop, is a popular attraction at schools and at various community events.

Customer and Community Outreach

Outreach programs designed to help residential customers with conservation include:

- TecH₂O WaterSmart workshops, helping customers understand best practices for irrigation, plant and tree selection, mulching, rain harvesting and more.
- Lectures, conferences and other events on regional water issues.
- Public service campaigns, which include publicity through media and social media and a quarterly conservation newsletter.

Rate Structure

In 1991, EPWater implemented an inclining rate structure where the unit price increases as water consumption increases. The graph above illustrates how the utility uses pricing as both a demand management tool and a way to generate additional revenue.

Municipal water utilities use rate structures and pricing signals as a water management tool to decrease non-discretionary water usage. Many regions facing water shortages have implemented large rate hikes in order to manage water use. The responsiveness to these rate increases is measured by the price elasticity of water demand. Because water is a precious resource with no close substitutes, the price elasticity of water demand is very low, or price inelastic. This means that as the price of water rises, increases in revenue will more than offset a resulting decrease in consumption, indicating that consumers are relatively unresponsive to small changes in the price of water. In order to send the right price signal to consumers, many water utilities have adopted large rate increases in order to get the desired response of decreased consumption.
Price elasticity of water also depends on other factors, such as precipitation and temperature, household income (the higher the household income, the higher the level of water consumption) and the implementation of conservation outreach programs.
Reclaimed water has also played an increasingly important part in conserving El Paso’s potable water supply. Reclaimed water is wastewater that is treated to be suitable for safe use in many beneficial applications, such as industry and irrigation. Although the Haskell R. Street Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) has been providing its effluent to Ascarate Golf Course for irrigation since 1963, EPWater began making aggressive efforts to expand its reclaimed water treatment and distribution system in 1992. The Utility provides advanced secondary (98 percent of organic pollution has been removed, and it has been 99.99 percent disinfected) and tertiary (99.9 percent of organic pollution has been removed, and it has been 99.99 percent disinfected) reclaimed water to users all over the city, from all four of its wastewater treatment plants.

With the expansion of the Haskell R. Street WWTP reclaimed system, EPWater is able to provide service to seven parks, three schools, Evergreen Cemetery, the El Paso Zoo, the historic Concordia Cemetery complex, and various street medians. The first phase was completed in 2003. Construction of a second phase was completed in 2006. A third phase was built in 2006 to provide two automated dispensing stations and four post hydrants for street sweeping and construction use. In 2012, the North Central Reclaimed Water System-Phase 1 was constructed and provides reclaimed water service to the Texas Tech Medical School.

The John T. Hickerson Water Reclamation Plant provides reclaimed water service to the Northwest area. In 1999, the distribution and transmission lines were constructed to provide reclaimed water service to customers such as Coronado Golf Course, two townhome associations, two apartment complexes and five City park were connected to the Northwest Reclaimed Water Project in 2003. In 2005, one townhome association, a medical office building and two commercial landscapes were connected. The Resler extension medians, one large commercial landscape, an apartment complex, a shopping center, the Don Haskins Recreational Center/Park and Canutillo High School were connected in 2006, followed by the construction of one automated dispensing station. In 2007, the Westside Sports Complex began using reclaimed water for their irrigation purposes. In 2018, two post hydrants were added at Thunderbird Dr. and Pine Hurst Dr. and at Trade Center Dr. and Northwester Dr. for street sweeping and construction use respectively.

The Roberto R. Bustamante WWTP provides reclaimed water to a 10-acre Tree Farm, which is managed by the City of El Paso Street Department, serves also Mount Carmel Cemetery and a reclaimed water stand pipe and a post hydrant located on Winn St. is provided for contractors for construction use. Reclaimed water facilities serve the Riverside International Industrial Center, just east of Loop 375. Mount Carmel Cemetery was connected in 2006 after completion of the pipeline project that extended from the Riverside International Industrial Center to the cemetery.

Construction for the expansion of the reclaimed water system in Northeast El Paso to serve the Northeast Regional Park was completed in 2005. The northeast system (Fred Hervey Water Reclamation Plant) produces tertiary quality reclaimed water for El Paso Electric Co., Painted Dunes Desert Golf Course, Bowen Ranch, the...
Northeast Regional Park and contractors for construction use. The remaining reclaimed water is recharged into the Hueco Bolson for aquifer replenishment.

These projects are informally called the “purple pipe” projects because of a regulatory requirement to color-coordinate utility lines based on what they transfer. EPWater distributes nearly 1.8 billion gallons of billed reclaimed water per year. There are three golf courses, 18 parks and 13 schools connected to the system, as well as a Zoo, six residential, and 18 commercial landscapes, one industrial company, six cemeteries, a hospital and several roadway medians. The cost benefit is especially favorable because of millions of dollars in grants from the federal government for these projects and is comparative in costs to other viable new water supply sources.

**WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS**

EPWater owns and operates facilities throughout El Paso, which include water and wastewater treatment plants; water reclamation plants; reservoirs; booster pump stations; wells; lift stations; and thousands of miles of distribution and collection lines outlined below. The water and wastewater map in the appendix geographically shows the area served by each facility.

**WATER SYSTEM FACILITIES**

**Robertson/Umbenhauer Water Treatment Plants**

The Robertson Plant began operations in 1943, with a 20 MGD capacity. The Umbenhauer Plant was added in 1967, also with a 20 MGD capacity. Together, these two plants are called the Canal Street WTP, and they use conventional surface water treatment to purify Rio Grande surface water (typically from March to September, when water is released from Elephant Butte Dam to serve downstream users). The plants may be utilized during the nonirrigation season to blend and treat water pumped from wells. The Canal Street WTP provides water to central and west El Paso. A major infrastructure renovation was completed in 2004, which extended the life of these facilities well into the future. This included the installation of an ultraviolet light disinfection system for a portion of the water leaving the plant. Major electrical upgrades were also completed in 2006. In 2015, the plant received the American Water Works Association Partnership for Safe Water 10-Year Directors Award of recognition and has maintained Directors Award status since.

**Jonathan W. Rogers Water Treatment Plant**

This plant, operational since 1993, was expanded to a total capacity of 60 MGD in 2002. EPWater received a $14.9 million Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant through the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) and NADBank for this project, which expanded the plant’s surface water treatment capacity by 50 percent. The grant represents approximately 40 percent of the cost of the total project. The expanded plant,
went online in May 2002. In 2015, the plant received the AWWA Partnership for Safe Water 10-Year Directors Award of recognition and has maintained Directors Award status since.

**Upper Valley Water Treatment Plant and other Arsenic Facilities**

In 2005, El Paso Water began operating four treatment plants specifically designed to achieve compliance with the EPA’s new maximum contaminant level (MCL) for arsenic, which became effective Jan. 23, 2006. The four plants have a combined treatment capacity of 41 MGD, which results in a design capacity of 96 MGD blended water meeting the MCL. The largest of the four plants is the 30 MGD Upper Valley Water Treatment Plant, which uses conventional flocculation, sedimentation, and filtration to remove arsenic. The remaining three plants have a combined capacity of 11 MGD and use a granular iron media to adsorb arsenic.

**Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant**

The Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant began operations in 2007. A joint project of El Paso Water and Fort Bliss, the plant facility is capable of producing 27.5 MGD of fresh water daily. This state-of-the-art facility applies an innovative reverse osmosis technology to convert the brackish groundwater to high quality drinking water. This desalination process not only removes salts, but also is the most comprehensive water treatment technology available, removing other potential pollutants from the water. The water pumped to the desalination plant protects El Paso’s and Fort Bliss’ fresh groundwater supplies from brackish water intrusion by capturing the flow of brackish water toward fresh water wells.

**Storage and Distribution System**

In addition to the two surface water treatment plants, EPWater’s distribution system includes more than 80 reservoirs, 64 booster stations, more than 10,000 fire hydrants, and over 2,800 miles of water lines of various sizes, up to 60 inches in diameter. The Utility has a system of about 165 wells. EPWater must operate and maintain the entire system 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Though infrastructure failures do occur, the Utility ranks among the most reliable in the world. The median number of main breaks as reported by the American Water Works Association (AWWA) is one per every 4.2 miles of water line. El Paso Water averages one per every 15.7 miles of water lines — that’s more than three times as good.

**Water Quality**

Currently, both surface water and groundwater treated by EPWater is monitored, and the quality is reported to required public regulatory agencies. Both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) have hundreds of standards for quality and reporting, which must
be met every day. The utility also works closely with other governmental agencies such as the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the Rio Grande Compact Commission, the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation, and Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) — to name a few.

El Paso Water has a long history of awards for compliance in meeting or exceeding standards set forth by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and other regulatory legislation at the state, federal and international level. Since 2004, the Canal Street and the Jonathan W. Rogers water treatment plants have been awarded the Partnership for Safe Water Phase III Directors Award. EPWater provides an annual drinking water report update to customers with a full report located on the website in compliance with the EPA’s Consumer Confidence Rule. The report describes the Utility’s water content, with respect to SDWA standards. It is printed in both English and Spanish and mailed to all customers annually. The Utility tests regularly for many parameters, such as inorganic compounds, metals, microbiological organisms, synthetic organic chemicals and volatile organic compounds. The results are reported to the TCEQ and EPA. Because the Utility meets or goes beyond compliance for all water quality requirements and transmits safe drinking water to its customers in a reliable manner, the TCEQ again recognized EPWater as a Superior Water System, the highest such designation earned in Texas.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM FACILITIES

Haskell R. Street Wastewater Treatment Plant

The oldest wastewater facility in El Paso, the Haskell R. Street Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1923. It has since undergone several expansions and upgrades, including a $22 million upgrade to increase treatment capacity to 27.7 MGD and improve treated wastewater quality and operational efficiencies at the plant, completed in 1999. This plant provides highly treated reclaimed water for the Central El Paso reclaimed water system, which began in 2003. The plant serves central schools and parks, including Ascarate Park and Ascarate Golf Course with irrigation water. This plant has won awards for perfect compliance with regulatory permit requirements from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA).

Since 1997, the Haskell R. Street WWTP has received 12 NACWA Gold Awards for perfect permit compliance. In 2007, the plant received the NACWA Platinum 8 Award for eight consecutive years of perfect permit compliance. In 2019, the plant received the NACWA Silver Award for peak performance.

In 1994, it was selected as the Texas State and USEPA Region VI winner of the Operations and Maintenance Excellence Award, Large Advanced Plant Category. Haskell R. Street WWTP has been selling its reclaimed water to the Ascarate Municipal Golf Course since 1963.
John T. Hickerson Water Reclamation Facility

Serving the west side of the Franklin Mountains into the Upper Valley, this plant began operations in 1987 and has since been expanded to 17.5 MGD of treatment capacity. Highly treated wastewater is either safely discharged into the Rio Grande or transmitted through the Northwest Reclaimed Water Distribution System. With significant Bureau of Reclamation and State of Texas funding assistance, the Northwest Reclaimed System serves Coronado Country Club Golf Course and various parks and schools in west El Paso providing additional, significant savings to the drinking water supply. The Hickerson plant has been nominated for six EPA Operations and Maintenance Excellence Awards, and in 2008, received 1st Place in the National Clean Water Act Recognition Awards for Operations and Maintenance Excellence in the Large Advanced Plant category. In 2015, the plant received the NACWA 17 Platinum Award for being the recipient of seventeen consecutive Gold Awards for perfect permit compliance. In 2019, the plant received the Silver Peak Performance Award. In 1992, the plant and personnel were recognized for their commitment to safety and were awarded the Water Environment Federation’s George W. Burke Award for Safety. In 2008, the plant also received the Texas State, Regional and National winner of the Clean Water Act O&M Awards Program in the Large Advanced Category.

Roberto R. Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant

The most recent plant in the system, it began operating in 1991 with a 39 MGD capacity that uses traditional technology for treatment. This plant, along with neighboring Jonathan Rogers WTP, serves east El Paso. It has been honored by NACWA for its perfect compliance as well. Since 1997, the plant has received 16 NACWA Gold Awards. In 2002, the plant was one of 17 Platinum Award recipients in the nation for five consecutive years of perfect permit compliance. In 1994, the plant received second place in the national USEPA Operations and Maintenance Excellence Awards. In 2005, the plant won the Water Environment Association of Texas Plant of the Year Award. In 2019, the plant was awarded the NACWA Silver Award. Treated wastewater is discharged into either the Riverside Canal or Riverside Intercepting Drain for use downstream. A new large-scale reclaimed water project (online since 2002) with a capacity of 2 million gallons per day also serves the immediate area. EPWater has completed the first of several improvements to the plant’s aeration basins, which will lead to enhanced treatment to serve continued growth in the area.
Fred Hervey Water Reclamation Plant

This 12 MGD plant has won not only awards, but also worldwide attention. The Fred Hervey plant is essentially a combined water and wastewater treatment plant, which treats wastewater to drinking water quality standards. The plant’s treated wastewater is sold to El Paso Electric Co. for cooling water, the nationally renowned Painted Dunes Desert Golf Course for irrigation and various other customers in the Northeast part of the city. The remainder is treated to drinking water quality and replenishes the Hueco Bolson through a series of injection wells and several groundwater recharge infiltration basins. Tours are regularly provided to industry, utility and academic representatives to one of the model plants of the system. The plant became operational in 1985 and was significantly financed with EPA assistance. The plant is also a crucial part of EPWater’s plan to reduce dependence on groundwater and was featured on the internationally acclaimed PBS series “Water: The Drop of Life.” The plant has received numerous awards, including the 1994 AMSA Public Information and Education Award; second place in the 1994 national USEPA Operations and Maintenance Excellence Award, No Discharge category; and the 1998 American Water Works Association’s Conservation and Reuse Award. In 1999, the Fred Hervey plant received special recognition by the El Paso del Norte Region Mission Possible-Survival Strategies in the category “Protection and Preservation of the Environment.” The plant has received eight NACWA Gold Awards and three Platinum Awards for perfect permit compliance under the expanded NACWA Peak Performance Award program since 2006. In 2019 the plant was awarded the NACWA Platinum Award.

The Utility also operates and maintains 75 lift stations and over 2,345 miles of collection lines to keep the wastewater system running at peak reliability and meet customer demand. The Water Environment Association of Texas (WEAT) in 2007 awarded the lift stations section with the George W. Burke Jr. Award for its effective safety program. In 2007, WEAT awarded the wastewater collection maintenance section with the Medal of Honor for Heroism in recognition for the section’s contribution during the flood of 2006.
SUPPORT FACILITIES

Fleet Maintenance Facility

Plans for a fleet maintenance facility began in 2015. Fleet Maintenance, the Warehouse, Property Control and the Meter Shop were moved to the new location. The Fleet Maintenance Building was completed in 2016 and is home to three sections: Building Maintenance, Heavy Equipment Operations and Fleet Maintenance. The state-of-the-art facility includes LED lighting and sensors that adjust lighting in unoccupied rooms, infrared sensors that can measure body temperature to adjust indoor climate settings and holding tanks for storing used oil. The building has tight security, a safe work environment and technology and learning resources for equipment operators. The facility also houses an onsite fueling station and a drive-through car wash. Fleet Maintenance maintains and repairs 649 Utility-owned vehicles and heavy equipment, which include trailers, loaders and backhoes.

Warehouse, Meter Shop, and Property Control Facility

The Warehouse building was also completed in 2016 and is located next to the Fleet Maintenance Facility. It allows larger Utility trucks better maneuverability and accessibility for material deliveries and pick-ups. The larger layout accommodates more supplies, such as pipes, for special projects within the Utility. The Warehouse also manages all the personal protective equipment issued out to Utility workers. The Warehouse manages approximately $1 million in inventory for El Paso Water.

The Meter Shop shares the Warehouse facility. The shop is responsible for repairing, testing and replacing water meters ranging in size from ¾ inches to 12 inches. The shop features a new automated meter test bench, allowing employees to more accurately test small and medium-sized meters of up to two inches. The shop also repairs, tests and installs all construction fire hydrant meters issued to construction locations. The spacious Meter Shop repairs approximately 2,000 meters per year out of approximately 204,000 El Paso Water customer meters.

The facility also houses Property Control, with two employees responsible for maintaining a complete inventory record of all Utility assets valued at more than $20 million. They are responsible for tagging, recording, auditing and disposing of broken and obsolete assets. The disposal of miscellaneous assets, vehicles and equipment was made easier in 2016 when the section started using GovDeals® to auction items to the public. They also obtain and maintain all licenses and titles for vehicles and equipment owned by EPWater. Employees are looking forward to implementing a scanner system, which will save them approximately 30 percent of the time that it takes to do audits of all sections in the Utility annually.
Hawkins Administration Building

EPWater moved its administration building to the current location in 1991. The building known as “Hawkins” is home to several sections, which provide utility-wide support. Along with the President/CEO and two Vice Presidents, there is also Finance, Accounting, Purchasing & Contract Administration, Treasury Management, Land Management, Human Resources, Water Resource Management, Information Technology, Engineering Technical Services, Communications & Government Affairs, and Legal Services. The Public Service Board holds its monthly meeting in the boardroom in the top floor of the building. Approximately 150 employees are housed in the building, providing the essential support needed to help maintain the Utility’s day-to-day operations.

International Water Quality Laboratory

The modern and open design facility, which is 27,000 square feet, celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2016. It has many cutting-edge features, which include an ultra-clean air system, a reverse osmosis water purification system and dedicated data management system. The laboratory consistently meets state and federal requirements by testing hundreds of tap water samples monthly. More than 45,000 samples and 350,000 chemical and biological analyses are performed and reviewed on a yearly basis, establishing the lab as a national model for high quality water standards.

Customer Service Center & Cashiering

In keeping with EPWater’s mission of providing the highest quality water services, the Customer Service Center provides services to approximately 206,000 customer accounts. The center offers services such as billing, meter reading, field inspections and all matters pertaining to customer accounts. Customer Service is charged with enforcing the rules, regulations and policies set forth by the Public Service Board, while maintaining and providing excellent customer service. The center provides office space for its more than 100 employees and hundreds of customers that use the facility daily.

Cashiering, which is located at the Customer Service facility, is responsible for collecting, processing and posting over 237,000 payments and deposits on a monthly basis. Cashiering collects over $35 million in payments monthly, which include electronic, walk-in, and mailed payments.