

Employees, customers happy with 4-day work schedule



Karen Hale works as a customer service representative for the York Water District. She and other employees are working a four day work week.



York Water District employees Don Neumann, left, Gary Stevens, center, and Todd Hill, talk about the four-day work week they recently switched to, which will be in trial for a year.

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February 09, 2009 2:00 AM

YORK, Maine — Joining what is becoming a growing trend, York Water District employees are now working four days a week instead of five.

Starting last month, the 18 employees began working four 10-hour days, Monday through Thursday, with Friday off. And so far, so great, said Superintendent Don Neumann. It's been a success for workers, customers and, he is anticipating, the bottom line.

"We've talked about it for a long time, how nice it would be to have long weekends," said Neumann. "But the No. 1 thing on our mind was how would our customers react."

The answer, at least so far, has been very positive, said billing clerk Patty Carter. "That extra time is a real benefit for them," she said. "They can come in before they go to work or after work. They really appreciate that."

Most importantly, Neumann said, he wants customers to know that if they have problems with their water service at any time, seven days a week, someone is always on call to respond.

Although it's been barely six weeks since the Jan. 1 start of the new schedule, Neumann said he expects there will be savings in electricity and heating, both at the water treatment plant and the district headquarters on Woodbridge Road.

He also said that he and his employees commuted about 100,000 miles per year to and from work, as most do not live in York. On the face of it, they've saved 20,000 miles a year by working four days — better for the environment, better for wear and tear on the vehicles. And on Fridays, all the water district's own trucks are off the road, too.

Employees said it's been an adjustment arriving to work so early and coming home later.

"Get up, it's dark. Come home, it's dark. I'm glad we got that out of the way," said Todd Hill, the district's Geographic Information System coordinator. "Now the days are starting to get a little longer."

"But I enjoy knowing I'm going to have that extra time on the weekend. It makes more time available," said watershed patrol officer Gary Stevens.

Neumann said there may need to be adjustments to the schedule in the spring and fall for some workers, when water needs to be turned on in seasonal homes. But overall, he said, the experiment is working well so far.

The district's board of trustees, which approved the plan as a one-year pilot project last fall, is expected to decide whether to continue the experiment at the end of this year. Neumann said the employees are hoping they will.

"It's been great," he said.



The York Water District building is on Woodbridge Road. Employees are on a trial run of using a four-day work week

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