

Water District switches to four-day workweek

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YORK — At the start of next year, the York Water District will switch to a four-day workweek, an experiment intended to save the district time and money.

The change will occur Jan. 5.

According to Superintendent Don Neumann, the move will save the district about \$20,000 next year.

"Basically, the cost of fuel for our trucks on the road are the biggest expense," Neumann said.

Fuel costs also go toward heating the office and running the generator at the treatment plant, he said.

Additionally, Neumann said it is expected overtime costs will be reduced by the change in workweek schedule.

The district has been talking about changing to a four-day workweek for several years now, but the idea was not officially brought before the Water District's board of trustees until Sept. 10 of this year.

"We polled all the employees, and a lot of the concerns were about day care, pet care, after-school activities for the kids," Neumann said. "With all those concerns in mind, everyone was willing to try it. It appears, on the surface, that it will be a benefit to everyone."

Employees will still be working full time. The hours of service at the office will change to 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Only four of the district's employees live in York, while some reside in nearby towns like Eliot and Kittery. Having to commute to work four times a week will save employees their own gas money.

According to Neumann, the change will be a one-year trial, and during that time the board of trustees will garner feedback from employees and management.

"We will log any complaints or issues we may have," Neumann said. "And if it appears it is not working, we can pull the plug on it at any time. We really wanted to give it a full year to go through our whole cycle."

Neumann said testing the four-day workweek during the summer turn-on process is a crucial checkpoint during the trial.

According to Neumann, customer service is the district's biggest concern during the change. Neumann said there will be a man on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and he believes customer service should not be affected by the change.

Neumann said the Brunswick-Topsham Water District has been on a four-day workweek for a few years now, and it has seen a reduction in its fuel costs.

Town Manager Rob Yandow said the idea of a shortened workweek has become popular.

"There has been a lot of discussion throughout the country of a four-day workweek as it relates to energy savings," he said. "It's not just limited to here."

Neumann understands the change may have its consequences, but he is optimistic the results will be worth the effort.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "It affects all of us differently. Whether we have younger kids or older kids — we may have jobs that we work a second shift somewhere else; it affects everyone a little differently. I think it'll be a good change — I look forward to what kind of efficiency there may be."

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