



Marion Utilities



2023
Year in Review

VALUE. SERVICE. STEWARDSHIP.

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A Message from the Director

Chuck Binkerd

There are a few things in life that we tend to expect will happen without much thought. We open a faucet and expect to get clean and safe drinking water. We flush and expect waste to disappear. When it rains we expect that millions upon millions of gallons of rainwater will vanish beneath our feet. And, when we set our trash out at the curb, we expect that it will be disposed of promptly and responsibly.

Marion Utilities accepts the challenge of meeting these difficult but reasonable expectations every day. Throughout the pages of this report you will discover examples of how our talented teams have met their goals and accomplished the many tasks associated with providing essential services to our community.

Our teams are committed to providing efficient and effective services, and we want you to know more about our approach to meeting those challenges. As questions arise, or as your curiosity grows, we invite you to reach out to us. Feel free as well to contact us to schedule a visit. We love it when folks come by for a closer look at our facilities and our operations.

Thank you for your support,

A stylized, handwritten signature in teal ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Binkerd'.

CHUCK BINKERD, DIRECTOR

Building a Sustainable Future for Our Community

Your Partner in Water, Waste, and Recycling

Welcome! We're not just your local utility company. We're your neighbors, your friends, and we're passionate about building a thriving, sustainable future for the place we all call home.

Our Mission

We strive to bring added value to the City of Marion by providing excellent customer service, maintaining the highest of standards for the lowest possible cost, and promoting environmental stewardship to ensure the future of our community.

Who We Are

Marion Utilities is an organization comprised of four individual and independent utility divisions:



Water



Wastewater



Stormwater



Solid Waste



Drinking Water




Claricones

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes to produce clean city drinking water? It's quite the process!

- 1 Our drinking water purification process starts with a medium called QuickLime. It is super-heated to 2,500° and crushed into lime stone, resembling flour with sand and pea gravel in it.
- 2 The lime is then added to a lime slaker and mixed with water to form a lime slurry or calcium hydroxide which resembles milk.
- 3 The lime slurry is pumped into a giant Claricone—a large funnel-shaped tank. Then, it's mixed with a polymer to form a "lime blanket" which is a filter that removes minerals which make the water hard. This stays in the lower part of the claricone, and the raw water passes up through it which is where the lime softening process happens. It raises the pH from about 7.4 to 10.8 and reduces total hardness by about half. This process goes on 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- 4 Several times a day, we have to discharge some of the blanket out of the cone to make room for more lime slurry. This is done by either "purging" the cone—manually opening a valve on the bottom, or "blowing down" the cone—opening an automatic valve in the middle of the cone. The used lime is sent to the lagoons behind the plant where it settles.
- 5 After passing through the lime blanket, the softened water enters the plant through the plant influent piping. Carbon dioxide is added to lower the pH to around 8.5 and chlorine is added for disinfection.
- 6 The water flows through the filters and into the plant reservoir. From there, it is pumped into the city's distribution system!



Our drinking water plant has two Claricones used to soften our water with lime. Each Claricone is capable of processing **six million gallons** of water every day.



i The used lime is sent to the lagoons behind the plant where it settles.o



New Meters

Investment: \$5 Million

This summer, we installed antennas that will read our new electronic water meters. These new, ultrasonic meters have no moving parts inside, and are exceptionally accurate for the life of the meter. The new meters will be read remotely, and leaks can be detected almost immediately. Customers can then be notified with high or low usage alerts.

Installation of these meters at homes and businesses throughout Marion will begin this spring, and we hope to have the project wrapped up in a year.



Lead Line Abatement

Investment: \$2 Million

We prioritize your safety and well-being in every aspect of our water supply. While some of our distribution lines are historic, dating back 70 years or more, we've taken proactive measures to ensure they meet today's health standards. Our skilled plant operators expertly manage the water chemistry, including pH levels, to prevent any lead from older pipes from affecting your water. A key part of this process involves coating the insides of the pipes with lime, creating a protective barrier that keeps your water safe and clean. Rest assured, delivering pure and healthy water is our constant commitment to you.

Marion Utilities routinely replaces lead lines as we encounter them in the system. In 2024 we will be taking a more proactive approach, as funds have been allocated specifically for replacing lead service lines.



Wastewater



Digester Lids

In 2022 & 2023, we removed the old floating lids from two of our digesters used in the biological breakdown process for wastewater treatment. Both lids were removed because it was time for them to be retired. Each lid weighed about 170,000 pounds, and it took *literally* the biggest hydraulic crane in the United States to remove them. We also coated these tanks with a protective epoxy paint to extend their longevity.

Much of our wastewater treatment process centers around capturing gas that is created during digestion and utilizing it to create energy. This gas powers a generator that usually supplies about half of the electricity it takes to run the wastewater treatment plant every year. We also rehabilitated our sphere which is used to store digester gas and installed a new methane flare in 2023.



Laboratory Services

Our laboratory was able to purchase a new microscope in 2023—this one records images and video that can be shared, in addition to allowing our technicians to see bacteria clearly and with more detail than before. Our lab offers nitrate and bacteria testing for the public, so if you know someone who is buying or selling a home, or is in foster care and needs those services, come see us.

i The largest hydraulic crane in the United States!



i Digester lid being removed





Stormwater



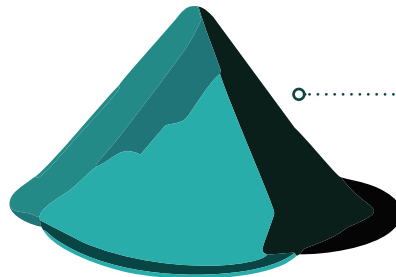
System Maintenance

In 2023, our Stormwater Division jetted and removed roots from 200,000 feet of storm and sanitary sewer pipe, and made numerous upgrades to our lift stations which help move flow in the system to higher elevations. Crew members are also evaluating and relining old brick manholes throughout the city.

Every year the Stormwater Division sweeps all streets in Marion twice and problem areas multiple times. This helps prevent miles of street flooding and minimizes pollution in local waterways. Marion Utilities composts street sweeping debris collected, and in 2023 we distributed **190 tons of compost** and **585 tons of sand** for use as an agricultural soil amendment.



.....**190**
tons of compost



.....**585**
tons of sand



Cole Lodge, a member of our System Maintenance crew, shows some equipment to a young visitor at our Open House last summer.



Solid Waste



Recycling

The recycling center collected about **140 tons** of recyclable material in 2023:



We average between **150–160 cars per day** at the recycling center and continue to see new faces on a regular basis. In 2023, we picked up approximately **11,260 tons of solid waste** – that number has climbed steadily from just over 8,000 tons when we opened the utility in 2016.



Learn More



Want to learn more?

Scan the QR code to visit our recycling center web page.

Beneficial Reuse



Soil Ammendment

In 2023, **2,580 tons of lime sludge** leftover from our drinking water treatment process and **4,545,000 gallons of biosolids** leftover from our wastewater treatment process were land applied to farm fields. The lime sludge acts as a pH stabilizer when applied to farmland and the biosolids are used as fertilizers!

We distributed **190 tons of compost** and **585 tons of sand** for use as an agricultural soil amendment. All of it was made from composted street sweeping debris!



Renewable Energy

We took in **543,805 gallons of high strength waste** referred to as FOG (fats, oils and grease) in 2023 from local businesses, resulting in added energy production and the additional income of \$39,909 to the utility.

Our generator, the CHP (Combined Heat & Power unit) produced **1,385,768 kWh of electricity** in 2023, which is the equivalent of enough electricity to power the average US home for more than 100 years! It has provided a net savings of \$104,854 in electricity for the wastewater treatment plant.



A wheel loader dumps lime into the TerraGator to be applied to farmland.

Customer Service



Rate Increase

The Utility sought and was granted a water rate increase that took effect in October 2023. The incremental increase will be phased in over five years. While some customers have seen a decrease in their bill since the new rate took effect, the average residential customer will see about a \$12 increase in what they pay by 2027, when the rate is fully implemented.

The new charges are more fair because the new ordinance does away with minimum charges that were previously applied to all accounts—now, customers only pay for what they actually use and they have the ability to control what they spend on water.

Throughout the rate increase process, Marion Utilities has been committed to having fair and affordable rates for our customers, while securing the funding needed to continue to provide safe and reliable water service to our community.

Safety & Training



Safety

In 2023 Terri Couse, our safety coordinator, earned certification as a CPR and First Aid instructor. As of January 2024, **all employees** have been trained in CPR and first aid. Couse also serves on our community-wide safety planning committee and coordinates with other city departments on initiatives like confined space safety training.



Cyber Security

Our Information Technology department works tirelessly to keep both the utility and our customer's personal information safe from threats. In 2023, server upgrades were made. We also partner with a third-party company to keep our customer's payment information safe when they pay their bill online or with a credit or debit card.



Marion Utilities welcomed several crew members from Marion's Fire Department who underwent confined spaces safety training at the plant in 2023.

Leadership



Employee Development

At Marion Utilities, we know that our most important asset is people. We are committed to adding value to our community by serving both our customers and our employees every day. Our own Robin Shrader, Assistant Director for Operations at Marion Utilities, is President-elect of the Indiana Water Environment Association (IWEA) and was instrumental in founding IWEA's Leadership Development Institute—a 10-course program where water and wastewater professionals take their careers and personal lives to the next level by deep-diving into topics like communications, human resources, and organizational leadership. The courses are taken over a 12-month period and are structured to best develop and inspire our future water industry leaders. The institute is now in its third year and has graduated approximately 50 students from all over Indiana since its inception in 2020, including nine employees from Marion Utilities.

In 2023, our Lab earned the Laboratory Excellence Award for the twelfth year in a row, and we earned IWEA's Wastewater Safety Award for the ninth year in a row.



Financial Summary



Marion Utilities Routinely Helps

We helped low-income customers secure financial help from the state for their utility bill. The utility voluntarily participates in these programs, advertises them to those who need them, and performs administrative tasks to collect the money and get it applied to the proper accounts.

Indiana’s Energy Assistance Program (EAP)

Administered thru ICAP

EAP/ICAP TOTAL: **\$134,047.28**

Indiana Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Federal COVID Monies





IERA 2021	\$5174.26
IERA 2022	\$30305.07
IERA 2023	\$22615.03
IERA TOTAL:	\$58,094.36

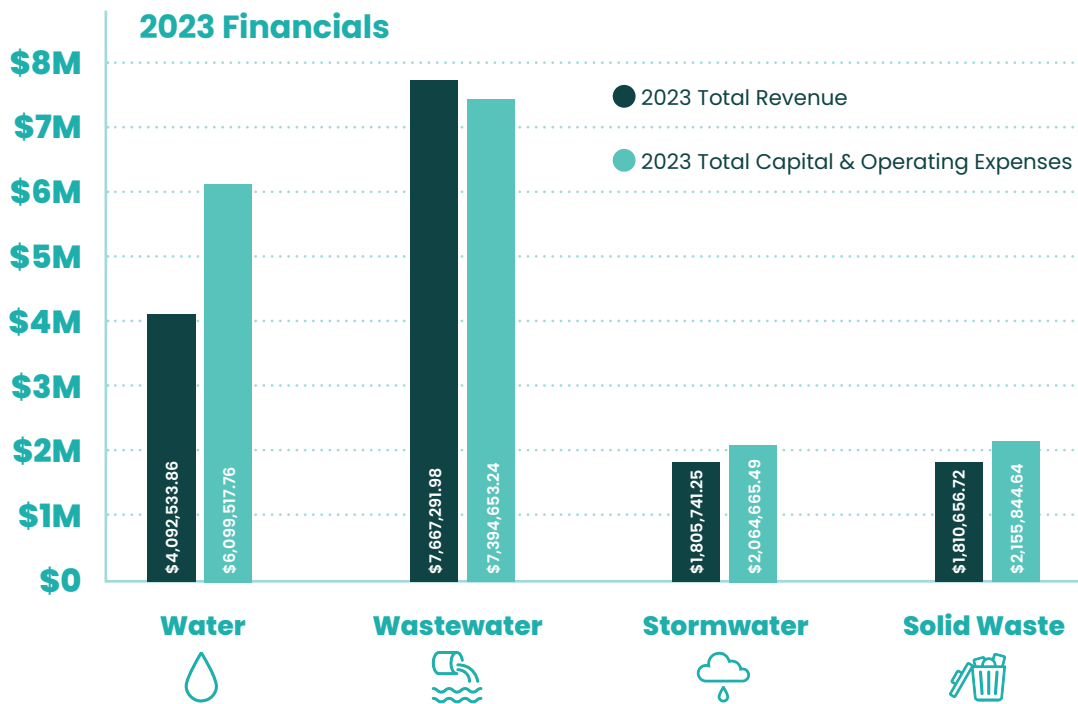
Our H2O Community fund gave out \$4,575.14 in assistance to Marion residents who were experiencing a hardship and having trouble paying their bill and also distributed more than \$1,000 to local programs that help residents find a way out of poverty.



Financial Overview

Noteable highlights and updates:

-  We have several capital projects planned for Water in 2024, including new meter installations, lead line abatement projects, and water tower rehabilitations.
-  Wastewater has significant plant upgrades in the works that are in line with our long-term control plan to further keep untreated wastewater from entering our area waterways.
-  In 2023, our Stormwater Division installed bypass pumping connections on four liftstation force mains, televised 58,000 feet of storm and sanitary sewer, and swept the city streets multiple times in an effort to help keep pollutants out of our rivers and creeks.
-  Solid Waste had its second biggest year on record in 2023 with more than 11,000 tons of waste collected and 140 tons of recyclables.



2023 TOTAL REVENUE \$15,376,223.81

2023 TOTAL CAPITAL & OPERATING EXPENSES \$17,714,681.13

Get Involved



Internships

Marion Utilities Internship Program offers students a fully customizable experience to better understand everything we do, from treating water to communicating with our customers. Our goal is to provide an environment where students can discover, inquire, and refine their educational and career goals.



Summer Grounds Crew

For students pursuing any level of education who are interested in groundskeeping and minor maintenance jobs around the plant.



Vocational Survey Track

For high school or college students desiring to understand more about the hands-on aspect of work at Marion Utilities.



Job Shadowing

For students pursuing any level of education who are interested in a day-in-the-life of a utility worker experience.



College Specialty Track

For students who have completed at least one year of college and have a major/minor related to Environmental Science, Chemistry, Engineering, Biology, Accounting, Marketing, IT, etc...



Apply today!

Scan the QR code or visit our website at marionutilities.com to learn more.

Together, We Can Make a Difference

Here at Marion Utilities, we are proud of our long-standing history of excellence, both in our work and in the customer service we provide. We look forward to continuing to be an example of leadership in our industry and community.

If you ever have any questions or concerns, we would welcome your input! Please reach out to us at communication@marionutilities.com, or give us a call at **765.664.2391**.

i

Vintage Postcard: Sewage Disposal Plant

*We are proud to have
served the community of
Marion, Indiana since 1877.*





Marion Utilities

1540 N. Washington St. | 765.664.2391

