



The WATERLINE



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News from the City of San Diego Water and Wastewater Departments

Fall 2007

WATER, SEWER RATE HEARING SET FOR OCT. 8

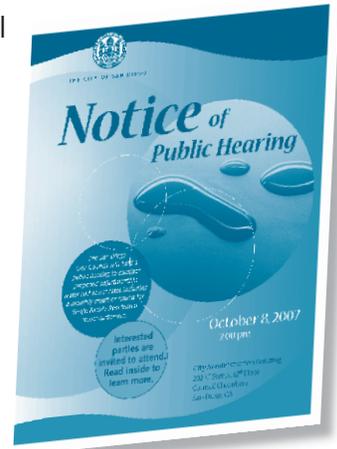
The San Diego City Council will hold a public hearing to consider proposed adjustments to water and sewer rates on October 8, 2007. The hearing will take place at 2 p.m. in the City Administration Building, 202 C Street, in the Council Chamber on the 12th floor.

The adjustment in sewer rates to be considered by Council is related to the recent settlement of a class action lawsuit alleging the City had overcharged single-family residential customers, while undercharging other customers, for sewer service until rates were revised in October of 2004. Under the settlement approved by the Superior Court, the City will reimburse Single Family Residential customers a total of \$40 million, less attorney's fees of \$5 million and other costs, over the next four years.

To satisfy the terms of the settlement, the City must temporarily adjust rates for all City sewer customers. But, the City also intends to reverse the proposed rate increase and offer an additional monthly credit to "eligible" Single Family Residential customers. Nearly all Single Family Residential customers are considered "eligible" under the terms of the settlement. Under the rate adjustment proposal, the City would raise customer rates by 3.05% on November 1, 2007 and again by 3.05% on May 1, 2008.

After the \$40 million settlement amount has been raised and distributed, the rate reversal and monthly credit for Single Family Residential customers will stop and the two 3.05% rate increases for all City sewer customers will end. This is expected to happen on or about October 30, 2011.

At its Oct. 8 hearing, the City Council will also consider adjustments to water rates necessary to pay for increased costs of the imported water the City purchases from the San Diego County Water Authority. The proposed water rate adjustment affects both the base fee and commodity charges for water service and would add approximately \$1.40 to the typical Single Family Residential customer's monthly bill.



As required by State law, a Notice of Public Hearing announcing the Oct. 8 meeting and providing more information about the rate adjustment proposal was recently sent out to all ratepayers and property owners in San Diego. A copy of that Notice, including Spanish and Tagalog translations, is available on the City's website at www.sandiego.gov.

More information about the proposed rate adjustments can be found at www.sandiego.gov/water or by calling the Water Department Customer Service representatives a call at 619-515-3500. 

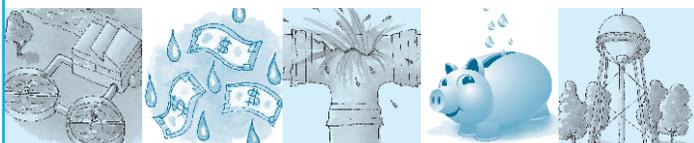


THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Important Water Department Numbers

(All phone numbers are 619 area code)

- To report a water line break or a sewer overflow **515-3525**
- To ask a question about your water or sewer bill **515-3500**
- To find out where you can pay your bill **515-3500**
- For Water Conservation Program information **515-3500**
- To establish or cancel water or sewer services **515-3500**
- To ask about San Diego's drinking water **668-3232**
- For Lakes Recreation Program information **465-3474**
- To schedule a presentation through the Speaker's Bureau **533-6638**
- To ask the location of a City water or sewer line **527-7482**
- Capital Improvements Projects Hotline **533-4679**
- San Diego City Lakes Hotline **465-3474**
- To report water theft from the Water Department **533-4146**



SAN DIEGO TO BEGIN RECEIVING FLUORIDATED WATER

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) is planning to begin treating its water with fluoride beginning in November of this year. MWD is one of the primary providers of water distributed by the San Diego County Water Authority and used throughout the City of San Diego. As a result, some of the City's water supply will include increased levels of fluoride following the implementation of the MWD treatment effort.



Approximately 9 percent of the treated water used in the City is supplied by MWD. Because the City water system is integrated and interconnected to ensure efficiency and reliability, the water supplied by MWD is distributed at varying levels throughout the City. This means that the level of treated water with fluoride delivered to San Diego customers beginning in November will also vary throughout the City.

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BI-MONTHLY BILLING TO BEGIN AGAIN IN THE SPRING

The Water and Sewer Departments will be returning to a bi-monthly billing cycle by April of next year. The bi-monthly schedule will apply to single-family domestic customers, as well as some multi-family and commercial customers now receiving monthly bills and who previously received their combined water and sewer billing notices once every two months.

In the fall of 2003, the Departments changed their billing cycles and began sending monthly bills to single-family domestic customers, as well as some other customers. The switch to monthly billing was made in order to help families balance monthly budgets. It was felt that paying a smaller bill once a month was easier than getting a larger bill every other month. However, because the City implemented this change without adding the staff needed to perform monthly meter reading, this meant that every other bill these customers received was based on an estimated account of their water usage.

fluoridated water continued

“Fluoride is a naturally occurring element of our existing water system,” said Jim Barrett, Director of the City Water Department. “As required by law, we have reported this in our annual Water Quality Report for many years. The decision to add fluoride as a water treatment process was made by MWD based on the request of public health officials representing each of the six Southern California counties in the MWD service area. We are working closely with health officials and other state and local agencies to inform the public of this change.”

Anyone taking fluoride supplements, including pills and drops, should consult their dental and/or health care provider about whether to continue the use of the supplements.

Because only the imported treated water received from MWD will have added fluoride, not all areas of the City will receive water containing fluoride above the naturally occurring level. In addition, due to seasonal demands and operational changes, the fluoride levels expected in City water supplies will vary throughout the system over time. Because of operation constraints and maintenance requirements of the City’s water distribution system, the City will continue to receive and rely on the imported treated water it receives from MWD through the County Water Authority.

The areas most likely to receive some water containing fluoride above the naturally occurring levels are:

Carmel Mountain Ranch
Clairemont
Encanto
Kearny Mesa
La Jolla
Linda Vista
Mission Beach

Mission Valley (partial)
Pacific Beach
Paradise Hills
Rancho Bernardo
Rancho Peñasquitos
Serra Mesa
Tierrasanta

Please check the Water Department website at www.sandiego.gov/water for more information about the areas that will be receiving fluoridated water and updated information on the fluoridation schedule. The Water Department’s Annual Water Quality Report can also be found on the web pages. 💧

The estimation process used by the City ensured that all customers were billed fairly through the course of the year. Even so, some customers and individual members of the City Council expressed concern about the estimated billing process.

“We listened carefully to those concerns and worked with the City Council to reevaluate the benefits of the monthly and bi-monthly billing cycle,” said Mike Bresnahan, head of the Water Department’s Customer Support Division. “The Council chose to go back to the way we used to bill. This shows just what kind of impact the public can have on the Water Department and the City government as a whole. Going back to bi-monthly billing comes as a direct result of the input we received from our customers.”

Once the change occurs – now scheduled for no later than April, 2008 – the two Departments will save approximately \$600,000 in combined mailing and other costs.

More information about the change will be made available both in the Water/Sewer bill and on the Water Department’s website (www.sandiego.gov/water) once the exact timeline for the transition back to bi-monthly billing is set. More information about the Water Department can also be obtained by calling a Customer Service Representative at 619-515-3500. 💧

SAN DIEGANS ARE GIVEN A 20-GALLON CHALLENGE



The City of San Diego has joined forces with the San Diego County Water Authority to issue to all San Diegans the 20-Gallon Challenge. By conserving 20 gallons of water a day San Diegans can help preserve this precious resource while also helping themselves save money on their water and sewer bills.

Last winter was a historically dry one both locally and in Northern California and the Colorado River basin. These are all the areas that supply San Diego with water. While one dry winter does not equal a drought, there are already concerns that the weather pattern might extend into this winter. If that happens, every drop of water saved now will help with possible supply problems in the future.

The Water Department’s Water Conservation Program has lots of ideas and services that can help you meet the 20-Gallon Challenge. While many San Diegans have reduced water usage inside the house by installing low-flush toilets, low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators, there’s still a lot of conservation that can occur outside the home.

Approximately 60 percent of urban water use in San Diego is spent on landscape irrigation and other outdoor purposes. One easy way to meet the 20-Gallon Challenge is to make sure you are not over-watering your landscaping. To find out just how much water your plants and grass really need, visit www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation and click on the Landscape Watering Calculator.

While you’re there, please check out all the other programs designed to help San Diegans conserve water and save money. 💧