

Questions and Answers On Water Bill Changes

Q. Why is WRS adjusting my rates?

A. The rates are being adjusted to help the utility meet operating needs, maintain good financial standing and preserve its bond rating.

The downturn in the economy and increased water restrictions because of three years of drought have significantly impacted utilities across our region, including Water Resource Services. Simply put, our customers are buying less water, even as expenses for the utility – just as your expenses at home – have risen. WRS has responded by streamlining operations, reducing the size of its workforce, deferring certain construction projects and more – saving \$11.8 million a year – but unfortunately, not enough to avoid a rate adjustment.

Q. Why is the utility concerned about its bond rating?

A. Bond ratings are a lot like your personal credit score. The better our credit rating, the less interest the utility pays on money borrowed to fund necessary capital improvements, such as expanding and upgrading existing plants, or building new facilities as needed. If WRS does not take action to keep the utility in good financial standing, bond agencies could lower our credit ratings, leading to millions of dollars more in additional interest. That in turn would lead to even larger rate increases for customers.

Water Bill Changes

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your bill which is established by WRS has changed.

The November bills also will contain an adjustment in the “Purchased-Water Pass-Through Charge,” for water purchased from Tampa Bay Water and other providers. That increase is 18 cents per 1,000 gallons.

Together, the two rate adjustments amount to an extra \$2.01 a month on the typical household bill for 6,000 gallons of water – less than the cost of a gallon of milk.

Q. What is rate indexing?

A. An independent financial company recommended indexing as a tool for WRS to set its rates to keep up with inflation. Rate adjustments can be made only once per calendar year, and will be tied to a factor set by the Florida Public Service Commission. Although WRS is not regulated by this authority, their standards are specific to Florida utilities. This makes their inflation factor more applicable to WRS, unlike the Consumer Price Index, which incorporates a wide variety of commodities.

Q. What rates are affected?

A. The amounts paid for water, sewer and metered reclaimed water service. The system of tiered rates – where higher water users pay more – will continue. The indexing will not affect reclaimed water customers who pay a fixed monthly amount already set by a formal agreement with the County.

Q. Will the rates go up every year?

A. Only if the utility’s revenues do not meet a certain threshold. The indexing plan approved by the County Commission allows for WRS to begin charging the adjusted rates on billable usage beginning Oct. 1, then automatically on June 1 of each year if adjustments are necessary.

Q. Are other utilities raising their rates?

A. Yes, many utilities in neighboring counties and cities raised rates last year, and/or are doing so this year, including the City of Tampa, Pasco County and Polk County.

Q. What is the “Purchased-Water Pass-Through Charge” on my bill?

A. This portion of the bill refers to the cost of water purchased by WRS from other sources.

Hillsborough County does not own any drinking water sources, such as wellfields or reservoirs. Nearly all of the drinking water we provide to our customers is purchased from Tampa Bay Water, the regional wholesale water supplier that serves six member governments. Depending on where you live, you may also be drinking water we buy from the cities of Tampa, Temple Terrace or Plant City.

The cost of this purchased water is paid by our customers through the “pass-through” charge, which is averaged and calculated annually. Every customer pays the same rate, and WRS does not make a profit on the charge.

Q. What is the new rate for the pass-through charge?

A. Beginning this month, the rate is \$2.43 per 1,000 gallons of water, an increase of 18 cents.

Q. What reclaimed water rates are impacted by the rate indexing?

A. The indexing applies to metered reclaimed water rates, that is, for those customers who pay for the actual amount of reclaimed water they use every month. The indexing does not impact customers who are charged a fixed monthly rate.

2009-2010 RATE TABLE

	Previous Rates		Rates on Usage Beginning October 1, 2009	
	Water	Wastewater	Water	Wastewater
Bill Charge	3.80*	3.80*	3.87*	3.87*
Base Facility Charge	7.90	12.75	8.04	12.97
Monthly cost per 1,000 gallons				
Purchased-Water Pass-through Charge	2.25		2.43	
0 – 5,000	0.65	4.10**	.67	4.18**
5,001 – 15,000	1.80	4.10**	1.84	4.18**
15,001 – 30,000	3.00	4.10**	3.06	4.18**
30,001 or more	4.50	4.10**	4.58	4.18**

* Per bill, not for each service

** Wastewater charges are capped at 8,000 gallons per month for residential customers.

For information on metered reclaimed water rates, please visit our website at: hillsboroughcounty.org/water/.

Help Reduce Trash In Local Waterways

Are you tired of seeing trash in your pond, lake, stream, or canal? Wish there was something you could do about it? Now there is. Hillsborough County is introducing a new program called Trash Tracker, where residents adopt a waterway in the unincorporated part of the County, monitor when, where, and how much trash is entering the site, and help clean it up.

Trash Trackers are asked to collect trash from their designated site and report the amount of trash collected once a month. This information helps Hillsborough County track where trash in waterways is a problem, make decisions about trash pollution management, and catch people who are causing dumping problems.

Once a group or resident chooses a site and signs up for the program, Hillsborough County sends them a startup kit of materials. The Trash Trackers then record how many bags of trash they collect monthly. The County will pick up the trash once it is collected.

Groups or residents who sign up for the program also will become eligible for discounted leases on trash-catching devices and maintenance and trash collection services from



participating companies that are involved in the project. The groups that sign up for these services also will benefit from the company picking up and reporting on the amount of trash to the County.

“Trash not only makes our communities look bad, but in our waterways, trash can block stormwater drainage, causing flooding, and carry other pollutants into waterways,” said John McGee, Stormwater Environmental Programs Coordinator.

For more information and to sign up, visit the Stormwater Management’s website at: www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org or call (813) 744-5671.

Get your FREE BINS and “guess who?” to win!

A challenge has been issued to all residents of Hillsborough County to recycle more! Start recycling right now by visiting www.HillsboroughRecycles.org to order your FREE recycling bins. If you already have bins, but are confused about what can be recycled, HillsboroughRecycles.org can help you there too.

There are real benefits to recycling: not only will you look like a hero to your kids and neighbors, but you’ll actually do some good for Hillsborough County’s environment. What could be better?

Did we mention that as a Hillsborough County resident, you can also participate in the County’s “Famous Bins”

contest? Keep your eyes peeled for billboards and bus sides with certain Famous “Bins” or “Bens,” like the one to the right, scattered throughout the County. When you see one (or more than one) go to the website at HillsboroughRecycles.org and tell us which ones you saw. When you guess correctly, you’ll be entered to win one of several fabulous prizes!



HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMUNICATOR

Published every month by the Communications Department to inform residents about the programs, services and activities of their County government.

For more information, call the Hillsborough Information Line at (813) 272-5900, or visit the County’s Web site at: www.hillsboroughcounty.org

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COMMUNICATOR

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Changes Coming To Your Water Bill

Beginning with the November bill, Water Resource Services (WRS) customers will see changes in the rates they pay for water, wastewater and metered reclaimed water service.

In order to keep the utility financially sound, Hillsborough County Commissioners in May approved the implementation of “rate indexing.” Rate indexing will allow us to make annual adjustments to rates based on an inflation factor established by the Florida Public Service Commission.

The rate indexing will be applied for the first time on usage this month, meaning customers will see the adjustments reflected in the bills received in November. After that, if any adjustments are necessary based on the indexing formula, the rates will change on June 1 of each year.

The rate adjustment for this year is 1.72 percent, amounting to an additional 93 cents per month on the typical household use of 6,000 gallons of water.

This is the first time in nine years that the portion of

COUNT NUMBER	BILL DATE	DUE DATE
999999999	12/08/08	12/29/08
CONSUMPTION (IN GALLONS)	READ TYPE	METER DESCRIPTION
27000	ACTUAL	WATER
Summary of Account Charges		
us Balance		\$114.35
yments - Thank You		\$0.00
ill Corrections		\$0.00
ue Amount		\$114.35
ccount Charges		\$250.25

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