



Wastewater fees



How are sewer rates set?

The city council authorized a wastewater rate study in fiscal year 2019 to analyze possible rate changes to occur in 2020. The process is underway.

What is the long-term outlook for wastewater rates?

The city conducts rate studies every 5 to 7 years. Future increases are expected to be more modest than the four percent increase in 2018 as the city approaches the retirement of its wastewater debt in 2027. The goal is to keep rates as low as possible while providing an expected level of service and meeting regulatory requirements.

Why isn't my bill tied to water usage?

Sewer bills are set at a flat rate for residential customers. Because the city does not provide water services and the water distribution system is owned and managed by private water companies, the city does not have access to water usage data

Does the city wastewater system operate at a profit?

No, the system is owned by rate payers, and rates are set to cover costs. The system does not generate a profit, nor does it provide financial support for non-wastewater activities.

Why are rate increases necessary?

Rates are increased to cover costs. Sewer rates in Sedona remained at the level between 1997 and 2010. When formal rate studies were completed in 2010 and 2013, fee increases were adopted to meet the financial obligations to operate, maintain, upgrade and expand the wastewater system.

Another reason for rate increases is self-sufficiency. The city is moving toward a self-sufficient wastewater system that operates as an enterprise so that users cover all costs. This model is used by most public utilities across the nation and is required by Arizona state law. The city is reducing the wastewater system's dependence on subsidy from sales taxes over time so that as sewer rates increase, the sales tax subsidy decreases. This complies with state law and allows the city to redirect sales tax revenues to fund other services such as road maintenance and repair, and for completing capital projects.

What are current monthly rates?

The last increase of 4 percent was effective July 2017. Current residential monthly rates are:

- Per residential unit (ERU) - \$61.11
- Low-flow rate - \$47.52
- Low-income residential rate - \$32.17

Qualified low-income residents can receive a discount of almost 50 percent.

Why is there a monthly "standby fee" if I am not connected to the sewer system?

The city constructs sewer system facilities capable of handling all current and likely future customers. The standby fee is a charge to areas not yet connected but that could be connected in the future. The fee is for maintenance of that portion of sewer system capacity that was constructed to serve these future connections. Without the standby fee, customers currently connected would be paying not only for their own service but the capacity needed for future customers as well.

Why are my rates different from other communities?

Charges among different communities vary greatly depending on a number of factors. These include:

- Age of the wastewater system. Sedona's system was constructed because of state mandates in the 1980s. Part of the wastewater bill pays for construction bonds and will be paid off in 2027.
- Geography. The wastewater collection system contains 17 pump stations because of our hilly terrain. Pump stations are expensive, requiring power and regular maintenance.
- Size of system. Sedona's system services a low-density population many miles away from the treatment facility. This results in fewer customers and higher fixed costs.
- Regulatory requirements as specified by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. Requirements differ between communities because of where the water is discharged or how it is used after treatment.
- Environmental sustainability. Sedona treats wastewater to an A+ quality level and injects treated water back into the water table. Sedona residents have told us that environmental sustainability is important to them, and these water treatment activities help ensure adequate water supply in Arizona for the future.

Questions about sewer billing?

Call the Sedona Financial Services Department at (928) 204-7205, Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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