

Why Increase Sewer Rates?



Dear Customer:

This insert is one in a series that will be provided to you over the next few months to inform you about our water and sewer services, major projects, and the cost to deliver these services.

As of May 1, 2009, Lubbock water customers will see the new water and sewer rates in their monthly water bills. Rate increases are necessary to continue to provide customers with a continual supply of water. Water is becoming a more valuable resource each year. Because the City must spend millions of dollars to bring water to Lubbock from as far as 180 miles away, it is logical for us to attempt to make every drop count. As a result, recycling our limited water resources is an important part of Lubbock's long-term water supply plan.

Half of the water used by Lubbock (6 billion gallons annually) is collected in the sewer system for treatment at the City's Southeast Water Reclamation Plant. Since the 1930's the wastewater has been disposed of primarily by irrigating cropland and as process water for some industrial facilities, but even our wastewater is too valuable a resource to simply dispose of it.

A few years ago, the City developed a new strategy for handling its wastewater. Instead of disposing of it on cropland and creating potential environmental problems, the City adopted the goal to treat the wastewater to stream-quality standards while discharging the treated water into the Canyon Lakes.

As a result, the City developed a Reclamation Plant improvement plan to increase treatment

capacity, which consists of four phases. These phases are as follows:

Phase 1 - Headworks Improvements

This phase to rebuild and improve the initial lift station has been completed at a cost of \$2 million.

Phase 2 - Improvements at Plant 4

This phase is currently under construction and includes upgrading and expanding the treatment capacity of Plant 4 at a cost of \$43 million.

Phase 3 - Solids Handling Optimization

The city has begun the process of evaluating methods to remove and handle solids produced during treatment.

Phase 4 - Improvements at Plant 3

This phase consists of a future upgrade to Plant 3, is estimated to cost an additional \$30 million, and may begin as early as 2010.

Improving the treatment of wastewater at the Reclamation Plant brings us one-step closer to our goal of reusing water. However, as part of the water recycling process, the City must also secure water supply and reuse permits from appropriate regulatory agencies. These permits are necessary for the discharge, storage, diversion, and use of water in streams, rivers and reservoirs. The City will need to construct reservoirs to capture the discharged water for reuse. The construction of Canyon Lake #7 and/or the Post Reservoir are two viable options that may become a reality in the next 20 years.

Once these projects are complete, the City will have the technology and infrastructure in place to make wastewater recycling a reality. The fees that you pay for sewer services are part of a proactive plan to ensure that we will have water to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,
City of Lubbock