

Public Fire Protection Charges on Water & Sewer Utility Bill

There will be a noticeable change on the sewer and water bill beginning with the first quarter 2024 billing (March). You will notice the public fire protection fee (PFP) in addition to the water and sewer consumption charges. Common questions and answers regarding the PFP are listed below.

What is the purpose of a Water Utility?

The Water Utility has three basic functions: 1) Capability to deliver water for fighting fires; 2) Furnishing water for consumption; and 3) Furnishing water for sanitation.

What is the Public Fire Protection Charge?

This is a charge that is required by State law and regulated by the State of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission. This is a cost collected for the benefit of municipal water utilities for the express purpose of recovering the costs to supply proper volume and pressure of water for fighting fires.

How has Public Fire Protection been paid for in the past?

The Village has been using property tax dollars to subsidize the Utility at the rate of approximately \$66,000/year for facilities in the Village of Brownsville.

Why has the Village been paying for the Utility Expense?

The Village has been subsidizing these costs for the utility customers to maintain a lower cost of water service for those residents currently connected to the service.

Why is this now going to show up as a fee on my Utility Bill?

The Village can no longer afford to artificially subsidize the Utility by general property taxes. Utility users/customers will now have to pay for a service that was previously subsidized by only Village property taxpayers.

Isn't this a cost that should be upheld by the Fire Department and not the utility customers?

Isn't this why I pay taxes?

This charge has absolutely nothing to do with the costs of operating Brownsville Fire Company. The Public Fire Protection Charge covers the costs of the Brownsville Water Utility to be able to deliver water for fighting fires and is completely independent of any expenses that the Fire Company may incur to use the water to fight the fire. How these expenses are accounted for and organized in the Village's financial accounts are regulated by the State of Wisconsin.

What costs does the Public Fire Protection Charge specifically cover?

Although hydrants are an important part of the cost, there are other expenses, such as increased sizes of water mains, increased pump capacity, and increased storage capacity. These things must all be in place to make sure that the Utility has enough capacity to provide water for fighting fires and still supply daily water needs at the same time. If the water system was not used to fight fires, the system would cost the utility significantly less to operate and maintain due to smaller mains, pumps, and storage tanks.

I have multiple meters; will I receive a charge for every meter?

Any meter providing general service (being consumed, used in a manufacturing process, discharge to the sanitary sewer, etc.) WILL receive the Public Fire Protection Charge. If you are a property that has an extra/special meter for irrigation purposes only and a meter for domestic water use, the extra meter WILL NOT receive the Public Fire Protection Charge.

Does the PFP Charge Apply to Tax Exempt Properties?

Yes, all utility customers will be responsible for paying the Public Fire Protection Charge, i.e., churches, schools, government entities will pay the same rate as any other customer with the same meter size.

My house is worth a fraction of what a major manufacturer in Brownsville is worth, why doesn't PFP reflect value of property vs. equivalent meter?

Many commercial, industrial, and public authority buildings already have private fire lines which they have installed at their own expense and pay a quarterly charge to the utility. These customers are not relying solely on the public fire protection capabilities for their fire needs and because of this additional safeguard, will have lower reliance on the public fire protection capabilities of the water utility.

Am I able to reduce my meter size to reduce my PFP charge?

Water meter size is based on delivering the necessary amount of water at the required pressure to all points inside your building. The utility can review your water use history and needs, but generally the meter sizing was reviewed at the time your building was constructed or remodeled. The meter size will not change without a review by the water utility or information furnished by a licensed plumber or professional engineer working for you.

This is just a utility rate increase, isn't it?

No, the utility is not receiving any increase in revenue, this is just the same amount coming from a different source - a direct charge on your bill rather than from the Village general tax collections.

Do other municipalities have a Public Fire Protection Charge?

In this area Lomira, Theresa, Campbellsport, Oakfield, Horicon, Mayville, Juneau, and others all include a public fire protection charge on their utility bill.

What will my charge be for public fire protection?

The Public Service Commission of WI has determined the following quarterly Public Fire Protection rates will apply:

Meter Size		Quarterly Charges
5/8	inch meter	\$35.31
3/4	inch meter	\$35.31
1	inch meter	\$88.38
1 1/4	inch meter	\$130.89
1 1/2	inch meter	\$176.85
2	inch meter	\$285.00
3	inch meter	\$531.00
4	inch meter	\$879.00
6	inch meter	\$1,770.00
8	inch meter	\$2,832.00
10	inch meter	\$4,245.00
12	inch meter	\$5,661.00

Further questions please contact DPW Adam Lechner at 920-583-6700 or publicworks@brownsvillewi.gov