

Understanding the Utility Bill



Have a question about your Utility Bill? This page responds to frequently asked questions about the single family residential utility bill. It goes over the information a City staff person would cover on the phone if there is a question or concern such as, "my bill is high," "my bill doesn't make sense based on my consumption." or "I think I have a leak." Reviewing the information below, the web links, and the [Utility Bill Information](#) page may answer your questions quickly and easily.

The City strives to have a bill that is as easy to read and understand what the numbers mean. We also strive to get as much information on the website as possible so that residents can quickly and easily get answers to questions. If the information can be improved on the website please [contact us](#). If you need to talk to a person about a specific issue on your bill or service, please contact [Utility Billing](#) or the [Citizen Information Center](#) for general inquiries.

When the most recent bill format was developed, the handout [Utility Bills Made Easier](#) was created. This is a useful handout for review. It is referenced below when reviewing key information on the Utility Bill.

Here is a breakdown of your Utility Bill and what it tells you:

Water Usage		
CURRENT READING	PREVIOUS READING	WATER USAGE IN CCF
4322	3976	43
TIER 1 (1 - 30)		33.76
TIER 2 (31 - 32)		48.32
TIER 3 (33+)		62.37
Total for Water Usage		\$144.45

When wondering why your bill seems different or higher than expected, the first place to look is the Water Usage part of the bill. The City of Lake Oswego has a tiered water billing structure. This means that as more water is consumed, the water gets more expensive. A tiered water billing structure was adopted as a way to encourage conservation of a precious resource - water.

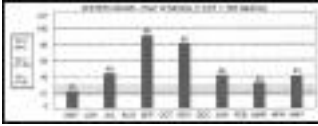
The Water Usage section of your bill (F on the handout) lists how much water you used in each tier. Do you have usage in Tier 3? If so, know that this water is charged at a rate more than double the water that is used in Tier 1. Many times when people wonder about their bill, the answer is in the fact that they have consumed more water in Tier 2 and Tier 3 than the previous month.

If you would like to see the rates by consumption and how the water consumption amount impacts your Utility Bill,

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play around with the [water calculator](#).

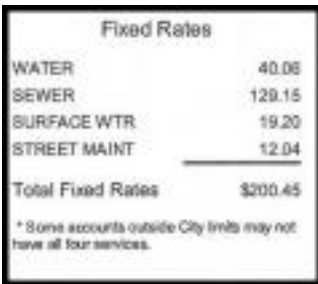


The Water Usage Graph (H on the handout) provides usage for the last 18 months - from the current billing month to the same month the previous year. It is important to compare your consumption level to the same billing cycle as people use more water in the summer months.

Looking at this chart shows how much your bill is impacted by the weather and your household habits, mainly watering the yard in the summer months. Is your consumption double in the summer months? Triple? if so, a free water audit would be worth your time. Through a [water audit](#), you can learn of ways to be more efficient and decrease overall water use.

Is your usage level about the same as the bill 18 months ago? If not, do you know why or do you think that you have a leak? Remember, this chart just shows usage, not cost, so if the usage level is unexpectedly higher than the last similar billing month, review the [How to Detect a Leak](#) information.

The City offers free [Water Audits](#) and [conservation resource](#) aimed at helping people reduce their usage towards Tier 1 levels. If you already consume at low levels, review the materials on this page about Fixed Rates.



Fixed Rates	
WATER	40.08
SEWER	129.15
SURFACE WTR	19.20
STREET MAINT	12.04
Total Fixed Rates	\$200.45

* Some accounts outside City limits may not have all four services.

The majority of a Utility Bill is made up of fixed rates. To review the fixed rates for utility services on your bill find the Fixed Rates box (E on the handout). The total fixed rate charge is also in the Invoice Summary (G on the handout).

The fixed portion of the bill for a typical ratepayer is around 82% of the total bill. Currently, the typical ratepayer pays \$135.63 monthly in fixed charges and 27.28 in water usage based consumption. The fixed charges change annually on July 1.

There is one fixed charge that does include some usage data - sewer. The sewer rates are made up of a fixed charge and then a usage rate based on your average winter water usage. The sewer portion of your bill remains fixed for 12 months - between July 1 and June 30. The fixed charge for sewer is \$44.88 and the consumption level for the typical home is \$14.64. If you ever wonder why your fixed charges are different than your neighbor, the above is the reason. A portion of the rate is based on consumption. When pulling out the sewer consumption related charge, 70% of the total bill is fixed and is not influenced by consumption levels.

Often a citizen will call who has used little water and/or is vigorously practicing conservation efforts, wondering why the bill isn't decreasing as much as they think it should. Others may call because they were out of town for a significant part of the month and thought the bill would be lower. If you are already consuming completely in Tier 1, the amount of change you will see in a bill is small from month to month. This is because of the fixed portion of the bill and the lower cost of Tier 1 water. Each 100 cubic feet of usage (ccf) of each 748 gallons is \$2.51 in Tier 1. For customers in Tier 1, decreasing usage by 1 ccf or 748 gallons will only change your bill by \$2.51.

If you would like more information on how the rates have impacted your utility bill over time, please read the [Rate Changes Impacting Monthly Bills](#) webpage.

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INVOICE SUMMARY	
PREVIOUS BALANCE	379.98
PAYMENTS	(379.98)
ADJUSTMENTS	0.00
PENALTIES	0.00
FORWARDING BALANCE	\$0.00
<hr/>	
Total Fixed Rates	\$200.45
Total for Water Usage	\$144.45
CURRENT BILL	\$344.90
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AMOUNT DUE	\$344.90
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AMOUNT DUE AFTER 07/01/2012	\$344.90

The Invoice Summary (G on the handout) lists any previous balances, adjustments or penalties that make up the Forwarding Balance. The remaining information shows your current monthly bill. There is a Fixed Rate total and the total for Water Usage - these two items make up your monthly bill.

Supporting Documents



[Utility Bills Made Easier Handout - Reading Your Bill](#)

Web Links

[Water Consumption Cost Calculator](#)[Water Meters](#)

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