

Public Fire Protection Charges on Water & Sewer Utility Bill

There will be a noticeable change on the sewer and water bill beginning with the fourth quarter 2018 billing (December). 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. Also, beginning in 2019 the garbage and recycling fees will not be included on the quarterly sewer and water bill. Those fees will be assessed on the tax bill beginning December 2018.

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 \$120,000/year for facilities in the Village of Lomira.

Why has the Village been paying for a 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? Due to budget constraints and reductions in State-shared revenues, the Village can no longer afford to artificially subsidize the Utility through the use of general property taxes. Utility users/customers will now have to pay for a service that was previously subsidized by only Village property taxpayers. All utility customers will now be treated equally and non-profits will now have to also pay for their share of the Public Fire Protection costs.

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 the Lomira Fire service. The Public Fire Protection Charge covers the costs of the Lomira Water Utility to be able to deliver water for fighting fires and is completely independent of any expenses that the Fire Department may incur in order 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 (water towers); that all must be in place to supply a fire. 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 Lomira 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. With a rate increase the utility receives more revenue than it did previously.

Do other municipalities have a Public Fire Protection Charge? There are 582 water utilities in Wisconsin classified by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission according to the number of customers they serve. Lomira is among the group classified as D utilities, serving fewer than 1,000 customers. 51% of Wisconsin utilities include this charge on their utility bills. In this area Theresa, Campbellsport, Oakfield, Horicon, Mayville, Juneau and others all include a public fire protection charge on their utility bill. Since all utilities are different in terms of: Number of Customers, Age of System, Valuation of Assets, and Density of Customers, (to name a few) comparison of rates is not very meaningful. With those factors in mind The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin has a link to a complete list of utilities in the state that includes which ones are direct billing public fire protection. If you are interested in more detail you can access this table from the following web page: <https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/water/PFPCOMP.pdf>

What will my charge be for public fire protection? The Public Service Commission of WI has determined the following rates will apply: * Residential meters are 5/8" or 3/4" with a few exceptions

Meter Size	Quarterly Charges
5/8 & 3/4" *	\$ 22.50
1"	\$ 57.00
1 1/2"	\$ 112.50
2"	\$ 180.00
3"	\$ 336.00
4"	\$ 561.00
6"	\$ 1125.00