



WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

2021 Rate Adoption FAQs

RATE ADJUSTMENT

1. When were the current water and sewer rates adopted by the board of directors?

A: Western's board of directors reviewed the proposed rates during a formal public hearing Wednesday, June 2, 2021, where the board voted 3 to 1 to adopt the new rates for four years. Customers were mailed a notice 45 days in advance of the hearing which provided information about the rates, why an increase was needed, the bill impacts and how to provide public comment.

2. How much will my monthly bill increase and when will my bill change?

A: Customers will see a change to their billing statement beginning on or after July 1, 2021, and every July for an additional three years. In the first year, bills for the average residential customer will increase between \$2 and \$4 depending on where you live, and if you also receive sewer services from Western. This equates to a median monthly rate increase of 2.1 to 3.5%.

Residential, commercial businesses, agricultural, landscape, commercial customers with private fire service, and those who receive sewer service from Western will see a rate adjustment on their monthly bills.

3. If I use water efficiently, will my bill decrease?

A: Taking simple steps to use water efficiently can effectively lower your water bill. More importantly, with more than 60% of water being used outdoors, taking action to adjust outdoor water use during cooler months, when plants are dormant and need less water to stay healthy, will be necessary to stay within your water budget and avoid major variances in your bill. Checking for and preventing leaks is another way to save money.

You can find more information about your water budget at wmwd.com/WaterBudget. To learn about Western's customer support programs that can help you use water more efficiently and save money, visit wmwd.com/WaterSavings.

4. Why is my bill amount fluctuating?

A: We encourage you to reach out to our Customer Service team during normal business hours, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., at 951.571.7104 or via email to billing@wmwd.com. They will be happy to provide a billing analysis to review why you have seen a fluctuation in your billing statement and if there is anything we can do to help. In addition to changes in water use, your bill could fluctuate if the number of days in the billing period is different. Western sends water bills 12 times per year and some billing periods are longer than others. But not to worry, your water budget adjusts with the number of



billing days.

Customers will need to take action to adjust outdoor water use during cooler months, when plants are dormant need less water to stay healthy, to stay within your water budget and avoid major variances in your bill.

Visit [wmwd.com/ReadingYourBill](https://www.wmwd.com/ReadingYourBill) to learn more about how your water budget is calculated and how to read and understand the charges on your bill.

5. Why was a rate adjustment needed?

A: Western must continue to keep safe, high-quality water flowing to our customers no matter the circumstances, and rates must keep pace to maintain service reliability including:

- The cost of purchasing water
- Operating and maintaining the water and wastewater systems
- Meeting high water quality standards

A cost-of-service study was conducted in early 2021 that showed the previous retail water and sewer rates were insufficient to support necessary expenses.

With customers in mind during the COVID-19 global pandemic, we are continuing to suspend water shut-offs due to non-payment and have gone one step further by also suspending late payment penalty fees. Western has also expanded payment assistance programming and are connecting customers to regional financial assistance, if eligible.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact our Customer Service team Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 951.571.7104 or billing@wmwd.com.

6. Does Western offer discounts or assistance programs?

A: Not only does Western offer bill payment assistance and repayment plans, but we also offer many customer support programs to help you use water as efficiently as possible to stay within your water budget and save money. There are opportunities for indoor and outdoor rebates as well as our turf replacement program. For more information about water use efficiency programs, visit [wmwd.com/WaterSavings](https://www.wmwd.com/WaterSavings).

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact our Customer Service team Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 951.571.7104 or billing@wmwd.com. To learn about payment assistance programs, visit [wmwd.com/PaymentAssistance](https://www.wmwd.com/PaymentAssistance).

7. How will the rate increase encourage water use efficiency and sustainability?

A: Western provides each customer with a water budget, billed at monthly tiered rates. Each customer's monthly water budget supports efficient indoor and outdoor water use. When you stay within your



personalized water budget and take action to adjust irrigation seasonally, not only are you being efficient with your usage but you also benefit by receiving water that costs less to deliver.

By using water efficiently and staying within your water budget, you can save money by making sure you're charged the lowest water rate.

When you exceed your water budget, Western must purchase more costly imported water to supplement use, which is reflected in tiers three and above on your water bill.

For more information on the value of Western's water and to learn more about your water budget, visit wmwd.com/ValueofWater or wmwd.com/WaterBudget.

8. Why are Eastern Municipal Water District's/Riverside Public Utilities' water rates so much lower than Western's water rates?

A: Unlike Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) and Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) customers, residents living within the Western service area live in a unique location that has very limited groundwater under our feet for customer's use.

RPU can secure 100% of their water from local groundwater supplies, the most low-cost water supply available. While EMWD must also import some of their water, they do have access to groundwater supplies and have more recycled water capacity. Since RPU and EMWD have direct access to local groundwater, their costs must support pumping the water out of the ground and cleaning it to meet drinking water standards.

Western's access to local supplies requires that we pay neighboring agencies for the water itself, plus pumping, treatment and transportation costs to deliver it to our service area. This amounts to about \$600 per acre-foot to transport the water from the well to your region, making our "local supply" up to five times more expensive than RPU's and EMWD's.

Since Western's Riverside customers sit atop a large hill predominantly made of rock, Western must import nearly 60% of our water from more than 700 miles away. This is a long, energy-intensive and expensive trip. The cost of energy, systems and labor that is needed to pump the water from the Sierra Nevada Mountains into our region and uphill into customer homes and businesses is a major factor in Western's cost of service, which results in a higher rate.

For more information, check out this video that guides [the value of water](#) in our service area.

9. What is Western doing to control costs?

A: Improving technology: Western is making sure we are using water efficiently and avoiding any water loss. When water is used inefficiently, it leads to rising costs. To address this, we've initiated a "Smart" Meter Replacement Program where Western is replacing all meters in our retail service area. Meters that under register an individual home or business end up costing all customers more money.

Enhancing water supply: In 2020, Western completed construction on our Victoria Recharge Basin. The basin replenishes groundwater with free stormwater, to increase local water supplies in the future and



reduce costs. This helps us avoid reliance on imported water, thereby minimizing rate increases. Furthermore, our Arlington and Chino Desalters work in conjunction with our recharge basin to enhance the region's water supply while providing locally produced and high-quality drinking water.

In 2019, we completed the La Sierra Pipeline. In times of emergency, La Sierra Pipeline provides Western access to more than 6,300 acre-feet annually to offset potential supply interruptions from northern California.

Improving access to local groundwater : Western purchases local groundwater from Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) and has entered agreements with Eastern Municipal Water District and Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District that will increase our access to future local supply sources.

Controlling labor costs : Employees are paying for a larger share of their retirement costs and Western will be maintaining our current full-time workforce headcount without seeking approval to add any newly budgeted positions. Additionally, Western negotiated lower premiums by 33% on Western-provided benefits.

Operational efficiencies : In one year, Western implemented 14 different operational efficiency projects that have created annual savings of more than \$1.2 million, which is essential in helping keep rates and future rate increases as low as possible for customers.

Securing grant funding : Finally, Western has been strategically enhancing its grant procurement efforts—seeking grant dollars to support critical projects which directly lowers the financial impact on our customers. In the past five years, Western has been awarded more than \$27 million to support major system improvements to increase local service reliability and technology enhancements that give customers more control of their water use.

10. How does Western spend the money they collect from customers?

A: Western works 24/7 to provide you with safe, reliable water and wastewater (sewer) services when you need them. Western is always looking for ways to control costs by:

Purchased imported water: Purchased imported water makes up between 27 and 46% of Western's budget as more than 60% of your water comes from more than 700 miles away and is purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD).

Purchased energy: While purchased energy accounts for about 3% of Western's budget, energy utility companies are significantly increasing this necessary cost to have the energy it takes to transport water to your home or business.

Other costs: The remaining costs are for operations, maintenance, a highly skilled workforce to operate and maintain Western's existing infrastructure and increasing regulatory compliance requirements that ensure you have safe, reliably drinking water and sewer services.