



Tiverton Wastewater District Water Operations, Maintenance and Administration (OMA) Fee and Sewer Usage Fee Policy

Effective Date

This policy supersedes the policy documentation “Determining Operations, Maintenance and Administration Fees for New Sewer Users with no Historical Water Usage Data” that was adopted at the regular Tiverton Wastewater District (TWW) Board meeting on June 25, 2018 and “Operations, Maintenance and Administration Fee Adjustments Policy” adopted at the regular (TWW) Board meeting August 25, 2021. It is effective upon approval until another policy is enacted.

Approval

This policy has been approved by the Tiverton Wastewater District (TWW) Board at their regular meeting on May 20, 2024.

Background

This policy sets forth procedures used to set Operations, Maintenance and Administration (OMA) fees and sewer usage fees. These policies apply to current as well as new sewer customers and describe how TWW will adjust accounts when necessary. We will clarify and carefully define sewer connection and customer classification terms so that customer billing is transparent, consistent, and fair. All fees are based on historical water usage whenever possible, and on well-defined estimates when necessary.

Definitions

Regular users are customers who use less than 100 Hundred Cubic Feet (HCF) (10,000 cubic feet) of water per year. For billing purposes, the total use in the previous 4 quarters of a billing cycle determines the user status.

Large users are customers who use 100 Hundred Cubic Feet (HCF) (10,000 cubic feet) of water per year or more. For billing purposes, the total use in the previous 4 quarters of a billing cycle determines the user status.

Some users may change between large and regular users on a quarterly basis depending on their usage.

Equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) shall represent a single-family household. For the purposes of this policy, each EDU has a water use value of 95 Hundred Cubic Feet (HCF) and is used as a multiplier to determine charges for entities that are not single-family households such as multiple family households or large commercial or industrial users.

Service Connection shall refer to each pipe connection **out of a building** into a connecting pipe or directly to the sewer main in the street. In most cases these service connections and intermediate pipes are the responsibility of the property owner, but there are cases where these pipes are owned by TWW. Records of pipe ownership are on file at TWW.

Applicability

Billing is done according to several factors. Whether a customer is a regular or large user, the number of families, or equivalent dwelling units (EDU) at the property, and the number of service connections determine each customer's bill. How these terms apply to individual customers is described below. Construction practices over the years, especially prior to modern building codes, may have created unique situations that we do not have standard billing practices for yet. Billing practices for non-standard installations not covered by policies in this document will be determined by TWWD staff and board on a case-by-case basis and added to the policy where appropriate.

Description of Fees

The following sections describe the fees that customers are charged on their monthly bill. As stated above, the two main parts of the bill are the **OMA fee** and the **Usage fee**.

The operations, management, and administration (OMA) fee is charged based on the number of service connections, or the number of families (EDU) served. Multiple service connections are charged multiple OMA fees. Multifamily properties with multiple EDU are usually charged multiple OMA fees. The exception to this is where multifamily properties are classified as a single large user.

Scenarios for number of service connections and how they are billed OMA fees.

The following table outlines the possibilities of how customers are connected to the sewer at a property and how it will be billed. This is consistent with historical practices by TWWD and the prior agency: The Town of Tiverton Wastewater Management Commission (WWMC).

Service connections and OMA fees.

Service Connections	Families (EDU)	OMA Fees
One (1)	One (1)	One (1)
Two (2)	One (1)	Two (2)
One (1)	Two (2)	Two (2)
One (1)	Multiple	Multiple*
Multiple	Multiple	Multiple

***Multi-family properties with one connection may be charged a single large user OMA fee**

The sewer usage fee is charged based on metered water use. Each customer will be billed usage charges based on the metered usage at each water meter connecting their property. In cases where there is one water meter for multiple properties, the usage is more likely to result in the customer being classified as a large user. Water meter readings are received from the three water suppliers that serve Tiverton. Currently: North Tiverton Fire District Water Department (NTFD) serves the majority of TWWD customers (75%) Stonebridge Water Department (SFD) serves most of the rest, and a small number of customers are served by the City of Fall River. There are a few TWWD customers who are not served by public water. These customers **must have a meter** for their well and submit usage readings to TWWD quarterly. A large percentage of the sewer usage fees collected by TWWD are paid to the City of Fall River for the treatment of sewage that TWWD collects. The bill that the City of Fall River sends to TWWD is based on these usage rates. This is currently the most reliable measure of how much sewage TWWD sends to Fall River for treatment.

Occasional water billing errors. Sometimes, a customer may receive a water bill with incorrect usage. Because water and sewer billing are done quarterly, it may take several months for the customer or the utility to notice and correct the error. In those cases, TWWD will work with the utility and the customer to ensure that the correct amount of usage is charged and that any billing adjustments are made promptly.

Occasional water leaks or spikes in usage. Sometimes a customer will experience an abnormally large amount of water usage due to a fixture left on accidentally or a large intentional use, for example filling a pool. In such cases TWWD will bill the amount of usage as stated by the utility. TWWD is billed by the City of Fall River based on water use. The customer must be charged for the usage that Fall River bills to TWWD, otherwise this cost would unfairly be borne by the rest of the TWWD customers.

Fee appeal for broken or leaking fixtures

If you suspect that your sewer bill is dramatically larger due to a water leak, you MAY be eligible for a credit on your bill. Once the repair is complete, submit documentation of the repair, including receipts for labor, supplies, and equipment within 90 days. Once your documentation has been reviewed, TWWD staff will determine the amount and the period for which the adjustment should be made. Only accounts in good standing are eligible for adjustments. Adjustments will be determined based upon the same billing period from the prior 12-month period, plus ½ the overage.

Adjustments on sewer bills will NOT be made in the following circumstances:

- Premises left abandoned or vacated without reasonable care of the plumbing system.
- More than one occurrence in any 5-year period.
- Pool filling.
- Irrigation outside of deduct meter customers.
- Bills claimed to be lost or not received.
- Homes under construction/renovation.
- The customer did not take immediate steps after detection of the leak to prevent further loss of water.
- Customer did not provide proof of repair (receipts for any materials or services related to that repair).
- Meters that are tampered with in any way.

Scenarios for number of water meters and how they are billed sewer usage fees.

The following table outlines the possibilities for how water may be metered at a property and how it will be billed. This is consistent with historical practices by TWWD and the prior agency: Town of Tiverton Wastewater Management Commission (WWMC).

Water meters and usage fees.

Water Meters	Families (EDU)	Usage Fees
One (1)	One (1)	One (1)
One (1)	Two (2)	One (1) *
One (1)	Multiple	One (1) *
Multiple	One (1)	Multiple
Multiple	Multiple	Multiple

***Multi-family properties with one meter are more likely to be large users.**

Regular users

Regular users are sewer users who use less than 100 Hundred Cubic Feet (HCF) (10,000 cubic feet) of water per year. They are billed in 4 quarterly installments per year during January, April, July, and October. Regular user OMA fees are set each year when all fees are reviewed as part of TWWD budget development. All fees are published in the TWWD schedule of fees posted on the TWWD website.

Large users

Large users are sewer users that consume 100 HCF (10,000 cubic feet) of water or more per year. They are billed in 4 quarterly installments per year during January, April, July, and October, or are billed monthly for a nominal fee. Large user OMA fees and monthly billing fees are set each year when all fees are reviewed as part of TWWD budget development.

Large user OMA fees are billed by equivalent dwelling unit (EDU). This value is determined using historical use data from the previous 4 quarters. 1 EDU is equal to 95 HCF of water use. The number of EDU for a large user is calculated by dividing the total water use by 95 HCF. The resulting use rounded up to the nearest tenth.

For example, a large user consuming 195 HCF per year would generate an EDU value of $2.05 \text{ EDU} = 195 \text{ HCF} / 95 \text{ HCF/EDU}$. Rounding up to the nearest tenth would provide a value of 2.1 EDU.

The EDU value is multiplied by the large user OMA fee to generate the annual bill, which is then divided equally to produce quarterly or monthly installments depending on the customer.

All fees are calculated quarterly based on the previous 4 quarters. If the user should drop below 100 HCF (10,000 cubic feet), they will be reclassified as a regular user.

New users

New users will be considered regular or large users and will be charged based upon design flows as described below.

OMA Fees

Single-family homes will initially be billed a regular user OMA fee as stated in the schedule of fees.

Multi-family homes will initially be billed an OMA fee as a multiplier of the regular user fee as stated in the schedule of fees depending on the number of units. Alternatively, they may be charged the large user OMA fee if they are reasonably expected to be a large user based on the design of the property.

Commercial or industrial new construction will initially be billed an OMA fee based on the estimated annual sewage flow using the formula:

- Regular or Large User OMA Fee x (Estimated Annual Sewage Flow in HCF / 95 HCF/Equivalent Dwelling Unit)
 - Estimated Annual Sewage Flow is calculated as half the design flow in gallons per day x365 days converted to Hundred cubic feet per year.
 - Estimated Annual Sewage Flow = (Design Flow Gal/Day x 50%) x 365 Days/Year x 1 HCF/748 Gallons = HCF/Year
 - Daily design flows shall be calculated based on the final building layout and the schedule of sewage flows contained in Appendix A of the *Agreement for Wastewater Treatment Between City of Fall River, Massachusetts, and the Tiverton Wastewater District*.
 - When a design flow is not available the TWWD will estimate an OMA fee amount with information available at that time.

OMA Fees for new large users will be reviewed and considered within 6 months after sewer connection is completed or OMA fees have been applied. TWWD reserves the right to make monthly or quarterly OMA fee adjustments to accounts, on an individual basis, if it deems more frequent changes are necessary for that account, or if usage surpasses one-half the design flow as it was calculated as described above.

OMA fee Adjustments

In cases where meter readings are not available for consideration, other factors may be considered. These may include prior history of usage, actual quarterly usage, or other factors. In general, any change in sewer usage versus the prior year may require an updated OMA fee amount be applied for the individual account. For sewer users requesting their OMA fee amount be reconsidered, TWWD will review individual account requests, only when received in writing, one-time annually. TWWD reserves the right to keep a minimum OMA fee at the amount calculated using the formula provided above.

At least annually, and generally at the end of the fiscal year, customer usage will be reviewed to ensure OMA fees are properly applied to individual accounts and that the fees are sufficient for the responsible management of TWWD finances. TWWD may review and modify OMA fees prior to the annual fiscal year-end review update in the event of circumstances beyond the TWWD reasonable control such as, but not limited to, fire, floods, pandemic, embargoes, war, acts of war, insurrections, riots, strikes, lockouts or other labor disturbances, or acts of God, especially if those circumstances impact the operations of the TWWD. Should the TWWD need to modify fees due to the aforementioned force majeure related circumstances, we will inform customers that these circumstances have resulted in changes to their bill.