

Questions/Answers about raising water/sewer rates

1. Why do we have to raise rates at all?

Pearl River Valley Water Supply District must raise its rates to cover increasing costs of sewage transport and treatment charged by its regional sewer partners. As with most towns in the Metro area, the District has no sewage processing plant and must pay those with that ability to transport and process the sewage produced at PRVWSD. The agency has absorbed two increases in Madison County without raising rates and is now facing an 80 percent increase in Rankin County. PRVWSD can't continue absorbing these costs. PRVWSD hasn't passed a rate increase in six years, which included 5 percent annual increases through 2020.

2. When does the increase go into effect?

It starts with the October 2021 billing cycle and will be on the bill received around Nov. 1.

3. How did PRVWSD arrive at the amount of the increase?

A water/sewer rate analysis was conducted. See the PRVWSD web page for the study. www.therez.ms.gov

4. Why the new “regional sewer charge”?

Beginning with the October bill, PRVWSD water/sewer customers will begin seeing a new line on their bill for Regional Sewer Charge (RSC). This is necessary to offset the growing cost of our sewer treatment providers in both Rankin and Madison counties, which transport the sewage to Jackson for treatment. Beginning in October, West Rankin Utility Authority will open its new \$150 million treatment facility, which is where all of PRVWSD's Rankin County sewage will be treated.

5. How much will my bill go up?

The average increase is about 20 percent, but the exact increase depends on the quantity of water a leaseholder uses per month.

A 3,000-gallon or less customer will still pay the same base fee of \$30 per month but will have to pay a new Regional Sewage Charge based on a rate of \$2.25 per 1,000 gallons. Instead of \$30, that customer will pay up to \$36.75.

A customer that uses 6,000 gallons a month would see the bill increase from \$68.40 to \$82.50, based on the additional \$2.25 per 1,000 gallon Regional Sewage Charge, and a slight increase in the volumetric charge of 5 cents per 1,000 gallons (\$5.45 to \$5.50) for water and 15 cents per 1,000 gallons for sewage (\$7.35 to \$7.50) for customers exceeding 3,000 gallons a month.

6. Why does PRV use WRUA?

In the past, PRVWSD has used West Rankin Utility Authority existing pipelines to pass its sewage from Rankin County customers to Jackson's Savannah Street treatment facility. PRVWSD and WRUA have long been partners including plans for the new facility. With the opening of the new plant, WRUA, and in turn PRV, will lessen its reliance on Jackson's aging Savannah Street treatment plant.

7. Why not just stay with Jackson?

It's no secret that there have been issues regarding the release of raw sewage into the environment and the Pearl River from Jackson's Savannah Street facility. At some point, Jackson will be facing the need to update its treatment infrastructure and costs will escalate. Relieving the pressure on the Jackson facility now and lessening PRV's reliance on it simply serves in the best interests of PRVWSD and its customers.

8. What are other communities charging? Are we higher/lower?

Most of the new rate increase will come from the start of the Regional Sewer Charge, a fee PRVWSD will collect to offset the higher costs we pay providers to process our sewer. Except for Jackson and Clinton that have their own treatment systems, all other area municipalities have a Regional Sewer Charge or a similar charge under a different name. Those rates vary from a low of \$2 to a high of \$5.35 per 1,000 gallons. The only two municipalities in the Metro area that do not have the same or similar charge are Jackson and Clinton, which have their own sewage treatment plants.

PRVWSD will charge \$2.25 per 1,000 gallons, lower than most nearby communities. For comparison, per 1,000 gallons, Flowood charges \$3.91, Brandon \$3.50, Richland \$3.78, and Pearl \$4.28 for residents and \$5.35 for its customers living outside city limits. Only Madison at \$2 and Ridgeland at \$2.07 are lower.

9. Why are Madison County customers paying for Rankin's service?

Madison County leaseholders are not paying for Rankin's service. They are paying to have their own sewer processed. PRVWSD has had two rate increases from its two Madison County providers since PRVWSD's last increase, but instead of passing those increases on to customers the agency has absorbed the costs. It can no longer afford to do so.

10. My water bill is twice what it was last month; what are you people doing?

The increase shouldn't double your cost. Contact PRVWSD and provide your account number and/or address, the agency will be glad to check the account and get back to you. PRVWSD also suggests that you download the free app EyeonWater for your smart phone or other device. It is free and helps you track daily water use and can help detect leaks before they become expensive.

11. I pay lease fees every year, why do you need even more money?

The lease fee is rent on land you do not own. The lease fee entitles you to place your home or business on PRVWSD land. In accordance with the Agreed Final Order of the Hinds County Chancery Court entered February 26, 1985, May 27, 1986, lease fees cannot be used to pay for services like water and sewer. Lease fees are used to maintain the lake, parks, recreational facilities and forest land.

12. Who do I talk to about this rate increase and can I appeal the decision?

The Board of Directors of the PRVWSD adopted the rate increase at its September 2021 board meeting. Comments can be sent to www.comments@therez.ms.gov.

13. Who are these Directors and who appoints them?

See the PRVWSD web site for this information. www.therez.ms.gov. It includes how each was appointed and the term of their appointment.

14. Are these Directors subject to this rate increase?

The law requires that eight of the fourteen Directors live on PRVWSD property. These eight will be subject the same fee increases.

15. Where do I get a copy of the PRVWSD financial statements?

PRVWSD's audited financial statements are posted on the PRVWSD web page at www.therez.ms.gov.

16. When are board meetings?

Regular monthly board meetings are scheduled on the third Thursday of every month at 9:30 a.m. at locations announced prior to each meeting. Committee meetings are held in the afternoons on the second Thursday of each month at times and locations announced a week prior.