

## 2008 UTILITY RATE INCREASES REFLECT REINVESTMENT NEEDS IN NEIGHBORHOODS, ENSURING ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY

Increases for water, sewer and stormwater rates, effective January 1, 2008, will allow the Department of Public Utilities to deliver excellent and dependable drinking water and sewer services to our residents and businesses. The rates also will support the department's Capital Improvements Budget that funds sewer and water projects in neighborhoods across Columbus and improvements to our wastewater and water treatment plants.

City Council approved the rate increases November 26, 2007. Under the new rates, the average Columbus residential customer will see a 12.55% change in their total quarterly bill. Specifically, the increases are: 18% for water; 10% for sanitary sewer; and 5% for stormwater services. The increase per quarter will average \$21.77, or \$7.26 per month. Average consumption is based on 3,000 cubic feet of water.

There is help for families living in poverty. The Low Income Discount Program provides a 15% discount for eligible customers who have previously qualified for HEAP, Medicaid, food stamps and other state and federal low income programs. Please submit the Low Income Discount application included with your bill if you wish to apply.

In addition, senior citizens 60 years of age and older, with a household income at 150% of the poverty level or lower, are eligible for a Senior Discount. Eligible seniors may qualify for both the Senior and Low Income Discount Programs.

The rate increases are driven by the city's \$2.5 billion, 40-year Wet Weather Management Plan (WWMP), to control sanitary and combined sewer overflows, and bring the city into compliance with consent decrees signed with the State of Ohio in 2002 and 2004. The WWMP will result in fewer sewer overflows, cleaner waterways and fewer basement backups. But while the EPA requires Columbus to complete this project, no federal funds are provided to the city, forcing the entire

burden to be shouldered by ratepayers. The city is pressing our local congressional delegation to support creation of an ongoing federal funding source to help relieve this burden on local ratepayers. Columbus is not alone as Cincinnati, Indianapolis and other cities face similar mandated orders to improve their sewer systems.

To fund the sewer improvements, a Project Clean Rivers surcharge began in 2006. The above increases include this fee which, for Columbus customers, will be \$2.57 per equivalent residential unit (ERU) per month; the fee for customers outside Columbus will be \$1.53 per ERU. Single-family residential properties are billed at one ERU, which equals 2,000 square feet of impervious (non-penetrable) surface, so the quarterly amount will be approximately \$7.71 for Columbus customers and \$4.59 per quarter for customers outside Columbus. Non-residential properties are charged by the amount of ERUs the properties are assigned, based on the amount of each property's impervious surface.

The new fees also go to support the city's Upground Reservoir Project, scheduled to begin construction in 2009. The \$140 million project, to be built in northwest Delaware County, will help provide a reliable water supply to a growing central Ohio population in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Water and sewer bills are based on how much water is used, and you can save money by following some easy water conservation tips. Examples include: repairing leaks; turning off faucets when water is not being used (while brushing teeth or shaving, for instance); running washing machines and dishwashers on full loads; installing low-flow fixtures and not overwatering your lawn.

Call 311 or 645-3111, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 6 p.m., for more information on water or sewer billing, Low Income or Senior Discounts and other water and sewer programs, or visit our web site at [www.utilities.columbus.gov](http://www.utilities.columbus.gov).

*See additional bill insert for the Low Income Discount Application*

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