

Illinois American Water Sewer Treatment Charge Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Is the Village raising our sewer treatment charge?

No, the sewer treatment in your Will County area is contracted by the Village of Tinley Park through the Illinois American Water Company, a private utility. Their billing rates are approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Village simply passes their charge through to the customer. The Village does not add any additional charges.

What is the new rate?

The new quarterly base service charge is \$129.60 for the first 3,000 gallons of water usage, plus \$4.109 per thousand gallons of water used in excess of 3,000. Outside water use is excluded from the sanitary sewer charge.

When did the new rate become effective?

The new rate became effective on January 1, 2017. Treatment fees on the February 1 billing will reflect the pro-rated increase in the base charges for the period beginning January 1, 2017. One month during this first billing period following the effective date of this rate change will be at the new rate. All consumption billed after January 1, 2017 will be at the new rate.

Does this rate change affect Cook County property owners?

No. The Cook County portion of Tinley Park receives sewer treatment through the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD). The charge for MWRD sewer treatment services appears as part of the property owner's Cook County real estate bill.

What can we do about their rates?

Illinois American Water is a regulated utility and must petition to the Illinois Commerce Commission for approval of its rates. The approval of rate changes is a lengthy process and follows an established protocol. IAW submitted this rate increase request in January 2016, and the final decision by the ICC was not rendered until December 2016 with a January 1, 2017 effective date. Their previous request, which became effective on October 1, 2012, was submitted in October 2011 with approval occurring in September 2012.

The Village of Tinley Park presented testimony in opposition of the proposed rate increases on behalf of our affected residents during the ICC hearing process.

The final rates approved were reduced from the original request.

Where can I get more information on this sewer treatment charge?

You can contact Illinois American Water Company at its website:

www.amwater.com/ilaw/

Also see the IAW press release regarding the rate changes:

http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/AMERPR/3477751902x0x921057/73C0A8D9-A513-47FC-BAA6-24C0FBA19D77/Statewide_Decision_Press_Release_FINAL.pdf

The sewer treatment services are provided under a bulk service agreement with the Village of Tinley Park. Tinley Park residents are NOT direct customers of IAW. We recommend that our residents should not contact IAW customer support to complain about the rate change as their customer service personnel are trained to respond to IAW direct customers with an IAW account number. They are not able to respond regarding other service arrangements such as exists between IAW and the Village.

What is sewer treatment?

Sewer treatment is the process to take sewerage wastes and extract and treat the water to a safe level so that it may be returned to the environment's water systems (creeks, rivers, streams, etc.). The remaining solid wastes are also treated and disposed of or recycled as fertilizers. Sometimes, this process is also referred to as "sewerage treatment" or "water reclamation."

How is sewer treatment different from the other sewer charge on my Village utility bill?

The charge on the Village utility bill for "Sewer" is for the maintenance and operation of the Village's sanitary sewer collection system that takes sewerage from individual properties and transports these wastes to the appropriate agency for sewer treatment and disposal. Sewer treatment for Tinley Park is handled by several different organizations. The organization providing sewer treatment is determined by where the property is located. For Tinley Park properties located in Cook County, as well as in a small portion of Will County, this service is provided by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD). Sewer treatment for Tinley Park properties in Will County not serviced by MWRD is provided by either the Village of Frankfort or the Illinois American Water Company, depending on location of the property.

Why doesn't the Village do its own sewer treatment in Will County?

The Sanitary District of Chicago was formed in 1889 to protect the Lake Michigan water supply and address contamination and other nuisances in the Chicago River and its tributaries. The State legislature expanded its authority and coverage area in 1955, and this government was renamed the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Greater Chicago (MSD) to recognize its expanded service area that now included most of Cook County in addition to the City of Chicago.

Prior to joining the MSD, homes and businesses in Tinley Park either had individual septic systems, or were illegally dumping their sewerage wastes into Midlothian Creek and other waterways. The illegal dumping, in particular, was a health hazard which the Village was required to eliminate. The individual septic systems were not always well maintained and often created health hazards of their own if they were not functioning properly. In 1955, all of Tinley Park was located in Cook County, and the Village Board opted to become part of the MSD's expanded service area. As a result, all areas of Tinley Park would receive sewer treatment services from this one service provider. At that time, it was not anticipated that the Village boundaries would expand beyond the Cook County border.

The MSD was renamed in 1989, becoming the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) "in order to provide a more accurate perception of the District's current functions and responsibilities," according to the MWRD's website.

The Village government has never had interest or desire to get into the “business” of sewer treatment. The costs of construction, operation and maintenance of a sewer treatment facility are high and the field of sewer treatment is highly regulated. After becoming covered by the services of the MWRD in 1955, the need for the Village to establish its own sewer treatment facilities was eliminated. Soon thereafter, the Village began planning for its municipal sanitary sewer collection system and the elimination of illegal dumping of wastes to our creeks and streams. The central collection system would also allow for the elimination of private septic systems and allow the Village to expand and grow. The sewer collection system routes the sewerage wastes to the entity that will perform the final treatment and disposal.

Beginning with the construction of Interstate 80 and the related improvements to Harlem Avenue (Illinois Route 43) and LaGrange Road (US Route 45) in the late 1960s, the Village recognized that its boundaries would likely expand into neighboring Will County. The first annexation of Will County land occurred in 1968. This presented the Village with the problem of obtaining sewer treatment services for those areas not previously included in the MWRD service area.

In Illinois, Facility Planning Areas (FPA) identifies the government or business that is responsible for providing sewer services to a geographical area. Accordingly, these governments and businesses are responsible for designing and sizing their sewer treatment facilities to provide sewer treatment services to their respective FPA territories, even though some properties may be farmland, or otherwise unimproved/vacant, and not currently requiring any sewer services. As property owners sought to annex their Will County property to the Village, developers and the Village have had to work with various sewer treatment agencies based on the Facility Planning Area boundaries. Over time, the Village has entered into contractual agreements with the MWRD, Village of Frankfort, and Illinois American Water to provide the needed sewer treatment and disposal services based on the established Facility Planning Areas to assure sewer treatment services will be available for all properties in Will County that are, or will, become part of the Village of Tinley Park.

There is a significant and lengthy process required to obtain approval for the construction of a new sewerage treatment facility, including determining its location. Geographical factors and environmental regulations also affect the location, design, and operation of sewer treatment facilities. Based on current developed areas of Tinley Park in Will County, it would be very difficult to find an appropriate location large enough to construct of a new sewer treatment facility. Considering all factors, including the Village’s current and potential Will County territory, it remains most economical for the Village to utilize the existing sewer treatment facilities than to obtain approval for construction, operation and maintenance of its own sewer treatment plant.