



FORT WAYNE
CITY UTILITIES
News You Can Use

Public Fire Protection Moves to Water Bill
Everyone who benefits will share cost

Providing a reliable water supply for public fire protection is an important function of Fort Wayne's water utility. In fact, the very first public water systems were developed to fight fires. Over time, public systems were also tapped to provide safe drinking water and to support an industrialized nation.

Delivering public fire protection requires that water utilities install and maintain larger pipes, pumps and water towers, larger than what is needed for everyday household uses. Facilities must be sized to provide for the massive amounts of water needed to fight fires.

In the past, the cost of public fire protection was paid with tax dollars. The City of Fort Wayne paid \$3.5 million annually from tax revenue to the water utility for public fire protection. In 2013, City Council approved moving the cost of public fire protection to the bills paid by water utility customers. \$3.5 million thus became available to the City improvements such as street and sidewalk repairs, parks and public safety.

Moving the source of funding for public fire protection from the property tax bill to the water bill helps to accomplish two important goals. First, it helps ensure that everyone who benefits from the availability of public fire protection pays for the service. Second, it frees up tax dollars to support other Fort Wayne City services. This is important because tax caps implemented by the Indiana General Assembly in 2009 have meant a loss in revenue for the City.

Beginning January 1, 2014, the typical residential water customer of City Utilities inside the Fort Wayne City limits will pay \$2.40 per month and typical residential City Utilities water customers outside the City limits will pay \$2.76 per month (based on having a ¾" or 5/8" service line). This will appear as a separate line item on the City Utilities bill. Businesses and other non-residential users that require larger water meters will pay more for fire protection based on meter size.

By shifting the fee to the Utility bill, all who benefit from fire protection and safe drinking water share in the burden of the additional costs associated with fire protection. In years past, the responsibility was born only by those who paid property taxes. This new method of collecting associated costs is more equitable to all who benefit.

Although you are seeing a new charge on your water utility bill, the important thing to remember is that upsizing parts of the water system and emergency preparedness helps save money on homeowner insurance premiums. If the Utility did not invest in oversizing of pipes, pumps, and other infrastructure, insurance premiums would rise and losses from fire would increase. It is a smart way to invest in public safety.