

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
STORMWATER UTILITY
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

Storm water service charge - Background

1. What is the storm water service charge and how was it created?

A: The storm water service charge was created by the City Council in September of 2002. The fee is dedicated to improving drainage, controlling flooding, improving water quality and implementing the new EPA water quality regulations in Rock Island. The storm water service charge is based on how each property affects the drainage system.

2. What is the purpose of the storm water service charge?

A: The storm water service charge is used to provide for the management, protection, control, regulation, use and enhancement of the storm water systems and to facilities owned or operated by the City of Rock Island. It also is used for implementing the new EPA water quality regulations.

3. Why is the storm water service charge necessary?

A: When it rains or snow melts, stormwater runs off driveways, parking lots, sidewalks and roofs into the stormwater drainage system. The drainage system includes storm sewers, ditches, culverts, ravines, streams and roadside swales that carry rainwater away from roads and private property. The more asphalt, rooftops and other hard surfaces the rainwater hits, the more runoff our system has to handle. The fee will pay for projects that improve drainage and reduce water pollution and neighborhood flooding as well as implementing the new EPA water quality regulations.

4. How was the Storm Water Utility Created?

A: A Storm Water Advisory Committee was created by City Council in May of 2001. The Committee included thirteen Rock Island residents representing schools, businesses, environmental groups, and homeowners. The Committee met six times in the year following inception and worked its way through a cost of service analysis for the existing storm water system, the anticipated impacts of the new federal regulations and alternatives for funding storm water management activities. The Storm Water Advisory Committee recommended the creation of a Storm Water Utility to fund storm water management costs including the operation and maintenance of the Mississippi River flood protection system.

5. Who is in charge of the Storm Water Utility?

A: The Department of Public Works manages the Storm Water Utility.

6. How were projects funded before this storm water service charge?

A: Historically, the sewer utility has paid most storm water conveyance system operating costs and these utility bills are based upon a customer's consumption of drinking water. This was an easy system to administer and understand, but there is no direct relationship between drinking water consumption and storm water conveyance system demand. Rather than increase Sewer Utility rates to cover the increasing storm water conveyance system costs, the City of Rock Island decided to investigate the creation of a Storm Water Utility that would allow storm water conveyance system costs to be spread among the users in a more equitable manner.

7. What if I have additional questions?

A: For more information, visit the City website www.rigov.org, or contact the Public Works Department directly at:

City of Rock Island
Public Works Department
Storm Water Utility
1309 Mill Street
Rock Island, IL 61201
Phone: (309) 732-2200

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Storm water service charge - Calculations

8. How is the storm water service charge calculated?

A: The fee is based on the premise that everyone should pay his or her fair share. Single family detached homes pay a fee based upon the gross property area. Small parcels with a gross area less than 6,000 square feet pay \$2.71 a month. Medium sized parcels with a gross area between 6,000 and 18,000 square feet pay \$3.62 a month. Large sized parcels with a gross area between 18,000 and 87,120 square feet pay \$4.52 a month.

For other properties aerial photography was used to measure the actual hard surface area and the fee owed. A charge is \$3.62 per month per Impervious Area Unit (IAU). The number of IAU's attributed to a property is determined by dividing the total impervious area (square feet) by 2,800 and rounding the result up to the next integer.

9. Are churches and other non-profit organizations exempt?

A: Storm water service charges are not a tax, therefore all entities including churches and non-profit organizations are required to pay the fee to support and improve stormwater systems. The storm water service charge is designed so that members of the community fund the program in relation to how their property uses the stormwater system.

10. Why is the user fee related to impervious or hard surface area?

A: Stormwater runoff can be directly attributed to impervious area. Asphalt, concrete, rooftops, and other hard surface areas do not allow rain water to soak into the ground. This allows the water to fill up the streams more quickly, and at higher levels. The additional water load on the storm system can cause flooding during heavy rains. The additional usage of the system also increases maintenance repairs due to the accelerated erosion of ditches, and the stormwater system.

11. What is impervious area?

A: Impervious area, as defined by the ordinance, is area that prevents or impedes the infiltration of storm water into the soil. Common impervious areas include, but are not limited to, rooftops, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, compacted aggregate and awnings.

12. What is infiltration?

A: Infiltration is the process of allowing runoff to penetrate the ground surface and flow through the upper soil surface.

13. Do public roadways and highways receive storm water service charges?

A: No, public roadways and highways are considered part of the stormwater conveyance system. The majority of stormwater facilities are located within public roadways. Public roads, streets and highways become part of the system used to direct stormwater away from residential and non-residential buildings.

14. What is an IAU?

A: An IAU is an Impervious Area Unit. The IAU is used as the basis for determining the storm water service charge to a parcel. Two thousand eight hundred (2,800) square feet of impervious area equals one IAU. The IAU was based on the median impervious surface for a residential property in Rock Island. The number of IAU's attributed to a parcel are determined by dividing the total impervious area (square feet) of the parcel by two thousand eight hundred (2,800) and rounding the result up to the next integer.

RESIDENTIAL QUESTIONS

15. When will I receive a bill?

A: Billing is scheduled to begin in May 2003 and will be included with the regular water and sewer bill.

16. When will I get my next bill?

A: Billing will be on a quarterly basis for residential properties and should be on your next water and sewer bill. Billing will begin in May.

17. I'm on well water with a septic system. Do I have to pay this bill?

A: Yes. This is an entirely separate fee from water/sewer charges. This storm water service charge helps fund drainage improvements, operation and maintenance of the storm water conveyance system and new EPA water quality regulations and does not address sanitary sewers or city water lines.

18. All of the stormwater in my neighborhood drains into a retention pond. Why should I have to pay storm water service charges?

A: While in the short term, stormwater does collect in the retention pond, the City of Rock Island provides an outlet for the basin. Although it collects and holds back water, the storage provided is only temporary. Eventually, all of the stormwater collected in the basin must drain out. The infrastructure (storm sewers, ditches, culverts) the City of Rock Island operates and maintains still carries the same volume of water; it is just released more slowly.

19. How do I report a drainage problem in my neighborhood?

A: If a storm drain is not working properly and causes water to flood a roadway and adjacent area please call the Public Works Department at (309) 732-2200. The problem may not be fixed immediately, but it will be investigated and prioritized.

20. Do I have to pay if I bought my house before or after September 9, 2002?

A: Yes, the storm water service charges are required based on the property, not the property owner.

21. If I am buying this property on contract, do I have to pay these fees?

A: The property owner on record with the County is responsible for paying the storm water service charges.

22. I recently moved to this location and I have not gotten a bill, why?

A: While we feel we are working with the latest property owner information, there are some property transactions of which we have not yet been made aware.

23. I am a tenant at this property, should I pay if I do not own the property?

A: No, the property owner is required to pay the bill, not the tenant of a rental property. Simply contact the property owner or landlord and provide the bill to them.

STORM WATER CREDIT QUESTIONS

24. Is there a way to reduce fees?

A: Yes. The City of Rock Island has developed a system of credits for storm water service customers who discharge directly to the Mississippi or Rock Rivers or have facilities or controls in place to temporarily store or treat storm water runoff.

25. How can I get a stormwater credit manual?

A: The credit manual is available online at www.rigov.org,
Department of Public Works
Attn: Storm Water Utility Credit
1309 Mill Street
Rock Island, IL 61201
Phone (309) 732-2200

26. What is the stormwater credit program?

A: The stormwater credit program is designed to encourage sound technical practices that reduce the negative impact of development on the drainage system through a simple but effective credit system. Properties whose impact to the storm drainage system is significantly limited or has been effectively reduced through specific controls will be entitled to a credit adjustment applied to the storm water service charge.

27. What is a credit?

A: A credit, as defined by the ordinance, is a conditional reduction in the amount of a storm water service charge to an individual property based upon the provisions of the Rock Island Storm Water Credit Manual.

28. Where do I submit a credit application?

A: City of Rock Island
Department of Public Works
Attn: Storm Water Utility Credit
1309 Mill Street
Rock Island, IL 61201

29. When can I submit a credit application?

A: Applications can be submitted by mail at any time.

30. What practices can receive a Quality Credit (QLC)?

A: Quality Credits are available for structural BMPs designed to remove 80 percent or more of total suspended solids. A QLC is also available for non-structural BMPs such as a filter strip or natural preservation area, which provides water quality benefits and/or the possibility of groundwater recharge.

31. How long do credits remain in effect?

A: Credits are applied indefinitely unless modifications are made to the stormwater facility, or revisions are made to the City code. If additional improvements are made the property owner may apply for a new credit based on the modifications.

32. How long does it take for the credit application to be reviewed?

A: After the application and all fees have been received a completed credit application will be reviewed within 60 days. If any information is missing or incomplete a deficiency letter is sent to the contact person. The review will continue and be completed within 60 days after the additional information is received.

33. Where do Direct Discharge Credits apply?

A: Direct Discharge Credits only apply to the Rock River and Mississippi River.

BILLING QUESTIONS

34. I was not informed about this before I got this bill, why?

A: The storm water service charge was considered in public hearings and publicized in the news media when it was passed in 2002. The Department of Public Works has spoken to officials representing industry, businesses, schools and other affected property owners. More outreach is underway for those who were not previously informed.

35. When will I get my next bill?

A: Billing will be on a quarterly basis and should be on your next water and sewer bill.

36. What happens if I do not pay this bill?

A: When storm water service charges are not paid on or before the due date stated on the bill, a penalty of five (5) percent will be added. Failure to receive a bill does not entitle the owner or customer to a remission of penalty.

37. What if I think my bill is in error?

A: If you believe an error has been made in calculating your bill, you should contact the Public Works Department (732-2200) for an explanation of the charge. If that explanation is unsatisfactory, you may file a formal written appeal to the Public Works Director. In the case of service charge appeals, the appeal should include a survey prepared by a registered land surveyor or professional engineer containing information on the total property area, the impervious surface area, and any storm water management features, such as detention ponds or conditions which influence the hydrologic response of the property to rainfall events.

38. How long will it take to resolve an appeal?

A: The director of public works shall conduct a technical review of the conditions on the property and respond to the appeal in writing within sixty (60) days.

39. I own this property with other individuals, how can I divide the fees?

A: Bills are sent to the property owner listed in the Water and Sewer Utility billing database. It is up to the recipient to divide the fees among multiple owners. The Rock Island Public Works Department does not know how much of the property is owned by each individual owner; therefore the Department is unable to divide the bill according to owner.

40. I own more than one property, can I receive one bill for all of them?

A: Not at this time.

41. I received a bill for a vacant property, what should I do?

A: Bills are generated using the most recent property owner information available. Sometimes information is not the most recent, and bills are sent out incorrectly. Also, properties that have one percent of their total area as impervious are charged at least 1 IAU. If you feel that you have received this bill in error please forward a copy of your bill and any additional information you believe will be beneficial to the Rock Island Public Works Department at the following address: City of Rock Island, Public Works Department, 1309 Mill Street, Rock Island, IL 61201.