

Waukesha water bills become monthly this spring, have rate increase

Officials remind residents of approaching PSC-approved billing changes

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WAUKESHA — Waukesha will switch from quarterly to monthly water bills this spring for residential customers of the water and wastewater utilities, and with that, residents can expect a water rate increase as well.

Waukesha officials have been working to inform residents of the change. The city's request for the water rate increase was approved by the Public Service Commission in early January.

Within the rate increase, Waukesha has begun construction on its Great Water Alliance project, which will switch the city to a Lake Michigan water supply in 2023. Its current groundwater supply is severely depleted and contaminated with radium.

The Waukesha Water Utility is mailing postcards to residential customers to explain the timing of the change.

"Each month, we currently send three-month bills to a third of our customers," Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak said. "Depending on which of the three groups you are in, the dates for the transition will be different. The postcard will tell you the dates for your address."

Duchniak said it is important to note that the first monthly bill will be for more than 30 days.

"Because of the differences in the time between your last quarterly bill and your first monthly bill, that first bill will cover between 50 and 80 days of usage, depending on your group," he said. "After that, the bills will cover just a one-month period."

Customers who use the automatic payment option will have payments withdrawn on the 15th of each month.

Average residential bills for water supply, wastewater

and return flow charges are expected to be about \$90 per month by the end of 2021.

The water bill for an average customer who uses 12,000 gallons of water per quarter with a 5/8-inch or 3/4-inch meter will see an increase from \$86.10 to \$99.77 — 15.88% (including the public fire protection charge), in step one. In step two, quarterly bills will increase for the same customer from \$99.77 to \$107.36, or 7.61% — rising in total 24.69%.

The step one rate went into effect Feb. 1. The step two rate effective date is uncertain, and will go into effect when project targets are hit. Duchniak said the public could expect the step two increase beginning sometime late this year.

"Most ratepayers prefer monthly bills because they align with household budgets for other expenses," Duchniak said. "It also will help users conserve water. Monthly bills will give customers more timely information about their water use, alerting them to overuse due to watering or leaks."

Additional on the Waukesha rate increases can be found at <https://bit.ly/2LL4fRX>.