



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 2, 2020
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Graham Mitchell, City Manager
SUBJECT: Public Outreach and Education for Sewer Billing Transition

Following the May 12, 2020 adoption of Resolution No. 051-20, to place sewer billing on the San Diego County Tax Roll, City staff created a comprehensive public outreach strategy to educate the public about this change and how it will streamline the billing process and achieve savings. I want to provide an update of our outreach efforts. Since last Friday, the City has fielded approximately 300 phone calls and about 120 emails.

The following methods, in no particular order, are identified by approach and an expected date of implementation, if the task is not complete:

Graphics

- Created standardized branding across collaterals for flyers, videos, digital ads, website and social media.

Videos

- Created 30-second videos in English, Arabic, and Spanish. These language-specific videos have been published on a scroll at the top of the sewer billing webpage and on the City's YouTube account.
- The videos will be posted on social media in the upcoming weeks and will be used in future advertising efforts.

Website

- www.cityofelcajon.us/sewer was redesigned, for easier navigation, by creating new side links to pages and visual buttons.
- A GIS Lookup Tool was built to allow customers to search by address, APN, or sewer account number to retrieve billing information.
- A Sewer Billing webpage was formed with additional visual buttons redirecting customers to newly-created pages, including: Property Owners, Renters, HOAs, and the Sewer Account Lookup Tool.
- An FAQ page was created with two categories: (1) Tax Roll Transition; and (2) Sewer Billing Prior to July 1, 2020. The FAQs are updated as staff receives additional inquiries via email, telephone, voicemail, and comments on social media.

Notices

- Notices of the sewer billing transition, public hearing, and tax roll charges were sent to landlords and tenants on June 23, 2020.
- Separate notices were created and will be sent to entities that have multiple owners with one or more meters and where it is not possible to break down the sewer bill without additional information (condominiums, mobile home parks, HOAs, business associations, etc.). As with landlords and tenants, this notice included information about the sewer billing transition, public hearing, and sewer charges. Entities were asked to complete an online questionnaire to allow the City to determine if these entities will be placed on future tax rolls or continue to be hand-billed. These notices are scheduled to be sent on July 2, 2020.
- Hand-bill notices were created for agencies and properties that do not receive a tax bill (school districts, City property, county properties, or no APN). As with landlords and tenants, this notice included information about the sewer billing transition, public hearing, and sewer charges. These notices are scheduled to be sent on July 2, 2020.
- Notice of the public hearing is scheduled to print in the Gazette on July 2, 2020 and July 9, 2020.
- A Sewer Billing Update is scheduled to print in the August 2020 Gateway publication.

Social Media

- The updated graphics and information were placed on various City platforms, including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.
- “New Sewer Bill” and “Sewer Billing Update” postings were published on June 25, 2020 and July 1, 2020. Future postings will be published on an as-needed basis.
- Pixel coding was added to the City’s website on July 1, 2020, to use in the digital outreach campaign. In a few weeks, staff can analyze the performance data and make adjustments to increase the efficiency in order to reach the target audience—sewer account holders in the City.

Attached are the illustrations of the public outreach campaign that have been created. If you have any questions about these efforts, please let me know.

Attachment

cc: Vince DiMaggio, Assistant City Manager
Yazmin Arellano, Interim Public Works Director

Attachments to Internal Memo dated July 1, 2020

Graphics:

EL CAJON
The Valley of Opportunity
Incorporated 1912

Your New El Cajon Sewer Bill

Goodbye 6 bi-monthly sewer bills

Hello 1 annual bill + savings

Sewer services now billed on your annual property tax bill

REMEMBER:
Set aside funds for the annual bill.

More information at www.cityofelcajon.us/sewer

EL CAJON
The Valley of Opportunity
Incorporated 1912

ATTENTION

City of El Cajon
Residents & Businesses.
Sewer Billing Update!

LEARN MORE

EL CAJON
The Valley of Opportunity
Incorporated 1912

انتباه

El Cajon مدينة
الصحي الصرف الزبائن
أعرف أكثر



Atención

**Residentes de la
Ciudad de El Cajon!**

**Actualización de facturación
de alcantarillado!**

APRENDE MÁS

Videos:





Website:
www.cityofelcajon.us/sewer

Interactive Maps

+ Engineering

+ Maintenance Operations

+ Projects

+ Solid Waste and Recycling

- Sewer/Waste Water

+ Sewer/Waste Water Billing

Multifamily Residential Accounts

Commercial Users

Frequently Asked Questions

+ Storm Water

Traffic

About Sewer/Waste Water

Font Size: [+](#) [-](#) [Share & Bookmark](#) [Feedback](#) [Print](#)

Effective July 1, 2020

Sewer Billing is Moving to Property Tax Invoices

Sewer service provided by the City includes transportation to the City of San Diego's Point Loma treatment plant where it is treated and released offshore in the ocean. The majority of the City's sewer costs are for the treatment by the City of San Diego. The sewer charges are calculated based on the water use at each property.

The City obtains information about the water use from the water district that provides the service to the property. Within the City, there are two water districts providing this service based on the location of the property; Helix Water District and Padre Dam Municipal Water District. The water district will notify the City when the water account for each property is activated or deactivated. The sewer charge will be based on the amount of the water used and the category of the use on the property.



SEWER RATES



SEWER BILLING



START OR STOP SERVICE



SEWER EMERGENCIES



ACCOUNT NO. & INVOICES



ACCOUNT LOOKUP



REQUEST AN ADJUSTMENT



PAYMENT ISSUES



FAQS

Questions?

TEXT (619) 333-6618 or Call (619) 873-1660

Email: sewerbilling@cityofelcajon.us

Sewer Billing Page

- Interactive Maps
- + Engineering
- + Maintenance Operations
- + Projects
- + Solid Waste and Recycling
- Sewer/Waste Water
 - Sewer/Waste Water Billing
 - Sewer Billing Rates
 - Wastewater Rate Study
 - Starting and Stopping Service
 - Sewer Invoice and Account Number Inquiries
 - Auto-Pay and Bill Pay
 - Payment Issues
 - Request an Adjustment
 - Multifamily Residential Accounts
 - Commercial Users
 - Frequently Asked Questions
- + Storm Water
- Traffic



[Your Government](#) » [Departments](#) » [Public Works](#) » [Sewer/Waste Water](#) »

Sewer/Wastewater Billing

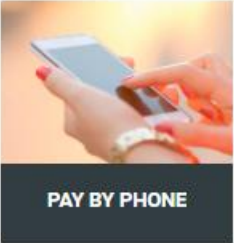
Font Size: [+](#) [-](#) [Share & Bookmark](#) [Feedback](#) [Print](#)

Beginning July 1st, 2020, the City of El Cajon will begin invoicing for sewer service on the property tax bill sent by the County of San Diego. This notification is being sent to property owners and will serve as notice that the amount below will be invoiced on your property tax bill rather than bi-monthly, as previously done.

In December 2019, the City's sewer billing company abruptly went out of business. This caused the City to begin exploring alternate options. In March 2020, the City issued a bid for contracted services. The contracted services option, as well as the option to bill utilizing in-house staff, were considered and presented to City Council on May 12, 2020. These options would have increased sewer rates above the approved rates. City Council approved the property tax option, which allowed them to reduce the approved rate by 2%.



For Invoices date before July 1, 2020



[Questions?](#)

GIS Lookup Tool

The screenshot displays the 'Sewer Billing Lookup' interface for the City of El Cajon. The interface includes a map with street names like 'Chambers St' and 'County Ditch'. A search bar is at the top, and a popup window provides detailed billing information for a specific location.

Sewer Billing Lookup City of El Cajon - Sewer Billing Page

SEARCH

Map controls: +, -, Home, Refresh, Info, Full Screen

Map labels: Chambers St, County Ditch, Veterans Meeting Hall, Sunshine Gardens

Popup Window:

Billing Year: 07/01/20 - 06/30/21 (FY20-21)
Site Address: [REDACTED]
APN: [REDACTED]
Total Annual Charges: [REDACTED]
Collection Method: Tax Roll

Sewer Account #	Rate Description	Prorated*	FWA/Annual	Usage (HCF)	FY20-21
[REDACTED]	Single Family Res-Fixed Winter	[REDACTED]	FWA	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

*The prorated amount is for sewer charges from the time of the last billed read through 6/30/20. These charges could not be billed via a bi-monthly invoice and were included on the property tax bill.

[Zoom to](#) ...

FAQ “Tax Roll Transition”

- + Projects
- + Solid Waste and Recycling
- Sewer/Waste Water
 - + Sewer/Waste Water Billing
 - Multifamily Residential Accounts
 - Commercial Users
 - Frequently Asked Questions**
- + Storm Water
- Traffic

Effective July 1, 2020, Sewer Billing is Moving to Property Tax Invoices

What do I need to do?

Please pay your current bill for sewer service via the website link below for billings through July 1, 2020. The annual property tax, which now includes billing for sewer service, will be mailed by the County of San Diego in September 2020. If you pay your property tax bill through an escrow account, you can contact your bank / account holder to withhold enough funds to cover your sewer services added to the property tax bill. You can review your estimated annual sewer service bill through the "[Sewer Account Lookup](#)". Additional details are provided for renters, HOAs and any customers whose ability to pay their current sewer bill is affected by COVID-19 at www.cityofelcajon.us/sewer.

What has changed?

The City of El Cajon was the last city in our region to issue its own sewer bills and will now be billing for sewer services on annual basis, versus six bi-monthly bills per year, as part of the County of San Diego property tax bill.

FAQs- Tax Roll Transition

How do I check my bill once the city goes into tax roll and know that I'm getting charged correctly? (especially as tenants)

How will this affect my escrow impound account?

How will this affect my renters?

I am an HOA where all the units own their property. We bill them their water, sewer, and trash in their HOA fees. How will the bill be calculated for our usage for the year when all units share one single water-meter and has been based on consumption?

I moved-out in June, how will I be receiving a final pro-rated bill? How would it affect me as a renter vs owner?

I'm a landlord having tenants move out right before the tax roll, how would I get my final bill?

If I haven't paid my bill due to being affected by COVID-19, will my previous balance be transferred to the tax roll?

If I move out/sell my house in the middle of the tax roll year and paid in full, how will this affect me? Will I be refunded?

The meter number listed on my Tax Roll billing notice does not match the meter number on my Helix water bill. What should I do?

What does "FY" on the Tax Roll billing notice mean?

What is "Flow"?

What is the prorated amount listed on my Tax Roll billing notice?

Will my water bill be included on the Tax Roll?

With the change to the property tax bill will my credit balance carry forward, or can I request a refund of the over payment?

How do I check my bill once the city goes into tax roll and know that I'm getting charged correctly? (especially as tenants)

A letter is being sent by 6/23/2020, the annual amount of sewer charges being added to the property tax bill. The annual charge can be divided by 6 to compare to previous bi-monthly bills. Additionally, the new enhanced sewer lookup tool can be used any time of year to obtain the annual charge for your property. Please visit www.cityofelcajon.com/sewer.

How will this affect my escrow impound account?

The City recommends notifying your escrow company to have them begin collecting sufficient monthly amounts to prepare for payment of the sewer charges with the future tax bill.

How will this affect my renters?

Property owners will collect sewer charges directly from renters, as warranted through rental agreements.

I am an HOA where all the units own their property. We bill them their water, sewer, and trash in their HOA fees. How will the bill be calculated for our usage for the year when all units share one single water-meter and has been based on consumption?

For this first year's calculation, there was not sufficient data available to appropriately split the sewer charges per individual condo owner within the property. Therefore, instead of putting sewer billing on the tax roll for this first year a majority of all HOA's, mobile home parks, and condominiums will receive a single annual invoice in September 2020 with 2 pay-by dates for the for the 12-month billing period from 7/1/2020 to 6/30/2021. We request that each HOA fill out an online questionnaire at <https://www.cityofelcajon.us/your-government/departments/hoa-questionnaire>. This form will assist with faster communication from HOA customers to the City, from the City to customers, and the proper billing method for future invoices.

FAQ “Sewer Billing previous to July 1, 2020”

FAQs- Sewer Billing previous to July 1, 2020

Can I pay my sewer bill and my water bill with one check?
Due to COVID-19, I am unable to pay my bill. What options are available to me?
How can I find my sewer account balance?
How can I find my sewer account number?
How can I pay my bill?
How can I request a Release of Lien?
How can I set up Auto-Pay or Bill Pay through my bank?
How do I request a copy of my sewer invoice?
How do I start or end my service?
How often do I get a sewer bill?
I'm going on vacation, what can I do about my sewer bill?
Payments that I made are showing as a past due balance on my account. How can I remedy this?
What are the Current Sewer Rates
What is the base charge that is shown on my bill?
What is the Late Payment Policy?
Why did my bill increase?

Can I pay my sewer bill and my water bill with one check?

No. The City of El Cajon is a separate entity from the water districts; therefore, the bills need to be paid separately.

Due to COVID-19, I am unable to pay my bill. What options are available to me?

The City of El Cajon is committed to ensuring the continuity of its services. Taking into consideration the health and well-being of the community and to help ease any potential immediate financial burden that customers may experience as a result of COVID-19:

The City will continue to send sewer bills in May and June but customers can choose to pay part of it or none at all. The amount not paid will be added to the next bill, without penalty or interest.

Please be advised, late fee charges on unpaid sewer balances will resume beginning January 2021.

How can I find my sewer account balance?

To find your sewer account balance email sewerbilling@cityofelcajon.us, TEXT (619) 333-6618, or click [here](#).

How can I find my sewer account number?

To request your 19-digit account number you can TEXT (619) 333-6618, email sewerbilling@cityofelcajon.us, or complete this [form](#).

How can I pay my bill?

You can explore the different options for paying your bill [here](#).

How can I request a Release of Lien?

To request a Release of Lien, please email Finance@cityofelcajon.us.

How can I set up Auto-Pay or Bill Pay through my bank?

*******AUTO-PAY IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE*******

In December of 2019, the company that the city contracted with for sewer billing and customer service, which was called Fathom, unexpectedly went out of business. On Fathom, customers were able to login to their customer portal, view their balance, transaction history, pay their bills, set up auto-payment options, and much more. Since this company is no longer in service, those features are not available anymore.

BILL PAY

To set-up a new bill payee with your bank, please use the following information:

City of El Cajon

P.O Box 51943

Los Angeles, CA 90051