

The Drain Report

Rate Increase for 2019

By: Cordelia Ford

Midway Sewer will have a rate increase for 2019. The current rate is \$27.00/month, and the rate in 2019 will be \$28.00/month. Midway Sewer bills on a 60-day billing cycle, so for our residential customers, the flat rate will go from \$54.00 to \$56.00 per bill period.

Our commercial customers are billed on water consumption. The rate will go from \$.036/c.f. to \$.0373/c.f. per bill period.

We have customers in the City of Des Moines, and the City of Federal Way, that are billed a Franchise Fee or Utility Tax in addition to the Midway Sewer rate.

The first bill of 2019 will have part of the bill period in 2018. The portion of the bill period in 2018 will be billed at the old rate, and the portion of the bill period in 2019 will be billed at the new rate.

Are Wipes Flushable?

By: Ken Kase

It depends on who you ask. The manufacturers of many wipe type products claim that their products are "flushable". It is a multi-billion dollar industry and they have demonstrated a willingness to litigate against attempts to change their labeling away from making the flushable statement. If you ask a plumber if wipes are flushable, for business reasons, they may also tell you it is OK to flush wipes. There is a lot of money to be made correcting preventable plumbing problems. I doubt any sewer service provider would tell you it is OK to flush these wipe type products.

In general, a sewer is not a garbage disposal system. A sewer is an inclined pipe, designed to safely convey very certain types of wastewater to a wastewater treatment facility. Many treatment plants, including ours, include biological treatment of the wastewater to obtain acceptable results. If contributors to the sewer system flush medicines, toxic substances, grease or oil, or obstructive matter, such as wipes down the drain they risk damaging the treatment process or clogging up the system.



Sewer pump clogged with wipes - Yuk!

So if you were to ask me what is OK to flush down the drain, the list would be very short. Only flush urine, feces, and toilet paper. Put the rest of the garbage in the trash! Take your toxic substances and oil and grease to one of the King County Local Hazardous Waste Disposal sites or to a waste mobile. The locations and hours of operation can be found at <https://www.hazwastehelp.org/>. Unused medications can be disposed of using the Medicine Return Program. For locations and more information, go to www.medicinereturn.com. When it comes to moist wipe products the only good place to dispose of these is in the garbage. I thank you, and the environment we all live in thanks you, for safely disposing of your unwanted items and garbage!

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Special points of interest:

- Midway Sewer District has one of the lowest monthly rates in the state.
- The Board meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Please contact the office for the meeting time.
- Midway serves the Cities of Des Moines, SeaTac, Kent, Federal Way, Normandy Park, Burien, and the Port of Seattle's SeaTac Airport.
- We have been part of this community since 1946.
- You can expect fast personal service when you need it.
- Our employees care about their customers.
- We have a single focus of providing quality sanitary sewer service.

Taxes, Fees, and Rent Could Be Added to Your Sewer Bill

By: Scot Sanborn



At the Midway Sewer District we believe it is important to keep the cost of sewer service low. It would be a type of barrier to the provision of sewer service if the cost is high. We have worked hard to keep our rates one of the lowest in the State. Sewer service is an important contributor in protecting the public's health. By collecting and treating the sewage we are minimizing the public's exposure to waterborne pathogens. For sewers to protect the public health and our waters, everyone needs to connect to the sewer system.

It appears that many Cities, as well as the County see sewer service as a potential source of revenue. Some of our local cities have proposed or imposed a tax on the revenue of the District. King County wants to charge rent for the use of the public right of way. These added costs are passed on to the customer. In some instances, we have negotiated agreements that provided for a limited payment of fees in exchange for no excise (utility) tax imposition.

The District has consistently opposed these taxes and rent on sewer service. The following is a brief history of our struggles to keep our rates affordable for our customers:

- ⇒ Sept. 1999, **Normandy Park** enacts a 6% tax on sewer service and other utilities (excludes water), the City notifies the District of the tax 18 years later on, Sept. 25, 2017. In Oct, 2017, the District notifies the City the tax is unlawful, but would negotiate a Franchise Agreement.
- ⇒ Feb. 23, 2011, The District officially establishes its position opposing the imposition of a 6% tax on sewer service, in response to SENATE BILL 5441, **State of Washington**, 62nd Legislature, 2011 Regular Session. A letter from the Board is sent to Senator Karen Keiser. The bill does not pass.
- ⇒ Oct. 14, 2014, **SeaTac** proposes a 6% tax on utilities. Water and Sewer Districts voice their opposition. The City passes an ordinance imposing a tax, but excludes water and sewer utilities.
- ⇒ Oct. 2015, **Des Moines** proposes a 16% tax on water and sewer utilities. The public and several district's voice opposition to the City Council. In Dec. 2015, the City Council proposes a scaled back tax of 11% on water and sewer utilities. Water and Sewer District's threaten a lawsuit against the City. A compromise Franchise Agreement is arranged between the City and the Districts, which provides for payment of a 6% fee.
- ⇒ Nov. 2016, **King County** passes an ordinance which forces utilities to pay rent for use of the public right-of-way. A group of Special Purpose Districts voice opposition to the ordinance. The County preemptively files suit in Superior Court. The Court decision, on July 27, 2018, is in favor of the District's position. King County appeals the decision. The date of the appeal is unknown at this time.
- ⇒ July 2017, **Kent** and the District begin discussions for a Franchise Agreement. This agreement may be passed by the City Council and enacted in early 2019. It provides for payment of a 6% fee but precludes a utility tax.
- ⇒ March 2018, **Federal Way** passes an ordinance imposing a 7.75% tax on water and sewer utilities. The local Districts voice opposition to the City Council and offer to negotiate a Franchise Agreement, to no avail. Lakehaven Utility District, High-line Water District, and Midway Sewer District join together to challenge the City's tax. The City prevails in Superior Court in a Sept. 4, 2018, decision. The group of districts decide to appeal the decision.

Money may be tight for the cities and the county, however it is our position that charging water and sewer utilities for their **essential public services**, is a bad idea. We believe that if we ultimately lose, so will our customers. We prefer to work with the Cities and the County on matters that benefit the public. It would be nice to resolve these issues and concentrate our efforts on what really matters, the provision of quality customer service and protect public health with cost effective, reliable, environmentally responsible wastewater collection and treatment.

Board of Commissioners



George Landon Jack Hendrickson Vince Koester Jim Bailey Scot Sanborn

Midway Sewer District

PO Box 3487

3030 South 240th Street

Kent, WA 98089

<http://www.midwaysewer.org/>

206-824-4960