

Understanding the Utility Bill



Have a question about how to read your Utility Bill? The [Utility Bills Made Easier handout](#) may be helpful. Other questions including where we are located, how to pay a bill, and how to establish/discontinue service may be answered by visiting [Frequently Asked Questions](#). The [Utility Bill Information](#) is another helpful link.

The City strives to have a bill that is as easy to read and understand. If any information can be improved on this website please [contact us](#). If you need to talk to a person about a specific issue on your bill or service, please contact [Utility Billing](#) or the [Citizen Information Center](#) for general inquiries.

Below is a detailed explanation of your Utility Bill

A small screenshot of a utility bill. It shows a table with three columns: 'Water Charge', 'Previous Meter Read', and 'Current Meter Read'. The 'Water Charge' column has a value of '\$10.00'. The 'Previous Meter Read' column has a value of '10,000.00'. The 'Current Meter Read' column has a value of '10,000.00'. There are also some smaller numbers and text below the table.

Does your bill look different or appear higher than expected, first look at the Water consumption and the Meter Read Dates (C on the handout). The City of Lake Oswego has a tiered water billing structure. A tiered water billing structure was adopted as a way to encourage conservation of a precious resource - water.

The Water consumption section of your bill (D on the handout) lists how much water you used in each tier. Do you have usage in Tier 3? If so, this water is charged at a rate more than double the water consumed in Tier 1. Many times when people wonder about their bill, the answer may be that they consumed more water in Tier 2 and Tier 3 than previous months.

If you would like to see the rates by consumption and how water consumption amount impacts a Utility Bill, play around with the [water calculator](#).



The Water Usage Graph (J on the handout) provides consumption for the last 24 months - from the current billing month to the same month the previous year. It is important to compare your consumption level to the same billing cycle since some people may use more water in the summer months.

Is your consumption double in the summer months? Triple? If so, do you suspect a leak? The chart just reflects your consumption, not the cost, so if the usage level is unexpectedly higher than a last similar billing month, review the [How to Detect a Leak](#) information.

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If no leak and still perplexed about your water usage? The City offers free [Water Audits](#) in the summer and is a [conservation resource](#) aimed at helping people reduce their water usage. If you already consume at low levels, review the materials below about Fixed Rates.



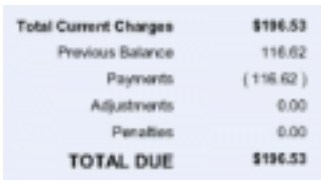
The image shows a portion of a utility bill with several rows of data. The first section is titled 'Water Charges' and includes 'Basic Water Charge' and 'Sewer Charge'. The second section is titled 'Rate Waiver' and includes 'Basic Water Charge' and 'Sewer Charge'. The values are listed in a column on the right.

The majority of a Utility Bill is made up of fixed rates. To review the fixed rates for utility services on your bill find the Fixed Rate in each section of your services.

The fixed portion of the bill for a typical ratepayer is around 82% of the total bill. The fixed rates change annually on July 1st, however, are implemented on the first billing cycle following the effective date.

The sewer charges are made up of a fixed rate and also a wintertime average based on the January, February, and March bills. The wintertime average is located under the Sewer Charges (E on the handout). The sewer portion of your bill remains fixed for 12 months – between August 1st and July 31st. Each household has its own wintertime average and it why your fixed charges are different than your neighbor. When separating out the sewer consumption related charge, 70% of the total bill is fixed and is not influenced by consumption levels.

Often a customer will call who has used little water and/or is vigorously practicing conservation efforts, and wondering why the bill isn't decreasing as much as they think it should. Others may call because they were out of town for a significant part of the month and thought the bill would be lower. If you are already consuming completely in Tier 1, the amount of change you will see in a bill is small from month to month. Again, this is because of the fixed portion of the bill and the lower cost of Tier 1 water. For current and historical utility rates see our [Master Fees & Charges](#) booklet and click on *Utility Rates* in the table of contents.



Total Current Charges	\$196.53
Previous Balance	116.62
Payments	(116.62)
Adjustments	0.00
Penalties	0.00
TOTAL DUE	\$196.53

The Invoice Summary lists the current charges and any previous balances, payments, adjustments or penalties.

Supporting Documents

 [Utility Bills Made Easier Handout - Reading Your Bill](#)

Web Links

[Water Consumption Cost Calculator](#)[Water Meters](#)

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