



Sewer Service Charges Frequently Asked Questions

What is my sewer service charge for?

It is a utility charge for your wastewater utility service, which includes collection, conveyance, treatment, and disposal of residential and commercial wastewater. Ross Valley Sanitary District (RVSD) partners with the Marin County Assessor's office for billing and collection of your sewer service charge on an annual basis, included in your property tax bill. It is not a tax.

How much is the sewer service charge?

The sewer service charge is based on equivalent dwelling units (EDU) and varies depending on your service area and property classification.

Ross Valley (RV) Zone-

Single Family & Commercial \$797 per year

Multi-Family \$714 per year

Larkspur (LK) Zone –

Single Family & Commercial \$1,067 per year

Multi-Family \$955 per year

Why are the Larkspur Rate Zone rates higher than Ross Valley?

Properties within the RV Zone pay a portion of their Marin County property tax, known as an Ad Valorem tax, to cover the cost of wastewater utility service. Properties within the LK Rate Zone do not pay this Ad Valorem tax to RVSD. To make up the difference and ensure equitable cost of service, Larkspur properties are charged for this difference through their sewer service charge.

Is there an increase from the prior year?

Yes, the increase is approximately 7% for property owners in Ross Valley (RV) Rate Zone and 5% in the Larkspur (LK) Rate Zone. See below for scheduled increases through fiscal year 2018/19.

How are the rates set and by whom?

The rates are set by the Board of Directors (Board) of RVSD. The Board is made up of five publicly elected officials. The rates are set by conducting a study of operating and capital funding needs, usually over a five year forward looking period. The most recent cost of service and rate study was completed in 2014, and new rates were approved following a public hearing and protest vote process as required under State law, Proposition 218.

How is the charge for each property calculated?

Each property is charged a fixed amount per Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU). The number of units on the property and land use classification is determined by the County of Marin Assessor's office.

How can I view and print my property tax bill?

Your current property tax bill can be viewed at the Marin County Assessors website by entering your parcel number. See the link below:

<http://www.marincounty.org/depts/ar/divisions/assessor/search-assessor-records>

What if I own a commercial property? How is my sewer service charge calculated?

Commercial property charges are based on the most recent winter water usage as provided by Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD). Water use is measured in CCF's, 1 CCF = 100 cubic feet, or 748 Gallons and covers a 2 month period or 60 days. The actual calculation of EDUs is as follows: # EDUs = CCFs x 748 ÷ 60 ÷ 215 (gallons per day). The # of EDUs is then rounded to the nearest tenth of an EDU. The minimum annual charge is for 1 EDU.

What is a high strength factor and who does it apply to?

The high strength factor is applied to customers who put greater strain on the wastewater treatment process than the average customer. This factor applies to restaurants, bakeries, mortuaries and markets with garbage disposals. The EDUs calculated in the standard commercial calculation is then multiplied by 2.34 to determine the total EDUs charged.

Why is the rate so high?

The aging infrastructure is an industry-wide issue and is especially concerning in older communities, such as ours. RVSD is currently undergoing an extensive capital improvement plan which requires funding. RVSD's rates are very close to the average for Bay Area utilities, and for comparable Marin County area wastewater utilities, which is a reflection of the common cost of service trends influencing rates. .

My house is small and I am the only occupant, how come I pay the same as my neighbor with a 3 story house and 5 occupants?

For residential properties, the current billing structure is based on a flat, per unit charge and does not account for use or occupancy. Approximately 90% of the total cost of providing wastewater utility service (operating, maintaining, and replacing the wastewater infrastructure) is made up of fixed costs, which do not vary with the quantity of flow. Therefore rates are mostly not dependent on flow volumes.

My property is on a septic system. Why am I charged for sewer service?

If your property is on a septic system you should not be charged for sewer service. If you are being charged, and are on septic, this can be confirmed with available records or physical inspection. You should contact RVSD to update the necessary property records and correct your billing.

Am I going to receive a breakdown of my charges or any further information?

Around the same time that you receive your property tax bill, RVSD will send you a letter with the calculation of your annual sewer service charges. This will explain how the charge is calculated and how much it is.

Are these rates going to continue to rise in the future?

The rates are set to increase annually through fiscal year 2018/19, at approximately 5-7% per year. Every fiscal year a budget and 5-year forecast are presented to the Board of Directors. The budget presents the cash flow needs for operations of the District and for the capital plan. This information is used when an analysis of rates is conducted and will determine the amount of rate increase, if any.

What can I do if I think there is a discrepancy on my property classification or unit count?

If you think that your property type is misclassified or the unit count is incorrect you can contact the Marin County Assessor’s office at 415-473-7215.

What can I do if I want to contact the Board of Directors of RVSD?

You can attend our monthly Board meetings which normally occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm at 250 Dougherty Drive in Larkspur. Call or email our offices to confirm Board meeting dates. There is time set aside at the beginning of the meeting for public comments. You can obtain the Board of Directors email addresses at the following link: <http://rvsd.org/about-us/board-of-directors>.

I think I may have been overbilled in prior years. What can I do about it?

If it is determined that you have been overbilled in prior years, you can request a refund by completing a refund request form. When submitting this form, your property tax bills and supporting documentation for the overbilling must be attached. Per the rate setting ordinance # 65, you can request up to 3 years of prior payments related to overbillings.

Are there any exemptions or discounts for low-income or senior ratepayers?

There is rebate assistance program for eligible low-income customers. This program provides a 25% refund of sewer service charges. To see if you qualify and for further information please contact the office at 415-259-2949 or email info@rvsd.org. There currently is no exemptions strictly for seniors.

How can I suspend/cancel my service if I am selling my house or if it will be vacant?

The sewer service charges are billed on the property tax bills therefore whomever is listed as the parcel owner with the County of Marin is responsible for the payments. The billing structure does not account for vacancies and therefore all properties are charged regardless of occupancy.

What will my rates be in future years?

Below is the schedule of rate increases through fiscal year 2018/19.

Rate Zone/Customer Class	FY 2014/15		FY 2015/16		FY 2016/17		FY 2017/18		FY 2018/19	
		% change								
Ross Valley Rate Zone										
Single Family Residential	\$692	8.5%	\$743	7.4%	\$797	7.3%	\$856	7.4%	\$909	6.2%
Multi-Family Residential	\$625	-2.0%	\$665	6.4%	\$714	7.4%	\$766	7.3%	\$817	6.7%
Commercial	\$692	8.5%	\$743	7.4%	\$797	7.3%	\$856	7.4%	\$909	6.2%
Larkspur RateZone										
Single Family Residential	\$961	11.2%	\$1,012	5.3%	\$1,067	5.4%	\$1,125	5.4%	\$1,178	4.7%
Multi-Family Residential	\$865	0.1%	\$906	4.7%	\$955	5.4%	\$1,007	5.4%	\$1,055	4.8%
Commercial	\$961	11.2%	\$1,012	5.3%	\$1,067	5.4%	\$1,125	5.4%	\$1,178	4.7%