

Stormwater Management Utility Fee

A Tinley Park Stormwater Management Utility Fee became effective May 1 and will appear for the first time with the August cycle of utility/water bills. The following are likely to be the frequently asked questions and answers to help residents understand the purpose and cost of the new fee:

Q: What is a stormwater management utility fee?

A: The Stormwater Management Utility Fee is a charge to assist the Village of Tinley Park in maintaining, improving, and constructing the stormwater drainage systems in Tinley Park as well as monitoring the water quality in these systems to minimize polluting our natural resources and lakes and streams. These stormwater systems are also a large and integral part of the Village's flood control programs.

This fee is part of the cost of utility service in the Village of Tinley Park. It is paid through your water bill along with a water usage (WA) and wastewater/sanitary sewer collection (SW) charges. The Stormwater Management Utility Fee (ST) will appear as a separate item on the Village of Tinley Park utility bill. This fee became effective on May 1, 2004 for Village of Tinley Park utility bills issued on or after August 1, 2004.

Q: How is the Stormwater Management Utility Fee different than the Sewer fee I am already paying?

A: The current wastewater/sanitary sewer collection fee (SW) is a charge for the Village to operate and maintain the sanitary sewer mains, pumps, and other equipment necessary to collect wastewater/sanitary sewerage from a home or business and deliver it to the agency or business that provides for the treatment and disposal of sewerage wastes. The SW sewer fee is for the sewerage collection system only and not for sewerage treatment.

The process of sewerage treatment is also known as water reclamation since the water used to carry the sewerage to the treatment facility is "reclaimed" or recycled so that it may re-enter our lakes and streams as clean water. Property owners in Will County will have a separate charge for wastewater/sanitary sewer treatment (T#) on their utility bill. Cook County property owners are charged for wastewater/sanitary sewer treatment on their property tax bills.

The Stormwater Management Utility Fee is designed to provide the Village funds to operate and maintain the storm sewer mains, pumps, ponds, drainage ditches, creeks, and other devices and equipment necessary to collect, hold, and release stormwater into our lakes and streams as well as to monitor the water quality of the stormwater. Under normal circumstances, stormwater should not require any special treatment to re-enter our lakes and streams.

Q: Why is this new Stormwater Management Utility Fee necessary?

A: There are significant costs to maintain, improve, construct and monitor the stormwater systems. This fee is essential for the Village to provide continued maintenance and improvement of existing stormwater systems, undertake future flood control projects, and the maintenance and implementation of stormwater monitoring and management programs as now required by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) rules and regulations developed by

the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Federal Clean Water Act. The Village of Tinley Park has over 220 miles of storm sewers alone that it is responsible for maintaining, not including retention and detention ponds and other facilities. The storm sewer system is aging and requires regular maintenance and repairs just like our homes and businesses, streets, water mains, and sanitary sewers. There are storm sewers in Tinley Park that are over 90 years old and still in service. In some parts of town, some storm drainage is still unofficially provided in part by field tiles installed to drain the farm fields long before there were homes and businesses built. Some of these old field tiles could have been installed well over one hundred years ago. The Village of Tinley Park typically finds it necessary to provide new storm sewers to replace these undersized, outdated, and generally undocumented old field tile drainage systems to improve flood control and stormwater management.

Q: How much will the Stormwater Management Utility Fee cost?

A: The charge is 15 cents per 1,000 gallons of water used. For a resident who averages approximately 20,000 gallons of water usage during a quarterly billing period, an additional \$3 will be charged on the Village of Tinley Park utility bill. The EPA has estimated that it costs \$10 per quarter, per household, to manage a storm utility system. We are below this estimate.

Q: How does this Stormwater Management Utility Fee benefit me?

A: Flood control, or stormwater management is designed in large part to minimize the impacts of flooding from rainfall and other events. The new NPDES rules and regulations will require the Village to begin to monitor the water quality of stormwater entering and leaving detention ponds and other flood control devices to minimize pollution of creeks, rivers, streams, and lakes where this water will ultimately travel. Stormwater management is important to all residents whether or not they are directly affected by drainage problems or current flood mitigation projects, and it is good for the environment. The proper maintenance of stormwater facilities and the initiation of new flood control projects also help to protect property values throughout the Village.

Q: What kinds of stormwater systems does Tinley Park have to maintain?

A: The most visible stormwater systems that are found throughout the Village, include detention and retention ponds, creeks and drainage ditches. There are also about 220 miles of storm sewers that are underground and cannot be easily seen except for the slotted sewer grates found in the streets and yards throughout town. (To tell the difference between a storm sewer and a sanitary sewer – sanitary sewer manholes have a solid cover, and storm sewers have an open slotted cover).

Q: I have two water meters – one for water used inside the home, which flows into the sanitary sewer system, and one for outside the home, which does not enter the sanitary sewer system. Will water metered for the sanitary sewer be exempt from the Stormwater Management Utility Fee?

A. No. The Stormwater Management Utility Fee is based on total water usage monitored by both meters. Every property creates stormwater runoff regardless of whether it has one meter or two, or whether or not there are storm sewers immediately adjacent to the property. All properties must pay an equitable share.

Q: Will I notice any other changes on my water bill?

A: No. The addition of the new Stormwater Management Utility Fee which will appear under the ST code on the utility bill will be the only change.

Q: Is the Stormwater Management Utility Fee a tax?

A: No. The Stormwater Management Utility Fee is not a tax, it is a user fee. That is, the contributors to stormwater runoff pay their share based on water usage. It is a more equitable system than paying through property taxes, as there is no direct relationship between the value of a property and the amount of stormwater runoff generated. Parcels that are tax exempt from property taxes would not pay if based on property values, even though they also produce stormwater runoff.

Q: Why is the Stormwater Management Utility Fee based on water usage and not a flat fee?

A: All properties create or contribute to stormwater runoff. A system is needed to provide that all properties pay a reasonable and fair share toward stormwater management. There are many ways to determine and charge stormwater fees to each property. In some communities, these stormwater charges are calculated on an individual property basis taking into consideration the impervious (hard surfaces that do not absorb water) and pervious (open areas such as lawns and gardens that do absorb water) areas of each and whether or not it is developed. Because of the large number of properties in Tinley Park, these individual calculations would involve considerable time and cost, and would require constant monitoring for any changes affecting the properties creating a fairly significant ongoing management and maintenance cost. Basing the Stormwater Management Utility Fee on the amount of water useage provides an equitable means for properties to pay their fair share, and eliminates the administrative burden and costs for the Village to make individual calculations for each property. The Stormwater Management Utility Fee is set at a low rate, that based on sample tests will reasonably mirror a flat fee system without the significant administrative burdens. The heaviest water usage occurs in the summer months, typically from outside landscape watering, which does directly impact stormwater management.