

April 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Four Rivers Sanitation Authority Wastewater System Rate Increases

1. How will this affect my sewer bill?

User fee rates are reviewed annually. The average residential customers' wastewater bill will increase by approximately \$1.78 per month for an average monthly rate of \$34.70, which equates to a quarterly bill of approximately \$104.09 for 18Ccf (or 13,465 gallons) of wastewater service. The quarterly billing rate includes both the charge for volume, or amount of waste water assumed to be processed, plus a reduced customer charge of \$ 8.29 per quarter. Customers who use FRSA's e-bill payment process will receive a \$1.25 per bill credit toward that amount.

Rates for industrial and commercial customers will vary by the specific use and the characteristics of the wastewater the user discharges. The rate for a residence on a private well is determined by the average municipal user rate for a like residence.

FRSA provides a Billing Calculator to estimate residential quarterly bills based upon water usage flow for specific water municipalities. <https://fourrivers.illinois.gov/residential-customers/sewer-billing-calculator/>

2. When will a new rate take effect?

On or after April 1, 2023, during your next billing cycle.

3. How do FRSA rates compare to other similar / local sewer Districts?

FRSA rates are among the lowest for cities of our size.

4. Why is FRSA spending money on capital improvements?

- As an EPA regulated agency, our aging wastewater system requires improvements to continue to deliver high quality service to our community, including: biosolids expansion for compliance with emerging regulations and to enhance the ability to capture waste energy for more sustainable operations; and phosphorous/nitrogen removal for emerging regulation compliance;

- The majority of our sewer pipes are between 60 and 90 years old, and many are in frequent need of maintenance to protect against raw sewage overflows and disruption of service;

- Pump station improvements, including backup generators, are needed to handle peak wet weather flows and back-up power.

5. Will you have provisions for low-income customers?

Yes. Users who need assistance with their sewer bill should contact the City of Rockford Community Services Division at 844-710-6919.

6. Doesn't my real estate tax rate cover this?

No. The Authority tax rate (.1658 for 2022) is for: Public Benefit projects, chlorination, other water treatments, and corporate operating purposes.

7. *What is the process for approving sewer rate increases?*

FRSA Management initiates a recommendation for a rate increase to the FRSA Board. The Board votes on the proposed rate increase during one of its monthly meetings. Meeting agendas are posted on our web site and in the cabinet on the front of the FRSA Administration Building, 3501 Kishwaukee St., Rockford IL. If the Board approves a rate increase, then the ordinance is published in the Rockford Register Star.

The FY24 rate increase was approved at the January 23, 2023 board meeting and was published in the Rockford Register Star on January 27, 2023.

8. *How can the public voice an opinion on the capital improvement plans?*

FRSA regular Board meetings are open to the public.

9. *Why don't you say no to more development?*

Costs to provide capacity to serve new development are recovered through other charges and are not driving the need for the Authority's proposed rate increases. Developers pay applicable basin fees, connection fees, payback charges, and cost participation fees. At the same time, our commitment to maintaining an efficient and effective wastewater system is a very positive benefit for economic growth in our community.

10. *What is FRSA doing to keep our rates down?*

FRSA is committed to cost-efficient operations, and we're doing many things to control rates. Our activities include:

- **Revenue enhancement/cost reduction opportunities.** FRSA is actively using/exploring opportunities to reduce our expenses, including:
 - Electrical generation with biogas (gas produced in waste treatment used to generate electricity and heat)
 - Improvements in bio-gas fuel efficiency's, ultimately resulting in increased energy production using less fuel
 - Land application of biosolids rather than landfill
 - Digesters that decompose 45% of incoming solids
 - Using sodium hypochlorite instead of chlorine gas
 - Sewer lining and point repair
- **Capital project delivery.** FRSA is exploring alternative project delivery approaches, such as partnering with local roadway agencies to reduce the costs of implementing capital projects and accelerate project delivery. We are also prioritizing capital projects and encouraging conservation to defer capital needs.
- **Financing.** FRSA regularly explores low-interest loans through the State Revolving Fund, rather than issuing higher rate general obligation alternate bonds for project funding.

11. *Where can I get more information about how FRSA manages its money?*

FRSA Financial information can be found on our website under the Reports page.
<https://fourrivers.illinois.gov/about-us/reports/>