

# utility update

## 2024 Utility Rates Support Infrastructure and Regional Growth Needs

2024 rates for Columbus water, sewer and stormwater customers were approved last fall by the Columbus Sewer and Water Advisory Board and Columbus City Council, following a public hearing, and began January 1. The rate structure will support regional growth and capacity needs, financed debt on many completed and ongoing capital improvement projects, cover operating and maintenance costs, and comply with regulatory requirements.

The revenue will fund continued improvements such as the Enhanced Meter Project, launched in 2023, to upgrade every water and city power meter, which will provide many customer benefits and operational efficiencies. Other projects include a long-planned fourth water plant northwest of Columbus to meet demands related to regional growth. The plant, and a water transmission line, are currently in design. Columbus now serves 1.4 million water users, and central Ohio is projected to have over 3 million residents by 2050. Blueprint Columbus, the green solution to solve wet weather sewer issues continues, along with the Lower Olentangy Tunnel, as well as treatment expansions at our Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant. Sewer and water line rehabilitation and replacements also continue as infrastructure ages. And of course, inflationary and supply chain cost increases have affected every business, agency, and family.

Also on the horizon: upcoming Ohio EPA regulations to comply with, such as new lead and copper rules, and also for PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

Approved 2024 Columbus utility rates increases are:

- Water: 5%
- Sewer: 5%
- Stormwater (Columbus customers only): 1%

Smaller Columbus households will see an increase of about \$10.16 a quarter, while larger households will see around \$15.91, depending on water consumption. Outside-Columbus contracting suburbs will see quarterly increases of \$11.44 to \$18.22, depending on consumption.

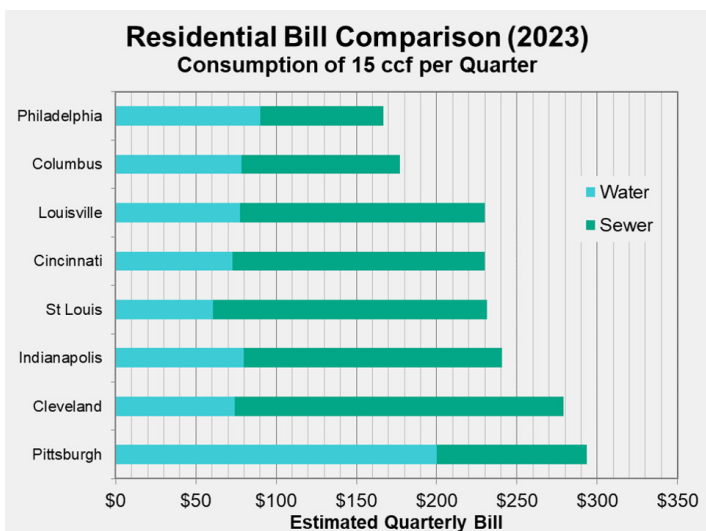
Increases will be less for approved low-income discount program customers, averaging \$8.71 to 13.31 a quarter.

Discounts for qualifying low income and senior customers remain available. Approved customers receive 20% off water and sewer consumption charges. New approved applicants are also currently eligible for a \$60 bill credit to help offset the rate increase. Qualified seniors age 60 and older may receive an additional discount. If you are enrolled in other assistance such as the Home Energy Assistance Program, you may qualify. Please use this QR code to apply from your smart phone, or visit <https://www.columbus.gov/payassist/>. For a paper application, please contact Customer Service.



Columbus' water and sewer rates remain among the lowest in the region (see chart). Columbus' tap water, meeting all state and federal drinking water standards, remains a great value at less than a penny a gallon.

For questions, please contact Customer Service at 614-645-8276, [UtilityLeadRep@columbus.gov](mailto:UtilityLeadRep@columbus.gov), or visit [columbus.gov/utilities](http://columbus.gov/utilities).



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## Do You Know What Your Water Service Line Material Is?

New lead regulations are coming, which will impact every water operator in the U.S., and we all have a short timeline to prepare to meet them. The U.S. Lead and Copper Rule was created to protect public health by controlling the corrosivity of water so that lead would not leach from pipe materials it came into contact with as it traveled through the water distribution system. After the water crisis in Flint, Michigan (reportedly caused by a source water change combined with not adding a corrosion inhibitor), much scrutiny was given to how lead was being regulated. In response, the USEPA announced new requirements; among them the development of a service line material inventory on both the city's and owner's sides of the curb stop box.

As the Columbus Division of Water works to meet the requirements, our current priority is to develop and submit our service line inventory to OEPA by October 2024. We are collecting this information through field activities and records review. We have also created a survey that all customers in the Columbus water system are asked to use to report their service line material. Information on how to correctly identify your pipe material is in the survey: <https://arcg.is/fqPb0> or scan the QR code in the next column. Your owner's service line is usually located in the basement near the inside water meter and should look something like the picture below.

The good news is that as we prepare to meet the upcoming new regulations, Columbus already has a highly effective corrosion control program. So as we build our database and develop our program to meet the new requirements, our customers can rest assured



**REPORT  
YOUR  
SERVICE LINE  
MATERIAL  
HERE**



we are already meeting our primary goal of protecting public health. It's also good to know that the city's water mains were constructed over various eras of other non-lead pipe materials. Any smaller city service lines that our crews encounter made from lead are replaced (see photo examples).



To learn more, visit [columbus.gov/leadandwater](https://columbus.gov/leadandwater). For questions, please contact the Columbus Water Quality Assurance Laboratory at [WaterQuality@columbus.gov](mailto:WaterQuality@columbus.gov) or 614-645-7691. We appreciate your help!

