

PUBLIC FIRE PROTECTION CHARGES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of a Water Utility?

A Water Utility has three primary functions:

1. Supplying water for consumption
2. Providing water for sanitation
3. Ensuring there is adequate capacity to deliver water for firefighting

2. What is the Public Fire Protection Charge?

This charge is required by State law and regulated by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC). It recovers the cost of the capacity and infrastructure required to deliver large volumes of water quickly for firefighting. These costs include a portion of wells, pumps, storage facilities, water mains, hydrants, and the estimated water used for firefighting.

3. How has Public Fire Protection been paid for in the past?

Historically, the Village used general property tax funds to cover Public Fire Protection (PFP) costs for customers connected to the water system.

4. Why were taxpayers paying for Water Utility expenses?

The property tax levy previously subsidized these costs to keep water rates lower for properties connected to the water system.

5. Why is this fee now on my Utility Bill?

Due to budget constraints, levy limits, and reductions in state aids, the Village can no longer subsidize these costs through property taxes. The PFP charge is now billed directly to utility customers to ensure all customers, including tax-exempt properties, contribute fairly.

6. Shouldn't this be covered by the Fire Department budget?

No. This charge does not fund fire department operations. It funds the **water system infrastructure** required to deliver firefighting water. Fire department expenses are separate and funded through taxes.

7. What costs does the Public Fire Protection Charge cover?

In addition to hydrants, this charge covers:

- Larger water mains
- Larger pumps
- Increased storage capacity (water towers/reservoirs)

These upgrades ensure adequate volume and pressure for firefighting while still meeting daily water needs.

8. I have multiple meters. Will I be charged for each meter?

Any meter providing general water service (domestic or commercial) receives a PFP charge. Irrigation-only meters do **not** receive a PFP charge unless they are 1-inch or larger.

9. Do other municipalities have a Public Fire Protection Charge?

Yes. Roughly half of Wisconsin's PSC-regulated utilities recover some or all PFP costs through direct charges. Many communities are moving to this method due to levy limits and budget pressures.

10. How is the Public Fire Protection charge calculated?

The PSC uses the “equivalent meters” method, which bases the charge on meter size. Larger meters pay more because they require larger system capacity.

11. Does the Public Fire Protection charge apply to tax-exempt properties?

Yes. All customers — including churches, schools, and government facilities — pay the same charge for the same meter size.
