

WATER AUTHORITY OF GREAT NECK NORTH

New Rates & Fees

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is there a new treatment fee on my bill?

New York State has become the first in the nation to adopt rigorous new drinking water standards that require public water suppliers to develop costly treatment plants to remove 1,4-dioxane, PFOS and PFAS from the water, prior to distribution.

In its pledge to provide customers with an uninterrupted supply of top-quality drinking water, the Authority will address any need for water treatment and invest whatever is necessary to ensure that it continues to meet or exceed all quality mandates set by the government. As of now, the Authority expects that to comply with these new regulations, expenditures could be in the range of \$20 to \$30 million.

2. How will this impact my bill?

As of January 1, 2021, commercial, government and municipal customers will see a \$7.79 monthly fee and residential customers will see a \$23.37 quarterly fee on their bill to help pay for the cost of developing and operating treatment systems for three contaminants of concern that are being regulated by New York State. This equates to approximately 26 cents per day.

3. Is the water safe for me to drink and use?

The Authority is currently in full compliance with all government drinking water regulations. Though raising the amount we charge you for water service is something we try to avoid whenever possible, our top priority is to provide you with high quality drinking water that meets or surpasses all drinking water standards.

The new state regulations are the toughest in the country for these contaminants and as a result, you can be assured that you will continue to have some of the best drinking water available.

4. Do I get any benefit from an increased rate?

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5. Can the Water Authority apply for grant money to pay for the improvements?

The Water Authority has pursued and been awarded state grant funds, but they alleviate only a portion of the cost of needed treatment systems. Luckily, due to the Authority's financial reputation, it has received the highest rating available from rating agencies to minimize the interest it must pay in the open market, all to the benefit of its customers.

6. How will the Water Authority spend the money?

Although the Authority is currently in full compliance with all drinking water regulations, construction is underway to develop a treatment facility at Well 6 for the removal of 1,4-dioxane to prevent exceedances of the allowable maximum level of 1- part-per billion. Grant money from the state, in the amount of \$3 million, will be used to help offset expenses for that project, which are expected to exceed \$7.4 million.

The Authority anticipates that three additional 1,4-dioxane, PFOS and PFAS treatment plants may be needed at its Watermill Lane facility. In addition, three wells at the Community Drive site are also being monitored closely to determine if it will be necessary to introduce treatment at that location for 1,4-dioxane, as well as PFOS and PFAS, for which the state has set maximum contaminant levels at 10-parts-per-trillion.

7. How did these chemicals get into the water system?

1,4-dioxane, PFOS and PFAS entered water supplies as a result of industrial manufacturing on Long Island, primarily from the 1950s through the 1990s. The companies knew, or should have known the hazards posed by their products, but nevertheless failed to take steps to prevent the contamination. The Authority has joined local public water purveyors in actions against those manufacturers in an attempt to hold them responsible for the construction and maintenance costs of treatment plants needed to meet the new standard.

As New York State Health Department regulations become more stringent, operating costs are increasing and raising capital is becoming more challenging for public water suppliers across Long Island. The Authority has recently issued \$19.8 million low-interest Water System Revenue Bonds, of which monies will be drawn as needed to cover costs associated with 1,4-dioxane treatment plants as well as water main replacement projects and other components of the Authority's long-term capital improvements plan.

Additional revenue will be needed to develop infrastructure that may be required to remove PFOS and PFAS and to maintain and modernize the Authority's aging water distribution system, some of which dates back more than 100 years.

The Authority's \$9.7 million operating budget for 2021 is used to serve a population of 32,400. More than 1.5 billion gallons of water are provided annually to 9,553 service connections via 117 miles of water mains situated throughout 7.5 square miles on the Great Neck Peninsula. The Authority maintains 11 active drinking water wells, 2.5 million gallons of water storage capacity and 827 fire hydrants.

Since the Great Neck community purchased the assets of the Citizen Water Supply Company in 1989, the Authority has been challenged with maintaining and upgrading an aging infrastructure that dates back to 1903; addressing the threat of salt-water intrusion; meeting homeland security requirements, a growing demand for water, conservation mandates and stricter federal and state quality standards; hardening the infrastructure to protect against flooding; and planning for future infrastructure needs and a growing demand for water.

8. How long will we have to pay the treatment fee? Is it a permanent addition to our bill?

The new treatment fee, as a result of New York State mandates, will remain in effect until it is no longer needed to meet budgetary requirements.

The Water Authority is exhausting all avenues for funds to help offset expenses associated with the construction of new treatment facilities including grants, as it does not feel it is fair that customers bear the total burden of associated costs.

We are also taking the companies responsible for the pollution to court to hold them accountable for the costs of removing these contaminants. We expect these measures to ultimately have a positive impact on water rates.

9. What can I do to save money on my water bill?

Consumers are encouraged to help reduce their own costs by taking steps to conserve water whenever possible. With irrigation accounting for about 50 percent of residential water use, an annual survey of the sprinkling system is recommended. Repairs and updates to the system, as well as the introduction of modern smart technology may result in a significant reduction in water use. Indoor leaks should be addressed and water-saving appliances purchased when possible.

The public is also advised to log onto the Authority's website, which provides information about conservation and other water-saving initiatives, including the Authority's newly designed household water conservation kit, which is available for free.

The Authority is playing its part in conservation efforts too. A sophisticated leak detection service was instituted that surveyed 117 miles of distribution system piping. Twenty-six leaks were located, saving approximately 138,000 gallons of water per day. The savings of reducing lost water more than pays for the survey cost.