

Public Fire Protection Charge

In December, 2011, Ashland became one of 264 water utilities within the state that choose to convert the Public Fire Protection Charge mandated by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin into a direct user charge.

Prior to the decision of the Common Council to convert the expense to a direct charge, the City's general fund subsidized the cost of providing a water system with the capacity required to fight fires. As a direct charge, the Public Fire Protection Charge will be paid by all properties within the City.

The conversion of the charge was included as part of the rate increase order issued by the PSCW on April 22, 2013.

What does the Public Fire Protection Charge specifically cover?

The mandated charge covers the obvious items such as fire hydrants. It also covers the not so obvious expenses such as the increased size of water mains, increased pump capacity, and increased storage capacity of the City's water tower; all items that must be in place to fight a fire. If the water system was not constructed to fight fires, the water distribution system would cost considerably less to operate and maintain because of smaller mains, pumps, and storage towers.

Additional information on the Public Fire Protection Charge can be found at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin website:
<http://psc.wi.gov/>

City of Ashland

Treasurer's Office

First Floor

Ashland City Hall
601 Main Street West
Ashland, WI 54806

715-682-7071

City Hall Hours:
8 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

www.ci.ashland.wi.us



Public Works Department

2020 6th Street East
Ashland, WI 54806

715-682-7061

Public Works Hours:
7 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Public Fire Protection Charge



***A Revenue Requirement of the
Public Service Commission of
Wisconsin and Incorporated
within the Ashland Municipal
Water Utility Tariff***

What is the Public Fire Protection Charge?

The Public Fire Protection Direct Charge is part of the City water utility's tariff established by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW). The Public Fire Protection Charge provides for reimbursement to the water utility for expenses required to construct and maintain a utility system with the capacity to deliver water for firefighting. Section 196.03(3)(b), Wisconsin Statutes permits a community with a public water system the ability to collect the charge as part of the property tax levy or as a direct user charge. In December, 2011, the Ashland Common Council elected to begin collecting the mandated charge as a user fee as permitted by Statute.

How has the Charge been collected in the past?

The City's general fund has been paying the PSCW mandated charge to the water utility from the tax levy in the amount of \$510,664 annually. The PSCW has established the charge at \$620,599 as part of the utility's April, 2013 water rate tariff.

Why has it taken so long to implement collection of the direct charge?

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin chose to include the conversion of the fee as part of the review of a water utility rate increase application. The Ashland water utility had not sought an adjustment in water

rates for a decade. The PSCW leveraged the conversion of the fee with a requirement for the utility to file a rate increase application. The finalization of the required rate study and review by the PSCW took considerably longer than anticipated. The utility will implement the Public Fire Protection Direct Charge as directed by the rate order issued by the PSCW on April 22, 2013.

Who determines the amount of the Charge?

The PSCW determines the amount of the Public Fire Protection Direct Charge. The charge will be based on the size of the water meter serving the property, and in the case of a vacant property with no public water service, the fee is based on the smallest meter size in the community. The PSCW will review and adjust the charge with each water rate increase application filed by the utility.

Why convert the Charge to a user fee?

As a direct charge user fee, all properties within the community (taxable and tax exempt) will begin contributing to the expense of providing the capacity within the public water system necessary for fire flows. All properties within the City will now be treated equally and will be required to contribute their share of public fire protection water utility costs.

Why isn't the Charge borne by the fire department?

The Public Fire Protection Direct Charge covers the costs incurred by the utility to be

able to deliver water for firefighting and is independent of any expenses that the fire department may incur in order to use the delivered water to fight a fire.

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

Every general service water meter (Schedule Mg-1 & Sg-1) will receive a separate Public Fire Protection Charge. The charge will not apply to lawn or irrigation meters. If your dwelling or business contains more than one general service meter, multiple charges will be received.

I am not a utility customer; will I be charged the Public Fire Protection Fee?

Yes, the charge applies to all buildable parcels within the corporate limits of the City of Ashland whether or not they are served by the City's water utility.

I have multiple adjoining parcels of property. Will I be charged for each parcel?

Every property parcel is identified by a tax number issued by the County Land Records Office. Each buildable tax numbered parcel will receive the Public Fire Protection Charge. The charge can be reduced by combining adjoining parcels. Contact the County Land Records Office in the Ashland County Courthouse, 201 Main Street West, Ashland, Wisconsin for more information on the process for combining parcels.