



Cumberland Water Department

Frequently Asked Questions

The Cumberland Water Department operates as an enterprise fund within the Town of Cumberland, Rhode Island, servicing roughly 23,000 people north of Marshall Avenue. Potable water and fire protection are supplied to our customers through the operation of a surface water treatment plant, six groundwater wells, two wholesale connections, five pumping stations, five water storage tanks and 140 miles of distribution mains. Water rates are set to support the operations of the Department, including the maintenance and replacement of infrastructure within the distribution system.

Hydrant Flushing:

Why are fire hydrants flushed and how often does it occur?

Fire hydrants are flushed to remove accumulated sediment from the distribution mains on an annual basis. The Department conducts a system wide unidirectional flushing program which usually begins in April (temperatures permitting) and concludes in mid to late June.

In addition to the annual flushing program, fire hydrants may be flushed at other times to remove discoloration which can occur due to a water main break, fire fighting activities or a very high demand on the distribution system.

How will I know when fire hydrant flushing will occur in my area?

Hydrant Flushing has been delayed this year due to ramifications from COVID-19. Hydrant Flushing will take place in the Fall and when the schedule is finalized it will be published to the Town website. The schedule is also advertised in the Valley Breeze bi-weekly until the flushing process has been completed. Residents can also call the Water Department Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 AM and 3:00 PM, at 401-658-0666 (option 1) with questions about when individual neighborhoods may be affected.

What should I expect when fire hydrant flushing occurs in my area?

Residents should expect to experience some water discoloration as well as fluctuations in water pressure while fire hydrant flushing is being conducted in their area. If you experience discoloration, run your **cold water only** for a couple of minutes to clear your service line. If the problem persists, contact the Water Department to see if the flushing activities are still in progress. If the flushing activities have concluded, we may have to open a fire hydrant near your property to assist in clearing the line.



Water Emergencies After Hours, Weekend, and Holidays

The Cumberland Water Department (CWD) operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is available to respond to water emergencies. If you experience an emergency (leaking water inside/outside your house or no water inside your house) please call 401-658-0666 (option 3), if there is no answer, leave a message. If you do not receive a return call in 5 to 10 minutes, please contact the Cumberland Police Department at 401-333-2500 and the dispatcher will contact the on-call person via radio to respond to the emergency.

Please be aware that CWD does not conduct repairs on private property. The homeowner is responsible for the underground line servicing their property from the curb shut off into the home as well as all plumbing appurtenances within the home. CWD will respond to turn off the water at the curb shut off, however the property owner will need to contact either a plumber or utility contractor to perform the repair.

Why Is My Water Bill Higher Than Usual?

There are several reasons why your water bill may be unusually high. The most frequent reason is a leak within the house, which is usually a toilet. Customers can check to see if a toilet is leaking through a few easy steps:

1. Listen to for the sound of running water in the bathroom.
2. Remove the cover on the back of the toilet to see if water is running down the overflow tube in the toilet tank. If water is running down the overflow tube, the float level will need to be adjusted in the tank to stop the leak.
3. If there is no water running down the overflow tube, and you can see no visible water running in the toilet bowl, place a four to five drops of food coloring in the toilet tank and see if the water changes color in the toilet bowl. If the water in the toilet bowl changes color, the flapper valve at the base of the tank will need to be replaced to stop the leak.

If you are unable to locate a leak within your house, contact CWD during normal business hours and our office staff will be able to research your consumption. In most cases, CWD staff has the ability to view your consumption on an hourly basis, if there is constant consumption, there is a most likely a leak. CWD offers help in identifying leaks for our customers within their homes during normal business hours, at no charge. Once the leak/leaks are identified customers will need to repair the leak either on their own or by hiring a plumber, CWD does not conduct repairs on plumbing appurtenances within a customer's home.



Why Is My Water Discolored?

Frequent reasons for water discoloration **cold water only**:

1. Annual Fire Hydrant Flushing Program (Typically April – June)
2. Water Main Break
3. Fire Fighting Activities
4. Operation of Fire Hydrants for Street Sweeping Activities
5. Unusually High Demand on the Distribution System
6. Unauthorized Use of Fire Hydrants

If you experience discoloration in your **cold water**, run your cold water tap for a few minutes to try and clear your service line, if the problem persists contact our office, CWD staff may have to operate a hydrant near your home to assist in clearing the line.

If you are experiencing discoloration in your **hot water** there could be an issue with your hot water tank. You should contact your plumber or service company to diagnose the problem.

What Should My Water Pressure Be?

Water pressure within CWD's distribution system ranges between 180 psi and 28 psi due to elevation and storage tank levels. If your water pressure is equal to or greater than 75 psi, you should have a pressure reducing valve and expansion tank installed in your home to avoid damage being caused to your interior plumbing and heating systems.

If you are experiencing issues with low pressure within your home the following issues could be to blame:

1. Your home is located at the top of a hill or near a water storage tank.
2. If you have a water filtration system, the filter may be clogged.
3. Remove the aerators on your faucets and check the flow, they may be clogged.
4. Remove your shower head and check the flow, it may be clogged.
5. Check the shut off valves going to your fixtures, they may be partially closed.
6. Check the main shut off valve to your house, it may be partially closed.

If you are unable to figure out why your pressure is low, contact our office during regular business hours and our office staff will try to assist you. CWD offers assistance in diagnosing why the pressure may be low within your home during regular business hours free of charge. CWD will not replace or repair clogged plumbing appurtenances within your home however we can help you diagnose the problem prior to you replacing the clogged equipment or hiring a plumber to do so.



In some instances, the underground line servicing your home could be clogged at the curb side shut off or at the connection to the water main. Once diagnosed as the problem, CWD staff would then excavate and repair the issue at no cost to the customer.

When Are Water Bills Sent and How Can They be Paid?

CWD bills our customers on a quarterly basis. In general, the bills are sent for the following times for the coinciding quarters:

<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Period Covered</u>
December	July – September
March	October – December
June	January – March
September	April – June

CWD accepts check and money order payments via mail. Cash, check, money order and credit card payments are accepted at our office during regular business hours. CWD will be accepting online payments via credit card only starting in December of 2019. There is a courtesy fee of \$2.00 minimum or 3% of the total amount charged to the customer when payment is made with a credit card.

What if I have Questions about my Water Bill?

1. First take a reading from your water meter, if you cannot easily read your water meter skip this step.
2. Have your account number and bill on hand.
3. Call CWD during regular business hours at 401-658-0666 (option 1).



Are Exemptions for the Elderly Available?

Some customers are eligible for a reduced service charge and exemption of the State and Water Quality Surcharges on their water bill if the following criteria is met:

1. The homeowner must be a minimum of 65 years old.
2. The homeowner must reside at the home and the property must be their primary residence.
3. The resident must apply in person at CWD during regular business hours located at 98 Nate Whipple Highway, Cumberland, Rhode Island 02864.
4. The applicant must provide proof of age and residency.

The exemption can only be provided once the criteria has been provided, back credits cannot be provided on previously issued bills.

Current Rate Ordinance and Explanation of Fees

Rate Ordinance (current fees)

Rate Ordinance (as of 7/1/20)

Explanation of Fees

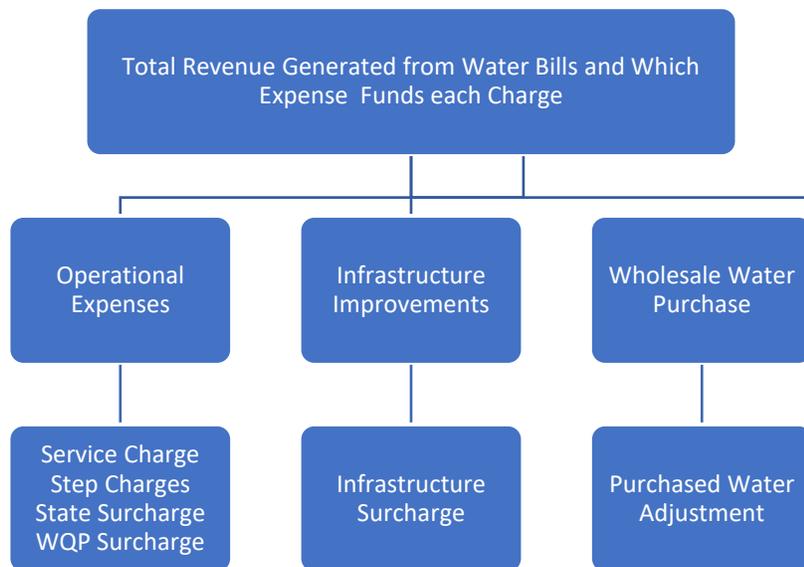
1. **Service Charge:** Flat fee annual charge which is distributed evenly on a quarterly basis to every customer for being connected to the water system which is based on meter size.
2. **Step 1 (water usage charge):** Volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water for 0 – 12,500 gallons used per quarter.
3. **Step 2 (water usage charge):** Volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water for 12,501 – 50,000 gallons used per quarter.
4. **Step 3 (water usage charge):** Volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water for 50,001 gallons and above used per quarter.
5. **State Surcharge:** State imposed volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water paid to the State of Rhode Island General Treasurer to fund the operation of the Rhode Island Water Resources Board.
6. **Water Quality Protection Surcharge:** State imposed volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water paid to the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank by water suppliers that produce their own water to fund the Water Quality Protection Program. Water suppliers can request funding or reimbursement for property acquisitions which protect watershed areas or improvements to the water system which will improve water quality.



- 7. **Infrastructure Surcharge:** Volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water which is reinvested in the form of water system improvements such as water main replacement projects, storage tank rehabilitations, pumping station upgrades and other system related improvements.
- 8. **Purchased Water Adjustment:** Volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons of water which funds the expense of water purchased from wholesale water suppliers.

How are Water Rate Increases Calculated?

CWD has taken the basic approach that there are essentially three areas of expense in the operation of the enterprise fund utility. The chart below illustrates which charges fund each of the three areas of expense.



Operational Expense Increase

Utilizing the methodology illustrated in the chart, if operational expenses increase, such as electricity, treatment chemicals, or distribution system supplies, and the current charges associated with that category were insufficient to fund the additional expense, the Step Charges and/or Service Charges would be increased. Increases are based on projected sales of water in each category, while considering historical data, growth within the system and trends in seasonal consumptions.

Infrastructure Improvements Increase

CWD maintains a Capital Improvement/Infrastructure Replacement Plan which outlines projects which need to be completed within the distribution system. The expense associated with these types of projects are substantial and usually require the issuance of revenue bonds. Revenue



bonds pledge future revenues from the enterprise fund as the repayment mechanism of the bond which is usually over a period of twenty years. When infrastructure projects are identified for an upcoming fiscal year, an estimate of probable cost is generated for CWD by a consulting engineering firm. The estimate is then used by the Town of Cumberland's financial advisor to develop an estimated amortization schedule showing the probable principal and interest payments associated with the revenue bond. The infrastructure surcharge would then be increased to fund the annual principal and interest payments associated with the revenue bond. Increases are based on projected sales of water, while considering historical data, growth within the system and trends in seasonal consumptions.

Purchased Water Adjustment Increase

CWD purchases water from other suppliers at a wholesale rate which is determined by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (RIPUC). Typically, an increase in this surcharge is triggered by a RIPUC approved increase in a supplier's wholesale rate for water. CWD then analyzes projected sales of water, historical data for the amount of water which has been purchased from the supplier, while considering growth within the system and trends in seasonal consumptions to determine how much water will be purchased from the supplier. The increase is then calculated to cover the additional expense.

Recent Water Rate Increases and the Financial Impact to Customers

Charges which fund operational expenses have not been increased since April of 2015. CWD has been able to maintain the funding of rising operational expenses, without increasing rates. Many upgrades have been made which have allowed for efficiencies to equate to overall cost savings for our customers.

The rate charged for the purchased water adjustment has not been increased since December of 2010, even though there have been increases in the wholesale rate from our suppliers. CWD has been able to maintain the purchased water adjustment rate for our customers by making operational changes to maximize production rates from our own sources.

The rate charged for the infrastructure surcharge was last increased in November of 2016 and will be increasing again in July of 2020. The increases have been made to fund the payment of revenue bonds associated with various infrastructure improvements which have been made to the water system. On July 1, 2020 the infrastructure surcharge will increase by \$0.50 per 1,000 gallons of water and will fund the payment of a \$4,000,000.00 revenue bond which will be used for the replacement of approximately 1.5 miles of water mains within the distribution system.

The financial impact of this increase to a customer which uses 100,000 gallons of water annually will be \$50.00 per year or \$12.50 per quarterly bill.



Recently Completed and Future Infrastructure Improvements

The following infrastructure improvement projects and associated cost have been completed and are listed below:

Year	Project	Contract Value
2008	Nate Whipple Main Replacement	\$ 186,354.00
2010	System Wide Water Meter Replacement	\$ 1,420,749.00
2010	Automatic Meter Reading System	\$ 1,271,825.00
2010	Diamond Hill Road Water Main Cleaning	\$ 1,922,842.82
2010	Woonsocket Interconnection Project	\$ 559,600.00
2012	Electrical and Pumping Equipment Upgrades	\$ 250,000.00
2014	Marshall Avenue Main Replacement	\$ 115,000.00
2014	Emergency Generator Project	\$ 56,000.00
2014	Long Term Pumping Tests for New Well Sites	\$ 252,545.00
2016	Fisher Road Water Tank Replacement	\$ 1,523,755.83
2018	Diamond Hill Road Water Main Replacement	\$ 4,725,279.13
Total for Infrastructure Improvement Projects		\$ 12,283,950.78

CWD expects to begin construction on the following projects in spring of 2020:

1. Diamond Hill Road Main Replacement Phase 2: Falstaff Drive to Garvin Elementary
2. Newell Bridge Main Replacement
3. Grant's Mills Bridge Main Replacement

Capital/Infrastructure Improvement Plan

Capital/Infrastructure Improvements are a necessary function of a water utility to ensure the supply of potable water and fire protection to our customers. CWD's distribution system supplies potable water and fire protection to its customers through roughly 140 miles of water mains, 86 miles of which is at or near its projected life expectancy. The cost to replace water mains may vary depending on size, paving requirements and sub surface conditions, but on average it will cost (at today's prices) \$2,000,000.00 to replace 1.5 miles of water main. Applying that methodology to the 86 miles of water main which is at or near its projected life expectancy, it will take approximately 57 years for the full replacement (at today's prices).



What You Should Know About your Irrigation System

Underground irrigation systems can vary widely in the amount of water which is used on an hourly basis depending on pressure, square footage of area which is irrigated and how many sprinkler heads are used in each zone. CWD has found that systems use as much as 1,000 gallons per hour and as little as 400 gallons per hour, so costs can vary greatly depending on your individual system. CWD has developed the following table to illustrate both how much water your irrigation system could be using and the associated cost of the water at the most common rate, 500 gallons per hour.

Hours Run	GPD	Days/Week	GPW	GPQ	Cost/Day	Cost/Month	Cost/Qtr
2	800	3	2400	72000	\$6.40	\$95.95	\$575.68
3	1200	3	3600	108000	\$9.59	\$143.92	\$863.52
4	1600	3	4800	144000	\$12.79	\$191.89	\$1,151.37
5	2000	3	6000	180000	\$15.99	\$239.87	\$1,439.21

Water Quality Report

As a Public Water System, CWD is required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to circulate our annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) for the previous calendar year by July 1st of the current calendar year. The CCR outlines substances which were detected in either drinking water or raw untreated source water and the levels at which they were detected for the previous calendar year or last reporting period for the substance. CWD notifies customers via a postcard mailer containing the direct link to the CCR, as well as posting the report in public places. Should you have any questions about the material provided in the CCR, please contact our office during regular business hours.