Water Quality Treatment Charge

A guide for SCWA customers

Water Quality Treatment Charge

- As of January 1st, 2020 all SCWA quarterly bills include a $20 Water Quality Treatment Charge.

- The Water Quality Treatment Charge was instituted by the SCWA Board to offset the cost to install new water treatment systems at over 50 SCWA public supply wells.

- These new treatment systems are necessary in order to comply with new regulations from the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) for the emerging contaminants 1,4-dioxane, PFOS & PFOA.

Why $20 per quarter?

- In order to ensure that all water served by SCWA meets new standards for 1,4-dioxane, PFOS & PFOA, over 50 new treatment systems must be installed.

- Designing, procuring, constructing, installing, and testing these new treatment systems will cost SCWA over $177,000,000, which does not include annual operating costs.

- SCWA has just under 400,000 customer accounts, meaning a $20 quarterly fee is needed to generate the necessary funding over a five to six-year period.

- SCWA is an independent public-benefit corporation operating under the authority of the Public Authorities Law of the State of New York, meaning SCWA operates without taxing power on a not-for-profit basis. Nearly all our revenue must be collected from customer water bills.

Why should I have to pay to clean up contamination that I did not create?

- SCWA did not put these contaminants in our aquifer, but it is our charge to remove/destroy them.
- SCWA has initiated legal action in two separate complaints against the manufacturers responsible for polluting Long Island's groundwater with 1,4-dioxane, PFOS and PFOA, seeking to recover the costs of treating contaminated water to remove the chemicals from SCWA wells.
- Unfortunately, resolution of these cases may take years, and treatment systems must be installed as soon as possible.
- Though we can not wait for the resolution of these lawsuits to begin work, SCWA customers will see some form of financial relief should the courts eventually rule in our favor, whether that means the elimination of the $20 fee, stabilizing water rates for a number of years, or some other financial measure.

Why is the Water Quality Treatment Charge a flat fee, and not based on a customers' water consumption?

- The decision was made by the SCWA Board to institute a flat fee so that the Authority has a predictable and reliable revenue stream for these projects.

- Using a fee relative to customer usage means there would be no way to predict what would ultimately be collected.

- As the fee pertains to water quality and not water quantity, we believe this affects all our customers equally.

I am on a fixed income and cannot afford another $80 a year. What should I do?

- SCWA does offer payment plans on customer accounts. Please contact one of our customer care representatives at (631) 698-9500 if you would like to set up a payment plan.

- SCWA does not offer any discount with regard to the Water Quality Treatment Charge at this time.

What is 1,4-dioxane?

- 1,4-dioxane is a synthetic chemical historically used as a stabilizer for industrial solvents, predominantly 1,1,1-trichloroethane, which was banned in the 1990s.

- It is also used in inks and adhesives and is present in trace amounts in consumer products such as detergents, shampoos and cosmetics as a by-product of the manufacturing process.

- 1,4-dioxane can not be removed from water using traditional treatment methods such as Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) or air-stripping.

SCWA Action on 1,4-dioxane

- SCWA began voluntarily testing for 1,4-dioxane in 2003.
- In 2016, Suffolk County Water Authority engineers designed and piloted the first full-scale pilot 1,4-dioxane treatment system in NYS history. The Authority's Advanced Oxidation Process (AOP) treatment system is currently in operation in Central Islip.
- AOP Treatment Systems are currently being installed were required across our service territory.
- Results show AOP destroys 1,4-dioxane molecules to virtually non-detect levels.

What are PFOS & PFOA?

- Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) are fluorinated organic chemicals used in treatments to protect carpets, clothing, furniture fabrics, paper packaging for food and non-stick cookware. They are also found in firefighting foams.

SCWA Action on PFOS & PFOA

- SCWA began testing for PFOS & PFOA in 2013 at the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

- PFOS & PFOA are removed from water using Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) treatment.

- SCWA has completed the installation of additional GAC systems to comply with the new regulations.

Does this mean that my water right now is contaminated? Is my water currently safe to drink?

- Yes, your water is safe to drink.
- When we talk about 1,4-Dioxane, PFOS & PFOA, we are talking about **lifetime exposure levels, NOT acute health risks** that would be a concern today.
- When regulators create new standards for emerging contaminants like these three, they are looking at exposure levels over a 70-year period.
- As Governor Cuomo mentioned in his statement on the subject in 2019: "We're proposing the most protective levels in the nation for three emerging contaminants to ensure we are regularly testing and fixing water systems **before they ever rise to a public health risk** in any part of the state."

Is it safer to drink bottled water instead?

- Bottled water is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), not the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), meaning it is not held to the same strict standards for quality and safety.

- Bottled water is not required to be tested for 1,4-dioxane, PFOS or PFOA.

- Bottled water should not necessarily be considered a “healthier” or “safer” alternative to tap water.

Levels of Detection

- SCWA's state-of-the-art laboratory instruments can detect compounds in the water down to parts-per-**million**, parts-per-**billion,** or in some cases even parts-per-**trillion**.

- For reference:
  - 1 Part-per-million = 1 second in 12 days
  - 1 Part-per-billion = 1 second in 32 years
  - 1 Part-per-trillion = 1 second in 32,000 years