

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why did our rates increase?

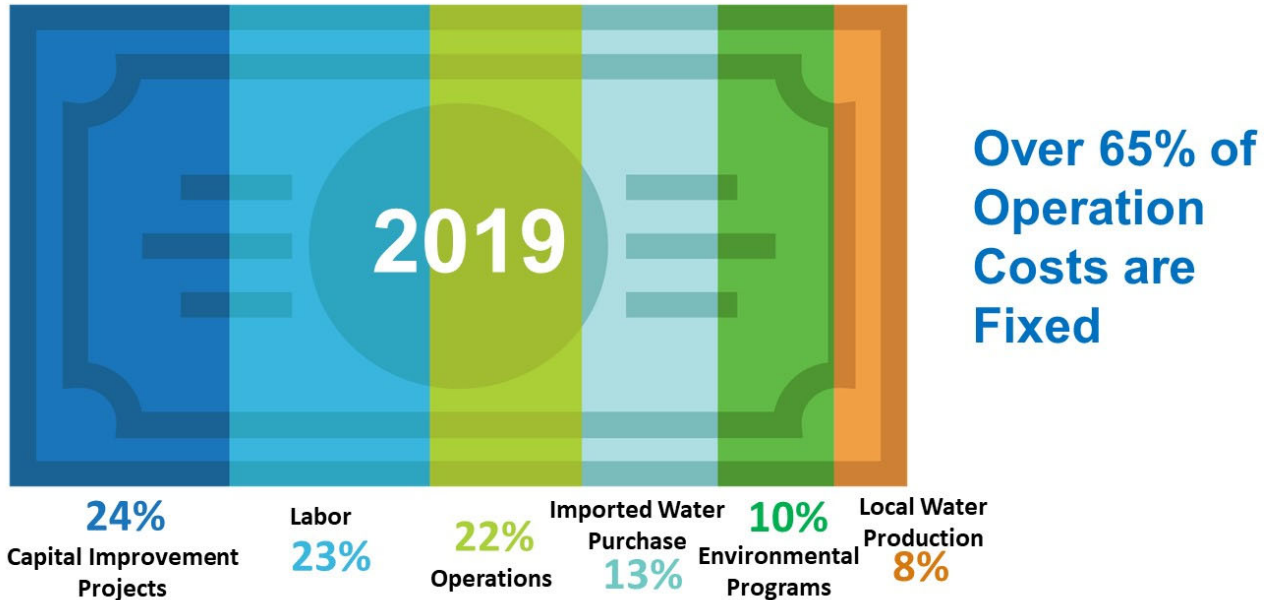
The rate increases were adopted by City Council on January 28, 2020 and went into effect on March 1, 2020. The rate increase will support the City's core mission to provide safe, reliable water and wastewater services to our community. Having a reliable water supply and maintaining continuity of service is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize the economic impact COVID-19 has had on our community and the need to be responsive to our community's needs in this time of crisis. The adopted rates will ensure that the City remains prepared to fulfill its mission of supplying our community with reliable, clean, and healthy water.

2) What do the rates fund?

The adopted rates will ensure that the City remains prepared to fulfill its mission of supplying our community with reliable, clean, and healthy water. Approximately 75% of the rates fund day-to-day operations, 22% of the rates fund capital projects to replace aging infrastructure such as water pipes, filters, and other equipment, and 3% of the rates fund water self-sufficiency projects. Due to COVID-19 impacts, the City has already diverted funds from water self-sufficiency projects to offset deficits and ensure operational continuity of water and wastewater services during this challenging time.

3) Why do we have a fixed charge on our bills now?

The adopted rate structure includes a 15% fixed charge to provide fund stability for water and wastewater operations as over 65% of our operation costs is fixed. In other words, 65% of our expenditures occurs whether each of our customer use 1 gallon or 100 gallons of water. Our customers still have significant control over their water bill as 85% of it is still commodity based.



4) Can you postpone the rate increase?

The rate increases were adopted by City Council on January 28, 2020 and went into effect on March 1, 2020. The City needs to maintain the fiscal integrity of its Water and Wastewater Funds as it operates independently from the City’s General Fund. This is critical to ensure we continue to serve our community. Like our community, the Water and Wastewater Funds’ bottom lines have also been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

We encourage our residents to continue to pay their utility bills if they can, otherwise if you have a financial hardship please contact the Billing and Collections office at 310-458-8224, extension 1, to help minimize the financial impact during these challenging times.

5) How does our water bill compare to our neighbors?

Santa Monica has one of the lower rates in the region. In comparing our average single family resident to our neighbors, Santa Monica’s water bill is about 50% less than the City of Los Angeles and Culver City, and 25% less than Beverly Hills.

6) What will happen to the City's water self-sufficiency goal?

The City is committed to fulfill its mission of supplying our community with reliable, clean, and healthy water. In doing so, we have had to postpone our water self-sufficiency goal to divert funds to day-to-day operations and ensure continuity of service for our community during this time.

7) What is the City doing during COVID-19 to ensure we have safe water?

The City monitors water quality in our water supply 24/7 and our water team is working around the clock to deliver safe, high-quality and dependable water for the community to use and drink. The City's water treatment plant removes viruses and pathogens, including viruses like COVID-19, through advanced filtration and disinfection.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our water team has already responded to two water main breaks in the City, one on March 20th at Lincoln and Ocean Park Blvd., where our crew was able to repair the pipe without interrupting service to any customer throughout the 6 hours of repair, and another on March 27th at 2nd Street and Santa Monica Blvd., where service was restored within one hour.

8) I'm worried about my water bill going up during the safer-at-home period, what can I do manage my water use and water bill?

- Tips to save water during safer-at-home
 - Please remember to turn-off the water while you are washing your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and turn it back on when you are ready to rinse off the soap.
 - Laundry and dishes are the major sources of indoor water use. Please remember to only run full loads of laundry and dishes to minimize water use.
 - Showers and baths are also another major source of indoor water use. The average American uses 17 gallons of water per shower based on

an average duration of 8 minutes. Reducing your shower time by just one minute will save 2 gallons of water.

- Ensure your automatic landscape sprinklers are set to not water during rain events and consider further reducing the amount of water used to irrigate landscaping.

9) Other Key Facts and Tips

- From our advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) smart water meter pilot program, we are seeing on average no change to a 10% decrease in water usage by our residents during the safer-at-home period from data analyzed for selected meters in the City.