



## **Sewer Billing FAQs**

### **Billing Error Questions**

#### **How did this billing error happen?**

The City's review determined that the issue resulted from the way that its tiered sewer rates were applied within the billing process. Specifically, the billing system applied the higher usage rate to all water used during a billing period instead of applying each rate only to the portion of usage within the applicable tier. At this time, the City has not been able to determine exactly when or why this incorrect billing configuration was initially established. The error was present for several years before it was identified by a new auditing firm.

#### **What process was used to calculate each customer's overpayment?**

After the City was notified about this issue by our auditor, we hired a consultant who used the correct billing formula to calculate what sewer bills should have been for each customer dating back to 2019. The results of this calculation were compared to the amounts that were billed to determine the refund owed.

#### **How many customers were billed incorrectly?**

About 4,300 customers were affected by this error.

#### **How much money, in total, does the City owe residents in refunds?**

Overpayments total approximately \$1.35 million.

#### **Will all wastewater customers receive a credit?**

No, customers who did not exceed the minimum charge were billed correctly and their accounts will not be credited.

#### **How much will my credit be?**

The amount of each household's credit will differ based on their individual water usage.

**Will the City pay interest on the credits?**

Yes, the City is working with the billing agency to include lost interest in the refund issued to impacted customers.

**How long will it take to get the credit?**

The City is working with Maine Water to have refunds issued to customers as soon as possible. The timeline of when you will see the credit reflected on your account depends on your billing schedule, since some customers receive monthly bills and others receive quarterly bills.

**What if I sold my property during this time of incorrect billing and am no longer a Biddeford sewer customer? How will I receive my refund?**

The current owner will receive a credit for the amount due to them since the sale of the property, and the City will issue a refund check to the previous owner. Deceased former customers will receive checks issued to their estates. If you sold a Biddeford property in the last seven years and you think you are entitled to a refund, please contact us at 207-286-9387.

**How can I trust that billing issues will not happen again in the future?**

The City of Biddeford transitioned sewer billing services to Maine Water in 2025, introducing specialized utility billing expertise and additional oversight into our existing process. Since Maine Water took over billing in 2025, all bill amounts have been correct.

**Who do I contact with questions about my refund or bill? What can I expect when I make the call?**

The City of Biddeford has set up a dedicated phone line for sewer billing questions, 207-286-9387. Please be advised that answers about specific accounts will not be immediately available at the time of your call. A dedicated staff member will collect your contact information, look into your inquiry, and return your call as soon as possible.

**Rate Increase Questions****How are sewer rates set?**

Sewer rates are set by the City Council during the annual budget process. As a part of this process, the Council reviews the operating expenses for the sewer fund and establishes a billing rate for sewer services that will raise enough revenue to cover expenses.

**Why is the rate increase so large?**

The sewer fund is supported strictly by users of this service. The funds taken in through customer payments must fully fund the service. Both the 20% increase approved last year and the additional 11.2% increase this year were needed for the fund to meet increased operational expenses and construction costs due to inflation.

**Why wasn't the 20% rate increase from 2025 put into effect?**

Over the past year and a half, there has been significant leadership turnover in City Hall. In this time of transition, the rate increase approved by the City Council was not properly communicated to Maine Water.

**Will the 2025 rate increase be applied retroactively?**

No, both the 2025 and 2026 rate increases will be effective September 1, 2026.

**How will the rate increase impact my next bill?**

As bills are based on actual usage, the amount of each customer's billing increase will be different.