

Frequently asked questions – Sewer bills (Residential - 2014)

Q: Where can I pay my bill? Can I pay with a credit card?

A: County sewer bills can be paid by mail using the return envelopes that come with the bills, or in person at the New Castle County Government Center, 87 Reads Way, in New Castle (We accept cash, check, money order, Discover Card and Debit Cards). Residents can also pay with their Discover Card by calling 323-2600. Discover Card fees vary based on the amount of the bill and range from \$1 to \$25.

<u>Dollar amount of transaction</u>	<u>Surcharge fee</u>
\$0.00 - \$100.00	\$1.00
\$100.01 - \$500.00	\$3.00
\$500.01 - \$1,000.00	\$8.00
\$1,000.01 - \$2,000.00	\$15.00
\$2,000.01 - OVER	\$25.00

Other major credit cards are accepted through Paymentus, which will charge users a transaction fee of \$5.25 for each transaction per \$650 increment. If you are paying more than \$650, you will be required to pay with multiple transactions when using this service. Customers can pay New Castle County sewer service fees via the internet at <https://ipn.paymentus.com/otp/stde/nccu>, or by calling Paymentus at 1-877-225-7351.

Q: What time period does the bill cover?

A: All residential properties connected to the New Castle County sewer system are billed on an annual basis. This billing is mailed out once a year in January in advance for the current calendar year. For example, sewer service bills mailed in January 2014 cover the calendar year ending December 31, 2014. However, your bill may also include a “Prior Account Balance” that remains unpaid.

Q: Does my bill have to be paid in total by April 7, 2014?

A: Yes. By law (New Castle County Code, Sec. 38.02.503) any balance that remains on your account as of April 8 will be subject to a 6% penalty, and a 1% penalty each month thereafter.

Q: What is my sewer service bill based on?

A: Sewer service bills are based on a property’s actual water usage over a prior 12-month period. The property’s water company provides this information in quarterly amounts to New Castle County. The water consumption amount is usually calculated using the first three quarters of the prior year and the fourth quarter of the year before that. For example, the annual sewer service amount for 2014 is usually based on the fourth quarter of 2012, and the first three quarters of 2013. The time periods used could vary slightly due to the meter read cycles of some water companies.

Q: How is the sewer bill calculated?

A: New Castle County compares the four quarterly usage amounts for each property. We then take the two lowest amounts, add them together, and multiply the total by two. This amount is your annual consumption, which is then multiplied by the residential sewer rate (5.74033 per 1000 gallons) to determine your bill.

Q: Not all the water we use flows into the sewer system. Do you make adjustments for things like swimming pools and lawn sprinklers?

A: Yes. To calculate your usage we take your two lowest usage quarters and double them. We disregard the two highest, which typically include warm-weather usage for pools and lawns. This is our way of allowing for water that may not pass through the sewer system. If you wish to have a more accurate account of the water you use that does not pass through the sewer system, you can have a meter installed that will measure water that does not pass through the sewer system.

Q: Do you make adjustments for leaks?

A: Yes, we make adjustments for leaks that add to your usage, but do not flow through the sewer system. To receive an adjustment, the homeowner must send in documentation to prove the claim – a copy of a plumber’s repair bill, for example. Any leak that passes through or flows into the sewer system - a toilet leak, for example - will not be adjusted.

Q: How do you calculate the bill for a new owner?

A: The first annual bill a new owner receives is based on one of three measures - the county average, the consumption billing from the prior owner’s water readings, or the consumption billing from the new owner’s partial water readings - whichever is lowest. The following year they will receive a bill based on their actual consumption, along with an adjustment from the prior year. Depending on whether your first bill was an undercharge or an overcharge, the adjustment will be either an additional bill or a credit.

Q: How do I qualify for a rate reduction if I am 65 years old, or disabled?

A: In order to qualify for a reduction on your sewer service charge, you must qualify for the county’s senior and/or disability exemption. You must submit an application to the County’s Assessment Division by June 1. If you already receive a Disability or Age 65 property tax exemption from New Castle County, you will automatically be billed the reduced rate. For more information, or to obtain an application, contact Assessment at 395-5520.

Q: I did not receive my sewer service bill. Am I responsible for the penalty?

A: Yes. Failure to receive a bill does not relieve a property owner of the obligation to pay their sewer bill on time. If you have not received your bill by the February 7, please contact New Castle County at 323-2600.

Q: How is the billing amount determined for a customer with a well?

A: An account that is serviced by a well is charged a standard rate. This rate is 85% of the average charge, (for 2014 the well rate is \$224.00).