



Debit and credit card payments accepted beginning in January

You asked and we listened! Starting January 1st, you'll be able to use your credit or debit card to pay your Charleston Water System bill.

using a debit or credit card, but there is a \$500 limit on *credit card* payments. Only Visa and MasterCard will be accepted.

Cards will be accepted over the phone, on our web site (charlestonwater.com), or in person at our downtown and North Charleston office locations. There won't be a convenience fee for



Rate increase to help fund capital improvements

The slight increase on your next bill will help Charleston Water System fund \$155 million worth of critical improvements to the Lowcountry's water and sewer system.

Charleston Water's Board of Commissioners approved a gradual rate increase of an average of 4% for water and an average of 7% for sewer each year for the next three years. The first increase went into effect December 1st and will appear on your January bill.

The increase is an average because the exact percentage increase varies slightly depending on how much water you use, where you live, and the size pipe that serves your home or business. For the

typical family in the City of Charleston using 6,000 gallons of water per month, the increase amounts to an extra \$2.87 per month on the combined water and sewer bill. Those who use 1,500 or less will see a \$1.50 increase each month.

The additional revenue from the increase will repay the debt incurred by an April 2006 bond issue, which raised \$155 million for critical capital improvements, such as replacing aging water mains, up-fitting treatment plants, and replacing sewer lines. You can view the list of projects in our Capital Improvement Program on our web site, www.charlestonwater.com

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Why we're raising rates

A message from Interim CEO Kin Hill



Kin Hill, P.E. Interim CEO

Clean drinking water and wastewater treatment are dependable services that allow us to enjoy public health, clean waterways, fire protection, and a high quality of life. They're so dependable, in fact, that it's easy to take water and sewer service for granted. But to continue to provide reliable service, we must

continually invest in our infrastructure—replace aging pipes, upgrade our treatment plants, and generally prepare for population growth and new regulations. All of that costs money, requiring periodic rate increases such as the one that took effect December 1st.

The rate increase is funding our 2006 Capital Improvement Project, which includes 45 priority projects that address three main issues:

A growing population. The economic and population growth rate in the Lowcountry continues to soar. With more people, homes and businesses comes an increased demand for water and sewer service. Last year alone, Charleston Water installed a record 2,700 new water services.

Aging infrastructure. The 1950s and '60s saw enormous growth, spawning a time of unprecedented development. Miles of water and sewer mains were constructed and water treatment processes installed. Many of those are now in need of repairs or must be replaced altogether.

New regulatory requirements. New regulatory requirements for water and wastewater treatment ensure we have higher quality water, but they often require new technology or treatment upgrades.

Investing in our water and sewer infrastructure is costly, but the true value of these services to our health, environment, and quality of life is priceless.

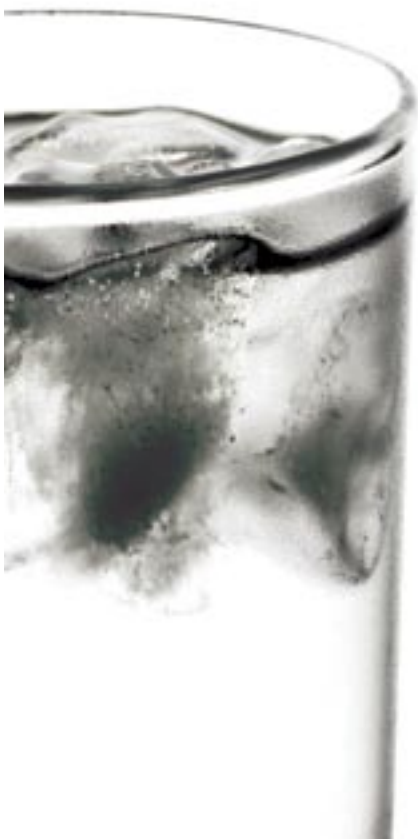
Are you drinking enough water?

It's estimated that as many as three out of four Americans are chronically dehydrated, which can cause headaches, cramping, daytime fatigue, fuzzy short-term memory, and difficulty focusing on a page or computer screen.

While many experts say there's no scientific basis to the old eight glasses of water a day rule, it is important to make sure you're getting enough fluids. That means drinking when you're thirsty—or more often than that if you exercise frequently, are sick, taking medications, or exposed to hot weather.

Adequate hydration is important to maintaining health, as water helps regulate body temperature, remove wastes, carry nutrients, cushion joints, and dissolve nutrients. Eating foods that contain a high percentage of water, such as fruits and vegetables, and drinking water instead of calorie-rich sodas and fruit juices, can help in weight loss.

In addition to being good for you, a glass of tap water costs less than a penny, making it the most affordable drink available. So the next time you're thirsty, go for a glass of tap water.



Lead and Copper levels way below EPA limits

Lead and copper sampling completed this summer shows Charleston Water's 90th percentile lead level at 3 parts per billion (ppb) and copper at 0 ppb—both well below the EPA's action levels of 15 ppb for lead and 1.3 ppm for copper.

Lead and copper were commonly used in home plumbing through the early 1980s, and even today some brass fixtures contain small amounts of the metals, which can leach into water and potentially cause health concerns at high levels. Charleston Water System prevents this leaching by adding trace amounts of a water treatment compound that forms a molecular "coating" inside water lines.

Because of consistently low lead and copper levels, Charleston Water System is only required to sample for lead and copper every three years. The next round of sampling will be in 2009.

Did you know...

Charleston's tap water comes from the Edisto River and the Bushy Park Reservoir. It's treated at the Hanahan Water Treatment Plant, located on the banks of the Goose Creek Reservoir, which served as the source of water from 1904 - 1989.



WATER WHYS

Why does the taste of tap water vary so much from city to city?

Although many of us think of water as not having any taste at all, water does in fact have slightly different tastes depending on where it comes from and how it's treated.

Water composition will differ depending on the geographic area and whether it is groundwater or surface water. Groundwater from wells and springs typically has a higher level of dissolved minerals such as calcium and manganese. In some areas, groundwater contains sulfur, which has a particularly offensive odor. Water that comes from surface sources, such as reservoirs and rivers, often contains higher levels of organics from runoff and aquatic life, which sometimes lends a more earthy taste, especially during the spring and fall temperature changes.

The treatment process is another factor that affects taste. A good example of this is water that has a "chlorine" taste. Treatment techniques have become more successful in eliminating unpleasant tastes and odors, but sometimes the cause is impossible to identify or the required treatment is too expensive to implement. Tap water that meets state and federal regulations is safe to drink, and the variations in taste are a celebration of the unique origins of that water.



Member of the **Partnership for Safe Water**, an elite group of water utilities committed to exceeding water quality standards.



ISO 14001 Certified
Committed to protecting and improving our environment.



Charleston Water System

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