

Carrolltown Borough Municipal Authority

P.O. Box 307
140 East Carroll Street
Carrolltown, PA 15722
(814) 344-9303
lbatdorf@carrolltown.pa.us

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Borough/Municipal Authority recently upgraded the utility billing software system that has been in use for the past several months. This change has enabled walk-in utility bill paying much faster. While most customers have met this change with praise and acceptance, others have met this change with resistance. We have heard your concerns and questions and this FAQ Sheet is an attempt to answer them as best we can.

Changes that have been implemented vary so this is meant to give you a better understanding of what changes were made and why; in addition to answering other questions you may have regarding the sidewalk ordinance and the new haulers for garbage.

SOLID WASTE QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 1: “Who are our Solid Waste Haulers?”

QUESTION 2: “When is Recycling and how often can we put it out?”

QUESTION 3: “What Time and Day is the trash picked up? What Time and Day is the Recycling Picked up?”

QUESTION 4: “I am doing work on my house, am I allowed to contract a different hauler?”

QUESTION 5: “I am a contractor, am I allowed to contract a hauler of my choice if I am from out of town but the customer is from Carrolltown?”

SNOW AND SIDEWALK QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 6: “I have to walk on the road, which is dangerous, because my neighbor will not shovel their sidewalk; what are you going to do about it?”

QUESTION 7: “I am a senior citizen and cannot shovel my sidewalk, what am I to do?”

UTILITY BILLING QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 8: “Why was my bill so high in November and what does pro-rated mean?”

QUESTION 9: “I always use the same amount of water, why am I being charged for an additional 1000 gallons this month?” “I never use this much water, is there a problem with my bill?”

QUESTION 10: “Why wasn’t I notified of the pro-rated charge?”

QUESTION 11: “Why is it necessary to know what the detailed consumption of water is?”

QUESTION 12: “Why didn’t someone contact me about the work being done near my home?” or “Why didn’t I receive the newsletter notifying me of when the hydrants were being flushed?”

QUESTION 13: “Why can I not put the water bill in the tenant’s name, as we did all the prior years before?”

QUESTION 14: “Why am I charged a late fee when I didn’t get my bill” or “Usually my bill is due the 7th and I paid on the 4th why am I being penalized?” or “I have no money at the end of the month, so why should I pay a late charge after the due date?”

QUESTION 15: “If the rates didn’t go up, why is my bill higher than usual?”

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QUESTION 16: “If water is free, why am I being charged, and why am I being charged sewage when it all just goes down the drain?”

ANSWERS

SOLID WASTE

QUESTION 1: “Who are our Solid Waste Haulers?”

Our solid waste hauler is Burgmeier’s Hauling Inc. If you still have additional questions other than what is being answered on the following, please feel free to call Burgmeier’s at (814) 943-8975.

QUESTION 2: “When is Recycling and how often can we put it out?”

Recycling is every Monday, but you do not have to utilize this service every week. Some residents only need it once a week or twice a month, but it is available weekly for your convenience.

QUESTION 3: “What time and day is the trash picked up? What day and time is the Recycling Picked up?”

Trash and Recycling are picked up the same day; every Monday, starting at 5:00 AM. Burgmeier’s ask that you have your trash and Recycling out no later than 5:00 AM every Monday morning.

QUESTION 4: “I am doing work on my house, am I allowed to contract a different hauler?”

No, you must use the contracted hauler of the Borough for 2018, which is Burgmeier’s Hauling.

QUESTION 5: “I am a contractor, am I allowed to contract a hauler of my choice if I am from out of town, but the customer is from Carrolltown?”

No, you must use the contracted hauler of the Borough for 2018, which is Burgmeier’s Hauling.

SNOW AND SIDEWALK

QUESTION 6: “I have to walk on the road, which is dangerous because my neighbor will not shovel their sidewalk; what are you going to do about it?”

Sidewalks/Public access: All residents are reminded that council has passed a new sidewalk ordinance in 2017 and it will be strictly enforced by the Police department. You are responsible to shovel, clear, and treat your walk way within the required period. If you are non-compliant, a warning will be issued and then a fine which will double and triple, etc. for the numbered offense. Council has received numerous complaints over the years from residents regarding sidewalks not being taken care of properly or at all. The public has the right to use any public surface in the borough and you are responsible for their safe travels over, and across your sidewalk areas. The borough streets are not a sidewalk and severely jeopardize safety and are life threatening to those that cannot access public sidewalks.

QUESTION 7: “I am a senior citizen and cannot shovel my sidewalk, what am I to do?”

We agree, and you should not have to. However, as a borough resident you must find someone that can and will. Even when you are away all winter, it is still your responsibility. The office will have a list of children/students that wish to be contacted to do shoveling, but you or a family member/friend will have to contact them.

UTILITY BILLING

QUESTION 8: “Why was my bill so high in November and what does pro-rated mean?”

Meter Readings As you know, in the past, meter readings were manually read on the 21st of every month with some months being estimated. While this appeared to have worked for many years, it was time for a change. Therefore, the meters are now being read at the beginning of the month for a multitude of significant reasons. In answering the pro-rated question, the nine days in September had to be made up to advance all bills current for the new reading date. Currently, since the meters are being read on the **1st of the month**, it is only for charges made in the previous month.

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For example, *December meter reading on the 1st is for your direct usage for the entire month of November only.* In the the prior billing cycles, if meters were read on July 21, that billing cycle started June 22; you would then receive your bill around the second week in August and it would be due by the 7th of September (most people would pay in the last week to avoid penalties). Your bill was being paid a month and a half out from your usage dates, which confused everyone about their actual water consumption. The current billing system now allows you to know the most current reading.

QUESTION 9: “I always use the same amount of water, why am I being charged for an additional 1000 gallons this month?” “I never use this much water, is there a problem with my bill?”

Meters: Our meters are read at a per thousand gallons with a digital gun. The gun only provides us a reading from the thousand digit. For example, if the meter at your residence reads 7,699, our digital gun only shows 7,000. Consequently, when you go over into the hundreds but not thousands it will eventually catch up. Therefore, the answer to your question of why you are being charged for additional water is that you are not. You did use it because the meter finally rolled over into the thousands and it is only now catching up.

Another culprit for higher than usual consumption is toilets leaking. A leaking toilet can add an additional 1 to 30,000 gallons per month consumption to your account and it is possible that you will not always hear the toilet running. This is your responsibility as a home owner (not that of the Borough) to ensure your plumbing fixtures are operational. We provide the service, even when or if a leaking toilet uses two services at once. Therefore, you pay for what was consumed.

The meters do not speed up, they only slow down or quit completely. If you want your meter calibrated, we will send it back to Sensus or have a certified calibration done. If the meter is correct, the full calibration charge (approximately \$350.00) would be your responsibility. If it is off and greater than 10% +/- we will pay and replace your meter with a new IPERL free of charge. We will be replacing meters in the system continuously and exchanging them for an IPERL; these are magnetic positive displacement meters, capable of picking up a tenth of an ounce of water. Currently, an old meter (20+ years) is not capable of that. If your meter is 20 years old or more, it is deemed obsolete and will not meet the federal standards passed by the previous presidential administration. At this point, there is no choice but to replace the old meter. If you would like more detailed information about this, please call the office to set up an appointment with me to discuss it further.

QUESTION 10: “Why wasn’t I notified of the pro-rated charge?”

Patience and understanding: We were tasked by coming up with a way to advance every utility account at once and use the fairest solution possible. Therefore, the best and fairest way to achieve this was to pro-rate the bills daily, based on the minimum amount. After the October and November Council Meetings, we asked the paper to report that we would be changing to the Muni-Link system and announce that a pro-rated charge would be assessed. We have in the past not only put notices in the paper, but the newsletters and website as well. Unfortunately, unless it directly affects the consumer, it often goes unnoticed; as it did on the November bill. This pro-rated data message was printed on everyone’s bill of which most did not read. The pro-rated nine days brought every account forward and this was a ONE TIME ONLY charge, and it will not be done again. We strive to provide information as requested but everyone needs to understand that we have limited time and staff to accomplish all the daily tasks, therefore we are not capable of getting all the information everyone needs at the time they need it.

QUESTION 11: “Why is it necessary to know what the detailed consumption of water is?”

Consumptive use versus loss ratios: Every drop counts! By advancing our meter readings with our billing system, we now have a more accurate account of gallons distributed to the system or the town. This distribution of water is also now required by the DEP to be reported monthly. This is a state law for all water/wastewater systems and these reports must account for every gallon of water consumed monthly. When this is not done, the state issues violations to the water/wastewater facilities and ultimately the Municipal Authority. We do not have to agree or like it, but we must comply with all state and federal regulations, which increasingly have become more demanding and burdensome for our systems and operations. Since 2008, the regulations have risen above 300% in ten years. The passing of DEP regulations has increased over ten times every third year; and continue. It should also be noted that those very regulations are becoming worse and projected to affect every resident/customer in the future. The Authority has done everything possible to minimize this exhausting effect, but it will inevitably change as future regulations become more stringent.

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QUESTION 12: “Why didn’t someone contact me about the work being done near my home?” or “Why didn’t I received the newsletter notifying me of when the hydrants were being flushed?”

Monthly bills/accounts/information: We have made many attempts to get the initial data conversion right and many weeks, days and hours had been set forth doing so...ultimately, the responsibility lies with the residents, property owners, landlords, businesses and institutions. It is your duty to provide the necessary information to the office regarding addresses, phone numbers, emails etc...but it continues to be ignored. The responsibility of the Borough/Authority is to provide daily water/sewage and weekly trash service, along with compiling our individual account information. In other words, if you don’t tell us there’s a change, big or small, how are we to know that you are not getting a bill or that we have spent hours making numerous calls to numbers that are no longer yours, not to mention the additional expenses of postage and certified mail that go out every month to notify you. When you call or visit the office, inform the staff of your new information or update the existing. We also have forms on the website that you can print and fill out, then return it to the office, either by email or regular mail. There is no reason for not providing the office with the much-needed CORRECT information on your account, especially your phone number in case of an emergency at your home.

QUESTION 13: “Why can I not put the water bill in the tenant’s name, as we did all the prior years before?”

Landlord/Tenants: Landlords provide housing and that’s a business. We are to provide services. The office is no longer responsible to track down tenants’ information or billing. All landlords are responsible and will be getting all bills addressed to them associated with any accounts. As landlords, you also **MUST** provide the borough with all tenant information on the landlord/tenant information sheet. Resident information is also very valuable when trying to attain funding and tap into various sources for improvement projects in Carrolltown. Your tenants are your responsibility and as unfortunate as this may seem, please understand this was done as a courtesy and a few bad issues have driven the change for all. This office has spent valuable time chasing tenants around for payment of services, therefore we understand your frustration when you are trying to do the same.

QUESTION 14: “Why am I charged a late fee when I didn’t get my bill” or “Usually my bill is due the 7th and I paid on the 4th why am I being penalized?” or “I have no money at the end of the month, so why should I pay a late charge after the due date?”

Late Fees: Your monthly utility bills are assessed a 10% late charge fee on the entire bill. Late fees are incurred when you do not pay your bill on time. Bills are mailed the first week of every month, and although the prior monthly bills were always due the 7th of the following month, **THE 7TH DAY OF THE MONTH DUE DATE NO LONGER EXISTS: payment is now due by the last business day of the month.** Therefore, if you get your bill on the 4th of January or anytime during the first week, it will be due January 31st; If you get your bill the first week of February, your bill will be due February 28th, the last business day of the month, no more will it be set on a fixed date. The fixed date was abused abundantly in the past and used as a last-minute effort to pay. It’s your obligation to remember the last business day as your due date and plan accordingly to avoid late fees. This leads us to the inevitable statement, “I didn’t get my bill.” All bills are digitally proofed, counted, printed and bar coded; a final count is done for postage and then the post-office recounts for billing the office. If you have not received your bill, please direct your inquiries to the POST OFFICE. **Late fees will not be waived because you forgot to pay your bill on time or didn’t remember that it was due.** You can call the office at any time to find out how much your bill is if you think it was lost in the mail or otherwise. We can not, with our limited staff, remind people who forget. We are here to do our jobs within the time frame allotted so please, help us accomplish this task.

QUESTION 15: “If the rates didn’t go up, why is my bill higher than usual?”

Allocation and overages: Your monthly allocated water used to be 4,000 gallons a month but was lowered in April, 2017 to 3,000 gallons a month. The Authority felt this was the fairest way rather than raise the rates and penalize those who stay within the normal water usage. Currently, your monthly water rate is \$35/water and sewage rate is \$32.00/sewage based on the 3,000 gallons allocation.

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When one goes over the allocation, it is billed at \$5.00/water and \$5.00/sewage. For example, if you used 5000 gallons for the month January, your charges will be:

\$35 water +
\$32 sewage
= \$67 base, +
\$10 water overage
\$10 sewage overage
= \$87 Total (*plus your regular trash service*).

WATER BY COMPARISON = an average 12oz bottle of water costs \$1.19. There are 128 oz. in a gallon that is equal to 10.66 bottles @ \$1.19 = \$12.68 for a gallon.

OUR RATE IS \$0.05 FOR A GALLON OF WATER. WATER IS NOT ABUNDANT OR INFINITE, BUT IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINING LIFE.

QUESTION 16: "If water is free, why am I being charged, and why am I being charged sewage when it all just goes down the drain?"

Water and Sewage that goes down the drain is not free. You are paying a very small fraction for the convenience of this utility and precious commodity. The convenience of which demands a 24/7 water filtration system that requires (around-the-clock state certified and appropriately licensed) water and sewage operators to manage and work plant operations and to record and compile an immense amount of data for DEP reports, as well as for federal SRBC allocations and mandated reports; the operators must also assure that the water provided is clean and safe after treatment in the complex modern filtration system. Our water meets and exceeds federal EPA regulations adopted by the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 and is pumped through a complex distribution network of pipes, enabling it to be delivered for the convenience and use in the comfort of your home. From the meters at your home to the hydrants on the streets, the system must consistently be monitored for repair and maintenance at all times.

At \$.05 per gallon of water (see above for details under, Water by comparison) we no longer have to walk miles to the rivers and streams in frigid weather or blustering heat to haul buckets of possibly contaminated water to our homes, nor do we have to worry about throwing out the dishwasher, bathing in tin tubs or digging holes for outhouses for our bathrooms a few yards away when our 7 day a week wastewater operator assures that the sewage collection transfers this to a wastewater treatment facility that captures, treats, and disposes of it with no danger of sickness and disease. Bear in mind, that while you have in the past been without phone, electricity, or other amenities, water and sewage has always been consistent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week that requires a great effort by the governing bodies and staff. We have been very fortunate in all our efforts that water does not have to be boiled or brought in; and sewage continues to flow. With all of this being said, it does not happen with a push of a button; and thus, this is why your water and sewage are not free.

I hope this FAQ Sheet has answered many of your questions and more importantly, gives you a better understanding of the water and wastewater (sewage) system. We try our utmost at the Borough to do what we can to appease our residents but ask you as a resident, to also help us help you. Our office phone is (814) 344-6650 or visit our website at www.carrolltown.pa.us.

Thank you and may you all have a pleasant new year!

Sincerely,



Lonnie Batdorf
Borough Manager