

Frequently Asked Questions

Private Fire Protection Charge

Q. What is Private Fire Protection?

A. Private Fire Protection is any fire protection system supplementing or in addition to the public fire protection system (public fire hydrants and supporting infrastructure) that relies upon the public water system for its water supply. Private fire protection can be in the form of booster pumps, sprinkler systems, private fire hydrants or any other system that relies on the public water system for supply with the designed purpose of fire protection and suppression.

Q. What is the Private Fire Protection charge on my City Services bill?

A. The Private Fire Protection Charge is a charge from the City of Bloomington Water Department that only applies to businesses that have fire protection systems which rely upon the public water system for their water supply.

Q. Why is there a charge or fee for Private Fire Protection?

A. The ratepayers that use the City of Bloomington water supply pay, through their water rates, a proportionate share for the public fire protection systems throughout the entire water supply, treatment and distribution systems. The most visible part of the fire protection system to most rate payers is the corner fire hydrant. But beyond that fire hydrant are a complex system of pumps, pipes and water reservoirs to provide water to that fire hydrant. This includes ample storage in the source water reservoirs to provide water for treatment in the Water Treatment Plant, proper sizing of water treatment units to provide adequate amounts of treated water to supply both the domestic needs of customers but also the public fire protection needs of citizens, as well as adequately sized water mains, booster pumps and storage facilities.

Customers can rely on the Public Fire Protection system for their fire protection needs at no additional cost. However, if a customer desires to have additional fire protection for their business, in the form of a sprinkler system or other fire suppression system relying on the public water supply for its water supply, the private fire protection charge applies. This is done so that the beneficiary of the Private Fire Protection system is paying their fair share for the public water system support of their private fire protection/suppression system.

Q. How was the Private Fire Protection charge determined?

A. The Private Fire Protection charge was determined by the City's water rate consultant in 2007. The water rate consultant analyzed all of the Water Departments costs and that portion of the costs associated with the production of water for domestic purposes (drinking, bathing, washing, etc.), that portion associated with public fire protection and that portion associated with private fire protection. The costs associated with private fire protection were then allocated based upon the size of fire service line (in inches of diameter) serving the particular business.

Q. What is the 2009 rate for Private Fire Protection?

A. The 2009 rate for private fire protection is \$6.80 per inch of diameter (rounded up to the nearest inch) of fire service line serving the business.

Q. Do other cities have Private Fire Protection charges?

A. Yes. The allocation of private fire protection costs to the users of those systems is a common practice. Locally, the cities of Peoria, Champaign, Springfield, Lincoln and Pontiac all have private fire protection charges. Nationally, Private Fire Protection charges are quite common.

Q. I never use or have never used my fire protection system. Why do I have to pay a fee for this?

A. Whether or not a fire protection system has been used or not does not determine whether a business will be charged a private fire protection charge. The presence of a functioning Private Fire Protection system that relies on the public water system for supply is what determines eligibility for this charge.

A public or private fire protection system supplied by the public water supply has to be "at the ready" 24/7. The necessary pumps, pipes, back-up power supplies and storage facilities must be in place to supply the domestic needs of the City, its public fire protection system and the additional private fire protection systems on an immediate basis.

Q. How do I know if I have a Private Fire Protection system?

A. A Private Fire Protection system is present if there are sprinklers, private fire hydrants, booster pumps or other fire protection or fire suppression equipment. The water supplied to the Private Fire Protection system can come

from a separate water line dedicated only to the fire protection/suppression system which is simply known as a fire line. The supply for fire protection/suppression can also be in the form of a water line that supplies both the domestic needs of the business as well as the fire protection needs. This type of fire protection/suppression system is known as a combined fire line.

Q. Is there a difference in a combined service line or separate fire line, fire protection charge?

A. No. The charge is the same, \$6.80 per inch diameter (rounded up to nearest inch of diameter) of fire service line serving the business. However, the calculation of that charge depends on whether a fire line is a combined service line or a separate fire line.

A separate fire line is dedicated to the fire protection system and the diameter of that fire line, as it initially connects to the fire protection system determines the Private Fire Protection charge.

A combined service line provides water for domestic purposes as well as for the Private Fire Protection system. The Private Fire Protection charge is determined by subtracting the diameter of the domestic water service meter inlet/outlet from the combined fire service line diameter as it initially connects to the fire protection system. This is done so that the water used for domestic purposes (which is already being charged a separate water rate) is not counted in the calculation for the Private Fire Protection charge. The difference (not less than one inch) of the fire protection line size minus the domestic water meter size is the charge for Private Fire Protection.

Q. Where does the revenue from the Private Fire Protection charge go?

A. The revenue for the Private Fire Protection charge is accounted for in the overall revenues of the Water Department Enterprise Fund. These revenues go to fund Water Department activities/expenses. The Private Fire Protection revenue does not go into the general fund of the City of Bloomington.

As an enterprise fund, the Water Fund must be financially self-sufficient. That is, the revenue the Water Fund collects must be adequate to fund all of the activities in the Water Department. The Water Fund does not receive any tax funding.