

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR STORMWATER UTILITY FEE

## WHAT IS GOING ON?

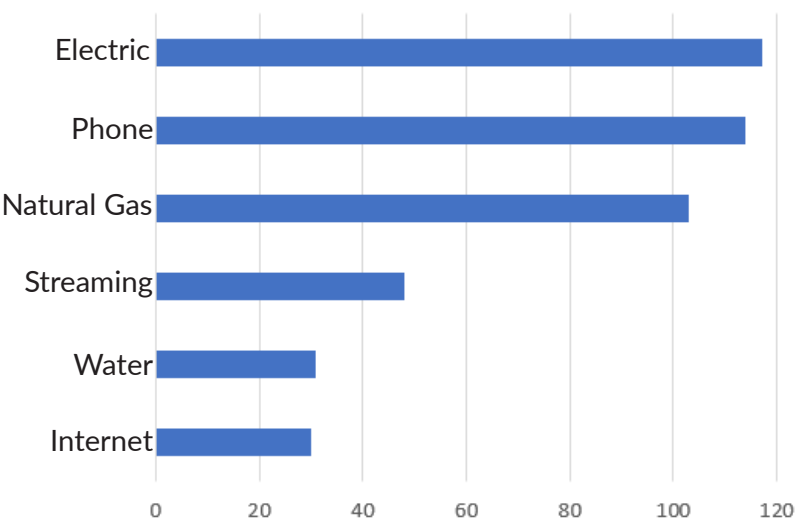
The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and federal government requires Palmer Township to manage stormwater through its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program and implement a pollutant reduction plan. The Palmer Township Stormwater Authority (PTSA) oversees the MS4 program. If the PTSA fails to address stormwater concerns, including improving local water quality, the PA DEP and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may impose fines. In addition to state and federal requirements, PTSA must also manage the costs of maintaining its stormwater infrastructure, address flooding concerns, and educate the public.

PTSA, through the guidance of a steering committee, evaluated methods of funding its stormwater program. The committee determined that the costs of the stormwater program are most equitably met through a stormwater fee which is assessed based on the amount of impervious area on each property. The issue of using taxes is that a property's assessed value does not correlate with the amount of stormwater it contributes to the system. Additionally, tax-exempt properties, such as churches and schools, benefit from the stormwater program but do not contribute financially. Therefore, properties with larger impervious areas, such as warehouses and industrial sites, will have a higher fee because they contribute more to the system.

## HOW IS THE FEE DETERMINED?

The PTSA and steering committee used aerial imagery to determine the amount of impervious area (IA) – areas where water can't soak into the ground, like roofs and driveways- on each property within the township. Using the IA data, the PTSA was able to determine how to distribute costs equitably, and what the fee should be for each property. If your property has less than 300 square feet of IA, there's no fee. Otherwise, the fee will be determined by your property's rounded impervious area measured in square feet. The stormwater fee will be included in the existing sewer and trash bill and will be billed quarterly. The bill will include the property's billing tier. Please see the table to the right for a breakdown of tiers.

Tier Number	Impervious Area Amount	Monthly User Fee
Tier 0	< 300 sf.	No fee assessed
Tier 1	300 to 1,999 sf.	\$9.64
Tier 2	2,000 to 3,999 sf.	\$20.00
Tier 3	4,000 to 5,999 sf.	\$32.68
Tier 4	6,000+ sf.	Monthly Fee of \$6.94/1,000 sf. of IA (Rounded to the nearest 100 sf.)



The introduction of the stormwater fee aims to address infrastructure needs, regulatory requirements, and longstanding flooding issues. In comparison to other utility rates, the fee is relatively low. The average monthly payment for single-family residents in the Township is \$20, falling within Tier 2.

Note: Data for average utility costs from Ana Durrani and Samantha Allen in Forbes, "Monthly Costs in the U.S. by State," (March, 2023).

## WHY IS IT NEEDED?

There are stormwater needs throughout the township such as aging and deteriorating infrastructure and flooding concerns that must be addressed in the upcoming years regardless of the work required by the MS4 permit. Neglecting these maintenance needs have had severe consequences. For instance, when pipes fail, the road above the pipe can deteriorate, leading to sinkholes and necessitating further repairs. Recent storms have caused similar damage across the township including sinkholes, pipe failures, road repair, and much more. Similar to a leaky roof, the longer maintenance needs are ignored, the costlier they become in the long run. For example, the storm damage incurred between July 15 and 16 could exceed five million dollars, in addition to a backlog of projects that still need to be completed.



**105  
MILES  
OF PIPE**

farther than the distance from  
Palmer Township to Philadelphia.



**2,500+  
STRUCTURES**

## WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

For more information, make sure to review the stormwater website at <https://palmertwp.com/stormwater.html>. Furthermore, property owners who have questions about their bill, how it was calculated, and efforts to appeal may reach out to PTSA:

**email:** [stormwater@palmertwp.com](mailto:stormwater@palmertwp.com)

**phone number:** 610-871-7871

Additionally, stormwater management extends beyond permit requirements and infrastructure

maintenance—it is a matter of public health and safety. Proper management of stormwater helps prevent flooding, reduces the risk of property damage, and mitigates potential threats to public safety. Palmer Township has experienced first-hand the need for improved stormwater infrastructure maintenance and management due to recent catastrophic storm damage. Projects to fulfill these improvements and meet State and Federal requirements demand significant funding. The stormwater fee will generate the necessary funds for addressing infrastructure improvements, fulfilling permit requirements, conducting maintenance and repairs, and ultimately protecting public health and safety.

## STORMWATER CREDITS AND APPEALS

Property owners who want to have their impervious area verified may go through the appeal process. In addition, there is the allowance for credits which are a percent reduction of the stormwater fee depending on offsetting stormwater program costs. For more information, please review PTSA's Stormwater Management Program Credits and Appeals Manual. This manual can be found on the township's stormwater website at <https://palmertwp.com/stormwater.html> under the forms and documents tab.

**\$25-\$30  
MILLION**

**NEEDED FOR STORMWATER  
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS  
& POLLUTION REDUCTION  
PROJECTS**

