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News Release

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Water use during winter months sets sewer charges

MURPHY (October 22, 2021) The annual three-month period during which the City of Murphy calculates sewer charges by averaging winter water use begins in November and includes totals from January and February.

Water consumption during these three months, known as winter averaging, is used to calculate household sewer charges based on the average residential utilization of water during that timeframe.

“Water utilities in most cities use some sort of winter averaging to arrive at each home’s wastewater or sewer rates for the following year,” says Teresa Thompson, Manager of Customer Service. “The water that is measured through the meter during the winter months, with the exception of December, gives us a good indication of what goes into our sewer system.”

This process is repeated the same way every winter. The amount of water used in each residence is recorded during the months of November, January and February, and the average for those three months becomes the monthly charge for sewer service over the following 12 months. December is considered a high-use month because of the holidays and is therefore not counted. This avoids adding a higher than normal month into the equation.

“There is currently no accurate way to measure how much wastewater goes into the various drains, sinks, toilets, showers or baths in a home,” she said. “That makes it a challenge to determine how much to charge for sewer service. The industry has produced this method of reaching a solution in as fair a manner as possible.”

Averaging during the winter works best because most homeowners will curtail or eliminate outdoor irrigation during these months, thus the majority of a home’s water is used indoors and presumably discharged into the sewer lines.

And, while many households may not see a big change from year to year, some homes may see a drop or rise in the wastewater charge because of what happens during November, January, and February.

Water leaks, runny toilets, washing less than full loads in the clothes or dish washer, washing cars at home, or any other unessential water use in the winter will not only drive the monthly cost of water up, but can also show up in the sewer charges during the following 12 months.

“During the winter, residents should be mindful that their water usage has a direct effect on their sewer charges for the following year,” said Thompson.

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ABOUT MURPHY -- Murphy is a fast-growing community located in Collin County. The population is approximately 20,010, generally characterized as highly educated with a median household income well above the state average. With more than 80 percent of the land developed, the community is dominated by single-family residences. City planners strive to preserve a family-oriented community with a strong sense of place. Money Magazine has dubbed Murphy as the 27th Best Place to Live in America for small cities, and D Magazine placed Murphy as the fifth best suburb in the 2014 list, where it has consistently ranked in the top 10.