

Utility Bill FAQs

Do you take an actual read of my water every month?

The Village attempts to take an actual read of your water meter every two months. You are billed bi-monthly for the prior two months' usage. If we are unable to get a read, your bill will indicate ESTIMATE, which is based on the last years' average usage. Please contact the Village Hall if your bill indicates ESTIMATE so we may check your meter and begin collecting actual reads.

What is the difference in the new billing structure compared to past bills (prior to May 2017)?

The Village changed the rate structure for water and sewer services to a flat, per unit structure. The Village's previous structure included minimum charges for both water and sewer, regardless of the amount of water that is used. This results in a somewhat inequitable system and we received considerable feedback from residents who feel the current structure is not fair. The new rate structure charges a combined total of \$11.84 for each unit of sewer and water used in a household.

How do I know my meter is working properly?

Please read your bills thoroughly. Look for the word ACTUAL or AUTO READ on your bill under the heading READ TYPE. Actual and Auto Read both indicate a true read from a working meter.

When in doubt, make an appointment with Public Works. A quick appointment can help provide the information you need to assure yourself you have a properly functioning meter.

What if you estimate high one month and get an accurate read the next month which shows you estimated too high?

Your bill will be adjusted accordingly. You will only pay for the water you used.

Why is the Village changing to Lake Michigan water?

Since 2006, the Village has been evaluating its current water supply. The Village continues to experience a significant infrastructure challenge as a result of declining water production from existing wells. In fact, in 2006 the Village utilized 10 functioning wells to provide water to our 15,000 residents. Due to declining supply within the shallow aquifer, there are only 5 functioning wells today.

As a result of this infrastructure challenge, the Village extensively evaluated source of supply options. After years of study and analysis, in 2011 the Village decided to move forward with the transition to Lake Michigan water. This will ensure the Village has a long-term, sustainable water supply solution. In addition, the Village will see improvements in the quality of water, as many Village residents express concern about the quality of the current groundwater. Based on the Village's detailed analysis, in addition to improved water quality, transitioning to Lake Michigan water was the most cost effective solution.

Why am I paying for Lake Michigan water prior to actually getting the water?

As the Village transitions from groundwater (shallow wells) to Lake Michigan water, infrastructure costs have been incurred. In preparation for the transition to Lake Michigan water, the Village completed a number of internal water system improvements. You may have seen a lot of construction activity taking place over the last 2 years. This was part of the Village's preparation efforts to make the switch to Lake Michigan water, which is scheduled to take place sometime this fall/winter. These improvements included the upsizing of water main connecting the Village's two water towers, construction of a 1 million gallon storage tank, construction of a Lake Michigan water receiving facility and pumping station that will pump Lake Michigan water through the system, and installation of water main on streets previously without. These improvements totaling roughly \$17 million, were funded through Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) low-interest loan funds. Starting in March of this year, the Village needed to begin paying back the debt incurred for these improvements.

In addition, the Village has joined the Central Lake County Joint Action Water Agency (CLCJAWA), which is the intergovernmental cooperative agency that supplies Central Lake County communities with Lake Michigan water. We will need to purchase water from the Agency. These two factors will result in roughly \$2 million in increased annual expenses to the Village's water & sewer fund.

What is SSA 16 on my real estate tax bill?

Special Service Area (SSA) #16 was created in 2013 for the purpose of providing Lake Michigan water to the communities of Lake Villa, Lindenhurst and the unincorporated areas of Grandwood Park and Fox Lake Hills via the CLCJAWA construction of water distribution mains.

In 2014 and 2015, property tax owners in this SSA saw an increase in their property tax bills (\$32 annually for a \$200,000 home). This was to fund the initial \$7 million bond issue for project engineering design and easement acquisition.

Property owners recently received their 2016 tax bill and it includes a property tax increase for this SSA that will go toward funding construction costs for extending Lake Michigan water pipelines. For homes valued at \$200,000, the tax is approximately \$255 a year. This SSA tax will continue to be assessed for 25 to 30 years until the bonds for this project are paid off.

Why is this being assessed on my Property Tax Bill?

An SSA is the most appropriate and only funding mechanism that can be used to sell bonds of this magnitude. Using the value of your home to determine your share of the tax burden is the mechanism for funding other services rendered to properties, such as fire protection, police protection, parks, schools, etc. Therefore, if your house is valued higher than your neighbor, you will be assessed a higher SSA tax.

Where can I find financial details regarding water and sewer funds?

You can find the most recent 10-year financial forecast summary sheet for the Water & Sewer Fund on the Village website. Beginning fiscal year 2017/2018 (began May 1) the Village saw the increase in costs noted above. This is an enterprise fund, which means rates and charges must pay for the costs of operating and maintaining the systems. The change in rate structure and increase in water rate is not merely a means to raise additional revenue for the Village, but a needed adjustment to cover increased costs to address the Village's water supply challenge.

You can also view a [Lake Michigan Water Project Presentation](#), found on our website, for full detail on the process that Village has taken towards this improvement of our water supply.

What will be the benefit of Lake Michigan Water?

In addition to the long-term sustainability of our water supply, Lake Michigan water is the highest quality natural water source in the region. Most users of Lake Michigan find that a softening system is no longer needed, and experts tell us removing a water softener system can reduce your water consumption by 10% to 20%. Lake Michigan water has no iron content eliminating fixture and laundry staining and no radium, barium, or landfill leachate contamination.

What does an average Lindenhurst household use in water?

42% of the Village's 5,000 customers use 10 units or less in a billing period, and 84% of customers use less than 20 units in a billing period. A billing period is two months.

What is a unit of water?

748 Gallons or 100 cubic feet of water.

Can I read my own meter?

YES. Most meters can be read by shining a bright flashlight on the meter head. You will see the numbers illuminate. Moving numbers indicate water is moving through the meter. Meters are read left to right. An appointment with Public Works can provide more help to read your meter.

How do I know if I have a leak?

The Village has a system in place to notify residents if we see unusual consumption on your bi-monthly read. We may contact you to let you know that your usage spiked. However, we are not plumbers and we can only provide suggestions for finding why your usage may be spiking. Certain village meters do allow the Village staff to run data logs indicating down to the hour when water usage increased or decreased. Please contact the Village Hall for more detail.

Anytime you notice an unusual spike in your usage, please be sure to check for running hoses, dripping faucets and obvious water use. Remember though, that many leaks are not obvious, and cannot be seen: water softeners, water heaters, toilets and sprinkler systems often have costly leaks undetectable by sight.

Can Public Works fix my leak or at least help me locate it?

Certain village meters do allow the Village staff to run data logs indicating down to the hour when water usage increased or decreased. Please contact the Village Hall for more detail. You can also make an appointment with Public Works to see how your meter works and to see if they can determine water running though indicating a leak. A meter with numbers that are moving indicates water is moving through the meter. This is a red flag if you feel all running water is off in the home. Public Works cannot act as plumbers, but may be able to provide assistance with some areas to check, while also checking for continuous or intermittent running water.

Why did my neighbor get a new meter?

Due to aging meters, the Village took part in a significant water meter replacement program. Several non-working meters were replaced to ensure we receive actual reads. If your meter has not been replaced, it is likely because it is working properly and generating actual reads, not estimates.

When will I get a new meter?

We are still attempting to contact residents who are in need of a new meter. If the Village reaches out to you, please call us to set up a meter appointment. If your meter starts giving estimates (you will see this on your bill) please call us right way to schedule a meter appointment.

What happens if you have estimated for several months? Do I get a refund?

If we are able to get a previous actual read off of your old meter, we will only charge you for the units used. If your estimate was high, then your final read on the old meter will adjust for the usage when we get the actual read. This also applies in reverse; if your estimate was low and the actual read indicates more usage, you will be billed accordingly. However, some meters do not provide a final read. Therefore we charge you based on the estimate of your usage over the last year. To avoid over or undercharging, it is imperative you contact the Village Hall the first time you see ESTIMATE on your bill.

I have a pool. Do you provide a discount on sewer rates when I fill my pool?

No. The Village does not offer a reduction of sewer rate unless you have as separate Irrigation meter that tracks water solely used for water purposes. You may purchase an additional meter, and with a valid permit have it installed by a plumber for purposes such as irrigation or water only use. The Village then will track that usage separate from combined sewer/water meters.

How can I review my account?

The Village website www.lindenhurstil.org has a Utility Billing page. Please click on *Pay My Utility Bill* and access the *online payment* system. You only need your account number. The Village Hall staff can provide you the number if you do not have a recent bill.

The website will allow you to see a full history of your account, including Read Type. Remember that **Auto Read** or **Actual** means you are getting a true reading of your usage.