

Water

Special Infrastructure Edition – 2004 N E W S



One of the Few Things it Can't Repair: Our City's Aging Pipes.

Repairing Our Aging Infrastructure

San Antonio is facing some challenges with our water and wastewater infrastructure. Simply put, much of it needs replacing.

Our city's water and wastewater infrastructure is the massive system of pipes, water wells, pumps storage tanks, treatment facilities, and pump stations that supply our drinking water and take away waste. Most of the system is below ground. In the 560-square miles that San Antonio Water System serves, there are more than 9,000 miles of water and sewer mains. That's a lot of pipe to keep in working order.

Much of our water and wastewater system was built decades ago. While the typical life expectancy of a pipe is about 50 years, almost 40 percent of SAWS mains will be that old or older by 2010.

Overall, while we have a very reliable water delivery system, age is becoming an issue. Our wastewater collection system, on the other hand is not in good shape. Nearly 25 percent of the city's sewer system is in poor or critical condition.

While infrastructure improvements aren't cheap, they're still much less expensive than making emergency repairs on a crisis basis.

SAWS is looking at increasing its construction and capital investment to about \$110 million a year for the next 10 years. This kind of investing now will help solve immediate needs, particularly on the sewer side, and not leave our children with an even more expensive problem in the future.

A Common Problem

Dealing with a failing infrastructure is one of the most pressing concerns facing cities throughout the country according to the American Water Works Association (AWWA). The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) agrees. In a recent report on

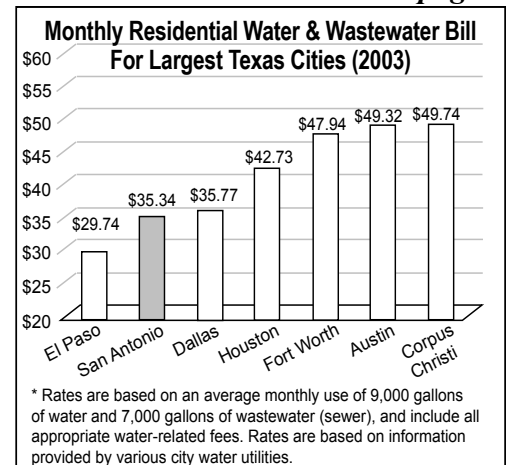
America's infrastructure, ASCE estimated the investment in drinking water infrastructure (not counting sewer mains or wastewater plants) falls short \$11 billion every year.

Some industry analysts say that the national infrastructure investment could easily top a trillion dollars and require intervention by the federal government in the near future.

Cities in Texas are also feeling the pinch. Like SAWS, other Texas water providers are faced with the dual challenge of developing long-term water strategies and maintaining a rapidly aging infrastructure.

In a recent survey of water and wastewater utilities in cities across Texas, (see chart below) SAWS rates were the second lowest in the state. And reports have come in that many of these utilities have either already raised rates or will soon do so to meet their water development and infrastructure needs.

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Repairing our Aging Infrastructure (cont.)

Working with the Community to Develop a Plan

Over the last eight months, SAWS has been working with a group of citizens to review current water and wastewater rates as well as other SAWS fees. The Rates Advisory Committee (RAC) represents a diverse set of interests throughout the community to include high, average, and low volume water users; commercial water users; low income water users; school districts; the green industry; chambers of commerce; neighborhood leaders; and environmental groups.

Their recommendations have been critical in developing SAWS strategies to manage the need for increased income to sustain the city's water and wastewater infrastructure.

How Do We Fix Our Infrastructure Troubles?

First of all, we know that the problems with the city's infrastructure won't be solved overnight. We need a long-term, phased-in approach to keep costs down.



Replacing pipes in our water and wastewater system is expensive, but replacing these pipes on an emergency basis can cost four times as much.

The two main components for remedying the problems of our aging infrastructure are:

- **Construction** to replace and repair aging pipes, pumps, and systems
- **Operations Investment and Maintenance** to ensure that the repairs and improvements to the systems are efficiently managed.

How This Will Affect Your Bill

As you can see in the chart to the upper right – which represents a higher than average water use – this bill would increase by 33 cents for water delivery and \$2.14 for sewer service. This new revenue would go toward the much-needed infrastructure and operating improvements. The other changes in the bill to include the City of San Antonio's stormwater fee, Edwards Aquifer Authority's fee and SAWS water supply fee will increase a slightly higher than average water bill by about \$5 per month.

While water bills in San Antonio are still rated as very affordable according to federal guidelines, we know that almost everyone faces financial hardship at some point in their life. That's why SAWS and the City have teamed up to make a variety of bill assistance programs available. If you are having trouble paying your bills, you can call 704-SAWS to see how we can help.

Next Steps

Proposed infrastructure changes in rates will be presented to SAWS Board of Trustees at their January 20

2004 Sample Rate Change			
Fee	Current	Proposed	\$ Change
Meter Charge	5.61	5.50	-0.11
Water Vol. Charge	8.02	8.35	0.33
Sewer Svc. Charge	14.10	16.23	2.13
Water Supply Fee	8.44	11.00	2.56
EAA Fee	1.17	1.49	0.32
City Stormwater Fee	2.98	3.08	0.10
Total Bill	40.32	45.65	5.33

Bill shown is for a residential customer within the city limits, using 10,000 gallons of water and 7,000 gallon winter averaging.

and February 3 meetings. The rates ultimately approved by the SAWS Board will be submitted to San Antonio City Council for review, consideration, and approval on February 12, 2004. New rates would be effective on or about March 1, and reflected in the April, 2004 bills.

January bills include a flyer with more details about proposed water and wastewater rates. This information is also available at our web site at www.saws.org.

Affordability Programs

SAWS offers a number of programs to help customers having financial hardship with their water bills. To determine if you qualify, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

SAWS Vision: SAWS will be the best water and wastewater utility in the United States by 2006.

Water News is published for customers of the San Antonio Water System. For more information regarding Water News, contact the Public Relations Department at (210) 704-7320.

Numbers to Know

Business Office	704-SAWS
Customer Account Information	704-SAWS
Jobline	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/ Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS
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Visit our website at www.saws.org