



RMWD LILAC FIRE READINESS AND RESPONSE

The recent Lilac fire is only the most recent of the wildfires to affect our area. We have dealt with fires in the past but they seem to be more frequent, and due to increasing population, more damaging to property. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the firefighters and first responders who came from as far away as Alaska to help get the Lilac Fire under control.

RMWD staff worked 24 hours a day through the fire event, closely coordinating our activities with the Incident Command set up by Cal Fire. We had a liaison posted at the command center that kept the line of communications open. Even though we had to evacuate our personnel and equipment from our offices due to threat of fire, we kept our Emergency Operations Center up and running throughout the event.

While we worked hard in our fire response, the real effort to being ready to deliver large amounts of water for fire protection happens well in advance. Our pipelines are designed to be oversized to handle fire flow. Our tanks hold extra capacity to be ready to deliver when needed. Our pump stations are similarly oversized. Even though the fire events are somewhat rare, every day we work to make sure that when called upon our system is ready to deliver the water needed to protect life and property.

We estimate that about 30% of our maintenance costs goes into keeping this oversized system ready to deliver fire flows. These costs end up in some of your monthly fixed fees, so even though they may seem high based on the water that you use month to month, remember that some of those costs are being spent to make sure that our system can be at its best when the worst happens.





WATER AND SEWER RATE HEARING COMING IN JANUARY

As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, the District will be processing a water and sewer rate increase in early 2018. Our Budget and Finance Committee has been working through several options for how to equitably pass through the cost increases from our wholesaler as well as some internal cost increases as well. The Committee will be meeting on December 12th at 1:00 PM to go through the final alternatives.

After that, the Board of Directors will hold a Special Board Meeting on January 10, 2018 to discuss the proposed rate structures and open a public comments process on the rate structures. The meeting will start at 1:00 PM and will be held at our District offices at 3707 Old Highway 395. We are holding a special meeting so that the topic of the rate structures will be the only item on the agenda, allowing the Board and the public to focus on this important topic.

This meeting will initiate a 45-day period for affected parties to provide comments to the District that will end on February 24, 2018. Under State law, the public has this opportunity to protest the rate changes. Should a majority of the affected group submit protests in writing, the rate changes will not go into effect. Absent that, the new water and sewer rates will go into effect on March 1, 2018.

A special notice will be mailed out on January 10, 2018 to all affected parties with information about the rate changes and how to submit protest documents to the District.

While we can't say right now what the exact changes will be, our water wholesale costs – which represent about 70% of our total costs – are increasing by a projected 6.3% starting January 1, 2018. This is the primary contributor to the water rate increase that is expected to be between 6% and 8%. As we have indicated before, we are working hard to pass through these cost increases as equitably as possible.

We understand that many of you have done a great job increasing your water use efficiency and having the cost of water go up after those efforts seems unfair. In several newsletters, this fall we have tried to explain some of the details on how the finances of the District work and we encourage anyone who is interested to participate in our Budget and Finance Committee meetings.

We are always open to new ideas as to how to deal with a challenge that is facing many water agencies – inescapable fixed costs related to maintaining aging infrastructure and a massive decline in water sales to spread those costs across.

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