



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Borough of Chambersburg

A full service municipality in Franklin County celebrating over 65 years of consumer owned natural gas service over 120 years of community electric and a regional wastewater, water, storm sewer and municipal solid waste utility

Beginning in 2020, the Borough of Chambersburg now assesses a ready-to-serve Ambulance Fee to all water service customers in the Borough of Chambersburg.

Details:

Beginning this year, Town Council approved by local law a new \$7 per month Ambulance Fee for utility invoices for service addresses within the Borough. The Borough mailed the first invoice for this new charge to all customers in January 2020. There was no charge in February 2020 to fix the invoicing database, but the fee resumed in March 2020.

You may have questions about this new fee.

A fee may be charged in exchange for the Borough Fire Department's ambulance service under State law. According to Fire Chief Dustin Ulrich, "we provide basic lifesaving ambulance services for our community. There is a significant cost to having ambulances staffed around the clock and ready to serve the Borough. These are Borough owned and operated ambulances with Borough employees. This is different from in much of Pennsylvania where non-profit ambulance companies provide ambulance services. However, regardless of how ambulance services are provided in Chambersburg, the cost of providing those services when compared to the revenue it generates is a challenge."

This Ambulance Fee helps defray the costs of the ambulance service being ready-to-serve. Borough Manager Jeffrey Stonehill added, "It is not a tax, as under State law taxes can only be assessed on the value of real estate. Approximately 40% of property owners are exempt from paying taxes. This is a fee in exchange for being ready to provide a service. Even with this fee, the Borough spends more on ambulance service than all the revenue it collects from the fee and other fees charged to ambulance patients."

The utility customer responsible for paying the water service (as provided by the Borough or in some cases an outside Authority) will be the party responsible for paying the Ambulance Fee.

- If you live in a single family home, you likely pay one fee per month
- If you live in multi-family residential housing (apartment, townhome, etc.), this might be your landlord, you likely pay one fee for every registered dwelling unit in your building
- If you are a business, commercial, or institutional use, you likely pay one fee for every water service connection to your building

Invoices that do not have a water charge (i.e. an extra trash dumpster or just electric service) will not be charged an Ambulance Fee. If you ask, Customer Service can research how many fees are being charged to each account. Utility customers are urged to call Customer Service at (717) 264-5151 to determine who will be responsible for the Ambulance Fee for their property.

Finally, the fee is not related to the Ambulance Club. The Ambulance Club is a voluntary program. If a citizen joins, it can help prevent the application of any "out-of-pocket" expenses that they might be required to pay under insurance rules. A citizen's decision to join the Ambulance Club is a voluntary exchange for potentially avoiding additional costs associated with using the Borough's basic lifesaving ambulance service. Individual insurance rules apply.

Chambersburg is proud to protect the health and safety of our residents and businesses. However, that comes at a significant expense. For many years, the Borough has been prohibited from collecting fees invoiced to patients who are covered by Medicaid/Medicare. For example, each year the Borough is forced to "write-off" as uncollectible, due to rules, bills worth over \$1.5 million that customers with third party insurance would have paid. This is in addition to almost \$300,000 per year in unpaid fees for patients with no insurance or unpaid deductibles or copays. All ambulance companies in Franklin County are experiencing the same problem with some finding it difficult to stay in business. This fee insures the continuation of this important service.

If you want more information or to better understand the funding crisis for ambulance services throughout Pennsylvania, call Dustin Ulrich, Fire Chief, at (717) 263-5872.