



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

Salisbury Stormwater Utility and Service Fee

The City of Salisbury Stormwater Utility and associated service fee are a result of an unfunded federal mandate that raised the standards for local municipalities regarding stormwater removal. The Stormwater Utility in Salisbury, established in July 2012, will overhaul the stormwater infrastructure within City limits and create cleaner water for our community in an effort to preserve the overall health of our physical environment.

What is an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)?

An ERU is the amount of impervious surface (measured in square feet) on a typical, single family, residential (SFR) property in Salisbury. That amount is 2,500 square feet. The ERU was determined by performing detailed measurements of impervious surfaces contained on a sample of SFR properties selected at random across all areas of the City. The resulting data was analyzed and the median impervious surface value for the data set determined the ERU value.

What constitutes impervious area?

Impervious area is any surface which inhibits infiltration of rainfall into the soil. This includes pavement (asphalt, concrete, brick pavers, etc.), rooftops, patios and compacted graveled surfaces such as parking areas and driveways. Swimming pools are considered pervious because they typically retain any rainfall which falls on them. Paved decks adjacent to pools are considered impervious. Railroad tracks are pervious due to the gap-graded ballast used under the tracks which allows stormwater infiltration. Paved surfaces and buildings associated with railroad yards and facilities are impervious in the same way as other properties.

How are impervious surfaces determined?

Impervious surfaces are measured from aerial photographs that have been processed to produce scaled images from which accurate measurements can be made. In certain cases, the City has verified or augmented photographic measurements using field measurements or data supplied on site plans.

How will residential properties be billed?

Each residential property will be charged for one ERU. Residential properties are billed a flat rate fee of \$4.25 per month. The fee will appear, monthly, on the City utility bills.

How will non-residential properties be billed?

Each non-residential property will be measured to determine the amount of impervious area on the property. That impervious area will be converted to ERUs based on one ERU per 2,500 square feet of impervious area. All partial ERUs will be rounded up to the next whole number and the property will be billed the amount of the number of ERUs times the Stormwater Service Fee rate. The fee will appear, monthly, on City utility bills and no property will be billed for less than one (1) ERU. Non-residential properties will be billed as follows:

- **Business 1** (Median/Typical)
 - ERU = 1-5
 - Fee = \$10
- **Business 2** (Averaged/Skewed)
 - ERU = 6-25
 - Fee = \$25
- **Business 3**
 - ERU = 26-50
 - Fee = \$75
- **Business 4**
 - ERU = 51-100
 - Fee = \$150
- **Business 5** (outliers)
 - ERU = 101+
 - Fee = \$300

What period of time will the stormwater service fee cover?

The stormwater service fee will apply to the calendar month in which it is billed. There will be no pro-rating of service fees for partial months. For example, a service fee billed in July will cover the entire month of July, even if the property was vacated half way through the month.

What happens when a residential property becomes vacant and all other utility services are cut off?

The stormwater service fee applies whether the property is occupied or not. When a vacant property becomes occupied, water and sewer services will not be connected until any back stormwater service fees are paid and the account is brought up to date.

Will City property taxes go down as a result of this Utility?

The City Council is responsible for setting and adjusting City taxes and no changes are anticipated as a result of the Stormwater Utility. Revenue will be used only for stormwater management within the City of Salisbury. City tax revenues are not sufficient enough to support the City's Stormwater Utility. Services that will be provided as part of the Stormwater Utility, exceed any the City has provided in the past.

Will tax-exempt properties, such as churches, non-profit organizations, local, state and federal agencies, and public utilities have to pay a stormwater service fee?

Tax-exempt properties are required to pay for utility charges including, electric, water and sewer and stormwater. The stormwater service fee is a utility charge that will be billed on your monthly utility statement.

How is billing for new properties initiated?

Most of the time, new properties will begin paying the stormwater fee when a certificate of occupancy is issued. This coincides with billing of utility services such as water and sanitary sewer. New residential properties will be billed a single ERU. New non-residential properties will be charged based on the amount of impervious area reported as required on the site plan which must be reviewed and approved by the City.

Why partial ERUs are always rounded up to the next whole number for non-residential properties?

Rounding up of partial ERUs is a policy decision and is not based on mathematical correctness. The policy is implemented to 1) simplify the management of impervious area data and 2) to recognize that the actual impervious area on a site will almost always be greater than what is charged. The added accuracy of rounding up or down to a whole ERU or charging based on fractions of an ERU does not justify the cost to achieve and maintain the data. This is a policy that many utilities use.

Where does the money collected from the stormwater service fee go?

All stormwater service fee and interest generated by stormwater charges will be accounted for separately from all other revenues and funds and will be used by the City of Salisbury solely for the operational costs, maintenance costs, management costs, indirect costs, capital improvements, debt principal and debt service, and establishment of a reserve fund for stormwater services.

The utility service fee will fund many initiatives required by the stormwater utility, including:

- **Maintaining and Installing Infrastructure** - Hundreds of miles of piping and other system components make up the storm drainage system that protects Salisbury from flooding.
- **Education** - The best way to protect stormwater quality and stop pollution is to educate our citizens. We make changes in our behaviors when we learn about the negative consequences they create.
- **Protection of the Environment** - Development and other human interactions with the environment increase the amount of stormwater runoff which is easily contaminated and carries pollutants into our surface waters. Stormwater Services continues to work to reduce stormwater pollution, stop illegal dumping, clean up our watershed and restore local streams.
- **Reviewing Plans** - Stormwater staff reviews plans for all new development within the City limits, making sure projects comply with state and federal regulations and contribute as little as possible to stormwater pollution.
- **Mapping the System** - In order to effectively maintain the storm drainage system, our Geographic Information System (GIS) technician continues work regularly to map all of Salisbury's outfalls, drains, ditches, pipes and other system components while monitoring for illicit discharges.