

Sewer fees to jump for overflow study

Homeowners could pay an additional \$40 per year for city sewer and \$29 for HRSD bill.

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HAMPTON - — Starting in July, homeowners in Hampton can expect to pay about \$40 more each year for sewer maintenance fees as the city complies with a federal mandate to find all the places sewer water could overflow during a heavy rain.

The city's wastewater rate is expected to increase from \$1.07 to \$1.48 per 100 cubic feet of water. An average household uses 800 cubic feet in a month, according to the [Hampton Roads](#) Sanitation District. That means a monthly bill would increase from \$8.56 to \$11.84. Hampton expects to raise about \$2.26million each year with the increased rate.

All localities in Hampton Roads are required to take part in a regional study of the area's sewer, or wastewater, system. The intent is to find all of the places where rainwater can pour into the sewer system and cause it to overflow into storm water. The eventual goal is to prevent any sewer overflow, or at least minimize it.

Sewer overflows are just one aspect of the recurring flood problems in Hampton every time there's a serious storm.

Each locality, along with the sanitation district, is working to comply with the federal mandate which is being overseen by the state Department of Environmental Quality. In Hampton's case, it will require looking at 2.5million feet of wastewater pipe, 108 pumping stations and 10,800 manholes.

And looking down the bathtub drain has never been so technologically advanced. Cameras and fiber-optic equipment help identify where tree roots have ruptured pipes or any other place where rainwater could get into the system, said city spokesman Ed Novi.

Hampton's findings will be pooled with those of other localities to develop a technical model of Hampton Roads' wastewater system.

The study is expected to be finished by 2013 and cost between \$50 million and \$100 million, said John Carlock, deputy executive director for physical planning at the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

Also starting in July, homeowners can expect to pay about \$29 more each year on their bill from the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. The sanitation district board hasn't voted on its budget yet, but the board will be asked to increase the rate about 30 cents per 100 cubic feet of water, said Ted Henifin, the sanitation district's general manager. The rate is currently \$1.98.

Most of the cost increase will pay to reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that enters the [Chesapeake Bay](#), Henifin said. The district is changing its water treatment processes at some of its nine water treatment plants to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus in the effluent.

Nitrogen and phosphorus feed algal blooms that deplete oxygen in the bay and deprive other plants of sunlight.

"It's really to meet those Chesapeake Bay goals," Henifin said of the rate increase.

By the numbers

\$69/year

Estimated increase in sewer fees to the average affected homeowner.

\$40/year

Hampton's portion of the increase for sewer maintenance fees.

\$29/year

The expected average hike in a homeowner's bill.