

FAQs - General

Q: *What is a Special District?*

A: A special district is a form of local government created to provide a specific public service(s) to an area within defined boundaries. Your special district is administered by San Joaquin County Public Works Department, but is a legally and financially distinct entity from the County and must be generally self-sustaining through customer service charges. While some of the service charges appear on your property tax bill, the service charges are not a tax. They are a charge for services to benefitting properties, which are unavailable to other County residents. Service charges collected in a District:

- May **ONLY** be used in the District in which they were collected
- May **NOT** be used for other purposes, such as roads, police, or other County expenses.
 - Are kept in a separate district fund & are **NOT** commingled with other funds (e.g. County General Fund)

Q: *What services are provided by the special districts managed by the San Joaquin County Public Works Department?*

A: The Public Works Department manages special districts which provide one or a combination of the following services to the properties within a district's boundaries:

- Water
- Sewer
- Storm drainage
- Street lighting
- Nitrate treatment
- Lighting & landscape maintenance
- Household hazardous waste
- Storm water pollution prevention

Q: *Am I in a County special district because I live in the County?*

A: Most County properties are outside of a special district. To find out if your property is in a special district, please visit www.sjgov.org/ud and enter your address in the search box on the map.

Q: *What types of costs comprise the expenses for a special district?*

A: The costs are unique to each special district and depend on the type of service provided. A breakdown of the annual operating expenses for your district can be found on your district's webpage.

Q: *How are the service charges (rates) determined?*

A: Your district needs to be self-supporting from customer service charges. The rates should generate sufficient revenue to pay the district's operating and maintenance costs and fund a capital replacement reserve.

Q: *How often do I pay service charges?*

A: Most service charges are paid annually through the annual property tax billing. Some properties may receive a mailed invoice if we are unable to collect the charges on the property tax bill. Metered water charges are collected through invoices sent to the account holder on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Q: *How are service charges increased?*

A: Service charges are only increased with property owner consent in accordance with The Right to Vote on Taxes Act of 1996 (Proposition 218). This requires a notice of Public Hearing to be sent to the property owners advising of the proposed increase. Some districts have an inflationary adjustment factor, which allows the County to increase the rate up to the maximum percentage consented to by property owners.

Q: *Are there plans to raise my service charges?*

A: Rate increases are proposed when your district needs additional revenue to pay for operating costs or build reserves. The financial information on your district's webpage will indicate if your district is likely to require a rate increase in the next several years.

Q: *I am a senior citizen and on fixed income, are there any discounts or waivers of the assessment?*

A: Unfortunately, there are no provisions for a discount or waiver of the assessment. State law requires equal application of the service charges based on the level of service or benefit received.

Q: *Does the County handle electricity issues?*

A: The County does not provide electric service. Please contact your service provider for any electrical service issues. If you are in a street lighting district and need to report a street light issue, please call Tilly Silva, Administrative Assistant, at (209) 953-7618.

If you have any questions regarding your service charges, please call (209) 468-3024 between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm, or visit the County's special district website at www.sigov.org/ud.