

## **Questions and Answers Regarding the New Garbage Service with Waste Management, billing and service questions.**

Q. I received my tax bill from the County assessor and I was surprised to see that it has my garbage collection bill added to it. Is this right?

A. Yes, the City Council negotiated a franchise with Waste Management last fall and directed that the collection be placed on the tax bill. The new negotiated rate reduces the monthly residential service cost from \$17 to \$14.78 and doubles the amount of capacity and service each residence will have. Each home now has a 96 gallon waste cart for trash and a 65 gallon cart for recycling. They are being picked up weekly. We are pleased to have been able to provide you with increased service at reduced cost.

Q. How can the City add a tax to the assessor's bill without my permission?

A. A tax would have been placed against every parcel and would have required the voters' permission. The waste disposal cost *is not a tax but is a fee* for service. It is not being assessed against parcels but is a bill for actual services to residences and businesses.

Q. Is it legal to bill me in this way?

A. Yes, many of California's cities and counties collect the fee for waste service this way so as to reduce the cost.

Q. Why did the City put my waste disposal bill on the assessor's roll instead of just billing me by paper as we did in the past?

A. For three reasons:

First, consolidating the billing and 'piggybacking' it on the assessors role reduces cost and overhead associated with accounting and mailings. This savings is part of the overall reduction that is being passed on to customers.

Secondly, there were many residences in the community that were not subscribing to the service even though trash service is mandated by the City's Health and Safety code. This enables the City to ensure that all the residences were receiving the service and thus the City was able to negotiate a better price on behalf of the customers because of the increased number of users.

Lastly, some of those people that were previously not subscribing to the service were instead dumping their garbage in their neighbors cans, or placing it in dumpsters of businesses or in the City parks, or just dumping it in the desert. They will no longer be able to pirate the services of others or dump junk in the desert and will now pay their fair share of the cost of garbage service. This will also lower the costs of the customers.

Q. When did all this happen? When was it decided? Was the public notified?

A. The City Council conducted a series of workshops in the summer and fall of last year and conducted a public hearing and adopted the new franchise on December 9, 2003. The public hearing was noticed, announced in the newspaper and was accompanied by several news reports and articles. Waste Management notified all customers of the change in the spring of 2004 and their final mailed paper billing notified all customers that commencing September 1, 2004 their fee for service would be collected on the assessor's tax roll.

Q. This bill is for the entire year and is for service I haven't even received yet. Why should I have to pay for it all at once?

A. The bill for \$148.10 is for 10 months of service from September 1 through June 30<sup>th</sup>. You don't have to pay for it all at once unless you choose to. The Assessor provides that you may pay the bill in two installments, one in the fall and the other in the spring.

Q. I don't need this service and take my own trash to the dump and do my own recycling. Why do I need to pay for a service I don't need?

A. You don't have to pay for a service you don't use. If you are a '*self hauler*' who takes their trash to an approved landfill and who recycles more than 50% of their waste, you may apply for a 'Self Hauler' permit at City Hall and if you make quarterly reports on your waste and recycling, your billing will either be removed from the assessors roll or if you have paid the bill already, it will be refunded.

Q. I own a residential property in town that has been *vacant* for years, yet I am being billed for service for it that it is not receiving. That is not fair. What can I do?

A. We agree with you. You will not have to pay for a service you are not receiving. The billing is for service rendered. Notify Waste Management that the home is vacant and how long it has been vacant so they can identify it. They may require electrical or water bills or some proof to show that the property has not been used. They will either remove the bill from the tax roll or refund your payment once they verify that it has been paid.

Q. I own a rental property. Do I have to pay the bill if it is vacant?

A. If your property is going to be vacant for more than 45 days you will not have to pay for a service you did not receive. Notify Waste Management when the vacancy occurs so they can cease service. You will need to notify them again when you wish to resume service.

Q. We are retired and only live in Twentynine Palms in the winter time. Do we have to pay for the summer months when we are not here?

A. No, if you are absent for more than 45 days you do not need to pay for service you are not receiving. There are many 'snowbirds' who live in Twentynine Palms from Autumn through Spring and leave for elsewhere in the summer. Notify Waste Management of your arrangements and they will process a refund for you or move you to a separate billing list. You must let them know when you will be leaving so they can remove you from the server list and then will need to notify them when you return so they can resume service.

Q. I am a *senior citizen* with a small household and don't generate much trash for removal. I don't need the big 96 gallon can, can I use the smaller 65 gallon can and get a reduced rate?

A. Yes, if you are a Senior citizen and don't generate that much trash you can so notify Waste Management and they will sign you up as a 'Senior' and your bill will be reduced to \$13.97 a month. Waste Management can process the difference for you.

Q. I have a dumpster at my residential property. Waste Management is billing me monthly for that service, but I also received the bill via the Tax Assessors bill. Why am I being billed twice for the same service?

A. It is an error. Please notify Waste Management so they may correct it and process a refund or credit you for the payment.

Q. I still have questions and want to talk further about this, what do I do?

A. Please write down the additional questions, provide your name and telephone number and we will research your question and get back to you promptly.

Q. I am elderly or handicapped and have no one else in my household and can't push my cart out to the street? What can I do?

A. If you are infirm or elderly, notify Waste Management, they will collect and return the cart from your home if you are on their list.

Q. Where do I take my questions about the billing or file complaints about service?

A. Waste Management's Twentynine Palms telephone number is 760.367.9168. Their Twentynine Palms Office is open only two days a week. Call before going to confirm. It is located at 73877 Amboy Road. If you are unable to get the information you need by calling Waste Management, call City Hall we are dedicated to your service.