

Santa Margarita Water District Rate Hikes Unfair & Unsustainable

ACTION ALERT: The Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) plans severe rate increases for a limited group of customers that include:
Churches Schools Nonprofits Businesses

Whether you belong to any of these organizations, support or frequent them, the proposed rate increases will negatively impact our community.

Who/What The City of San Juan Capistrano's water system, now run by Santa Margarita Water District, is called Improvement District 9. (You may see "ID9" in literature – that's the City of SJC.) The SMWD plans to repair and upgrade water systems using rate increases that narrowly impact a select few: 124 churches, nonprofits, schools and businesses will face extreme rate increases, 70 businesses will have up to a 1000 percent increase.

How The SMWD intends to pay for the water system upgrades in a very short window of time – yet these improvements will benefit the entire community for generations to come – by targeting the 70 rate payers who have fire sprinkler system pipes 3" in diameter or larger. These sprinkler systems are only used in the event of a fire and may never be used.

Why We believe that the rate study approved by the SMWD board on May 19, 2023 is deeply flawed. The unprecedented targeting of such a narrow band of rate payers for such severe cost increases is unfair and unsustainable.

When The SMWD board holds a public hearing on July 12, 2023 at 6 pm at the SMWD offices.

What to do? The rate increase notice that went out from SMWD is confusing and complex to calculate. There is no commercial rate calculator on the SMWD website, and responses to inquiries have been slow, if at all. We are willing to pay our fair share to fix what is necessary. We object to the allocation of fees and seek a better, fair and equitable solution. We'll need your help to make that happen.

Three steps:

- 1) **Write a letter. It is the most important thing you can do.** There is a better way to get the funds needed for repairs. The SMWD could easily issue a bond to raise the funds needed. See letter sample attached to this information.
- 2) **Attend the SMWD board meeting to speak and show support.** July 12, 2023 at 6 pm, Santa Margarita Water District board room, 26111 Antonio Pkwy, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688.
- 3) **Spread the word.** Send this information to everyone. Get them to act. These rate increases, if approved, will start August 1, 2023.

There is power in numbers so let's stay connected. Please include your phone number in your email and we will keep you updated. info@sheacenter.org

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How to submit a protest letter:

1. Identify yourself by assessor's parcel number or service address*

**For those of you writing as the person in charge of the business, nonprofit, church or school, please email us for more detailed information about the protest letter.*

Date Letter must be in writing (no email) and received by July 12, so please mail letters by July 6 or deliver person on July 12 at the SMWD public hearing.)

Name

Title (If applicable)

Address (ideally, protest letters come from San Juan Capistrano)

City, state, zip

Email

Phone number

2. State you are in opposition to the rate increases, specifically to the water, recycled water and/or wastewater services. State why: some of the feedback comments we've been hearing are:

(Please use your own language)

- "We are barely able to get by, these increases will put us out of business."
- "Not only did I not get the rate increase notice, when I call the SMWD and ask for help, nobody can answer my questions about our increase."
- "These rate increases will strike at the heart of our business community. It's already hard enough to do business in the post-pandemic, now inflationary times."
- "I am a volunteer at _____ and these increases will affect those we are trying to serve by taking away valuable financial resources."
- "There are ways, such as issuing bonds, to raise the funds needed for improvements without damaging our businesses, churches, schools and nonprofits."

3. Sign the letter **(It must be signed!)**

Please mail by July 6, 2023 to:

Santa Margarita Water District, Secretary to the Board of Directors
26111 Antonio Parkway
Rancho Santa Margarita CA 92688

**Your protest only counts if it is in writing sent via
US Mail or delivered in person before July 12, 2023.**