FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Stormwater Charge

NON-RESIDENTIAL

1. What is stormwater runoff?
   Stormwater runoff is water that flows over our yards, streets, buildings, parking lots, swimming pools and other surfaces when it rains. Stormwater runoff flows into the nearest waters and eventually ends up in our local streams, ponds, rivers, and oceans.

2. Why do we have a stormwater charge?
   The City has a combined sewer system (CSS) that conveys most of the City's stormwater runoff and all of the sanitary sewage to the City's wastewater treatment plants for treatment and disposal. In addition, a very small portion of the City's jurisdiction is also served by Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) drainage system. During intense precipitation events, excessive rainfall can overwhelm the CSS leading to combined sewer overflows impacting your health and environment. Intense wet weather events can also lead to localized flooding in MS4 areas. The City's sewer charges, and the stormwater charges help fund the repair and maintenance of the combined sewer system, the MS4 system, and other stormwater structures that convey stormwater runoff, prevent sewer overflows, localized flooding, pooling, etc.

3. If my stormwater runoff does not flow into the streets and flows directly into a river, should I still pay the stormwater charge?
   Yes. The City is responsible for the holistic stormwater management of the City's stormwater system which includes the CSS, the MS4, and all the surface water including the Delaware River. Therefore, the City is responsible for managing the water quality of not only the treated wastewater that is discharged from the City's wastewater treatment facility but also the overall water quality in the Delaware River and other surface waters that are within the City's jurisdictional limits, which includes stormwater that is directly discharged by properties into the surface waters.

   The City's stormwater management benefits everyone in the City by protecting the City streets and properties from flooding, erosion, pollution problems, and property damage. Therefore, all properties within the City's jurisdictional limits are billed a monthly stormwater charge. However, the City offers a stormwater credits program, specifically to non-residential properties. Properties that demonstrate onsite management of stormwater or properties that have a direct discharge NPDES permit may be eligible for some stormwater credits, subject to meeting the eligibility requirements.

4. Is my Stormwater Charge based on my water consumption?
   Stormwater Charge is NOT based on your monthly Water Consumption. Stormwater Charge is based on the *Impervious Area* estimated for a parcel.

5. What is a Parcel?
   "Parcel" means any real property, either developed or undisturbed, which is assigned a tax parcel number by New Castle County.

6. What is the basis of my stormwater charge?
   Stormwater charge is determined based on the impervious area square footage estimated for your property.

7. What is an Impervious Area?
   Impervious Area" is the total square feet of any hard surface area, including buildings, any attached or detached structures, paved or hard-scaped areas, compacted dirt or gravel and other such surfaces that either prevent or restrict the volume of stormwater that can enter the soil, and thereby causes water to run off the surface.

8. Is my property's Impervious Area measured?
   No, it is not feasible to measure each non-residential property's impervious area. The impervious area is estimated by multiplying your property's gross parcel area (total lot size square footage), obtained from New Castle County, by an assigned *Stormwater Runoff Factor.*

9. What is a "Stormwater Runoff Factor"?
   "Runoff Factor" is a multiplier or factor that is used to approximate the level of imperviousness that exists in a non-residential parcel. The runoff factor that is assigned depends on the specific stormwater class that is assigned to a non-residential parcel. Generally, stormwater classes that have large areas of hard paved surfaces will have a higher runoff factor.

10. How is my property assigned to a stormwater class?
    Your property is assigned to one of eleven non-residential stormwater classes based on your property's land use code. The land use code is assigned by New Castle County, based on the designated and stated use of the property. For example, if your property is assigned a land use code of a "church" by New Castle County, then your property will be assigned a stormwater class of "INS" (SW05) – Institutional. A corresponding runoff factor of 90% is assigned to your property to determine impervious area. Table 1 presents the eleven non-residential stormwater classes and their corresponding runoff, defined per the City's Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Rate Ordinance 24-017.

Table 1: Non-residential Stormwater Class

S. No.	Stormwater Class	Stormwater Charge Code	Stormwater Class Description	Runoff Factor
1	COM	SW01	Commercial	95%
2	GOV	SW03	Government	95%
3	IND	SW04	Industrial	90%
4	INS	SW05	Institutional	90%
5	MFA	SW06	Multi Family Apartment	75%
6	PAR	SW08	Parks & Cemeteries	25%
7	PAV	SW09	Paved Surface	95%
8	PKG	SW10	Parking	95%
9	REC	SW11	Recreational Playgrounds / Arenas	35%
10	UTI	SW12	Utilities	90%
11	VAC	SW13	Vacant	30%

11. How is the impervious area calculated for my property?
    A two-step process is used to calculate your property's impervious area:

(i) First, your parcel is assigned to one of the eleven Non-Residential stormwater classes that the City has defined, as indicated in Table 1.

(ii) Second, a corresponding ***"Stormwater Runoff Factor"*** is assigned to the parcel based on your property's stormwater classification. The impervious area is then determined as the parcel's Gross Parcel Area (Lot Size) in square feet multiplied by the assigned Stormwater Runoff Factor.

Example:

- If you have a Retail Store with a Gross Parcel Area (Lot Size) of 3,000 Sq. Ft., then:
  a. The parcel is assigned a Stormwater Class of **"Commercial"**
  b. The parcel is assigned a "Stormwater Runoff Factor" of **95%**
  c. The estimated Impervious Area **= 3,000 X 95% = 2,850 Sq. Ft.**

12. How is the Stormwater Rate defined?

The monthly stormwater rate is defined as a charge per "Equivalent Stormwater Unit (ESU)". The **ESU** is a base unit of measure that has been defined for the calculation of stormwater billing units. For the City of Wilmington, one ESU is equivalent to **789 Sq. Ft.** of impervious area, and the FY 2025 monthly stormwater rate for one ESU is **$5.565.** The stormwater rate per ESU, that is currently effective, is per the City's Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Rate Ordinance 24-017.

13. How is the Stormwater Charge calculated for a parcel?

For a parcel that is assigned to one of the eleven (11) non-residential stormwater classes, the stormwater charge is calculated as follows:

(i) First, the ESU Factor is calculated by dividing the parcel's estimated impervious area square footage by 789.

(ii) Second, the Stormwater Charge is calculated by multiplying the ESU Factor by the Monthly ESU Rate of $5.565/ESU.

Example: Using the same example from Question 11:

- If you have a Retail Store with a Gross Parcel Area of 3,000 Sq. Ft.
  a. The parcel is assigned to the Stormwater Class of **"Commercial"**
  b. The parcel is assigned a "Stormwater Runoff Factor" of **95%**
  c. The estimated Impervious Area = **3,000 X 95% = 2,850 Sq. Ft.**
  d. The calculated "ESU Factor" is **2,850 ÷ 789 = 3.61 ESUs**
  e. The calculated monthly stormwater charge is **3.61 X $5.565= $20.09.**

14. My property is tax exempt. Do I still have to pay the stormwater charge?

Yes. Stormwater charge is a "User Fee", like the water and sewer user charges, and is not a tax. Therefore, all tax exempt properties that are within the City's jurisdiction must pay the monthly stormwater charge.