The "14%" water rate increase: what residents were told and what they are paying

In January 2026 Burbank Water and Power raised residential water rates, and will raise them again in January 2027. Customers were told each increase was "14%," and the notice mailed to every customer included a table of projected monthly bills at four usage levels. Those projections were accurate: the bills BWP printed in April 2025 match the rates it adopted and the bills it has since sent, to the cent.

The actual increase depends on how much water a home uses, because the fixed monthly availability charge rose faster than the per-unit rates. In January 2026 bills rose between 12.6% and 17% depending on usage; the January 2027 step adds about 11%. Over the two steps a typical home's water bill rises 25% to 30%. This page exists as a comparison: BWP's water disclosure was straightforward, and its electric disclosure was not.

A comparison of BWP's public projections for water with the rates adopted by City Council and the bills of an actual Burbank single-family account, referred to below as the Example Account. Every figure comes from a BWP or City of Burbank document or from the Example Account's own 2025 and 2026 bills.

14%

What BWP told customers, each year. A water-system average; the mailer also gave dollar projections at four usage levels.

12.6% to 17%

What bills actually rose in January 2026, from a high-use home to a low-use one. BWP's mailer showed this range.

11%

What the January 2027 step adds at any usage level, per the adopted fee schedule.

26%

Where the Example Account's water bill will be after the 2027 step, compared with 2025: $1,341 a year becomes $1,694.

1. What customers were told

> "beginning January 1, 2026, BWP is proposing an electric system average rate increase of 9.9% and a water system average rate increase of 14%. An identical increase is proposed for the following year to take effect on January 1, 2027."
>
> "For the typical customer, the proposed fees and charges reflect monthly increases of approximately $13.76 for water services (1" meter billed for 12,000 gallons)"
>
> Notice of Public Hearing mailed to customers, April 2025.[1] Water is subject to Proposition 218, so this notice was legally required; electric is not, and the same notice gave no electric bill figures.

The notice and the council presentation carried the same "Residential Water Bill Impacts" table. Four example homes, each with a photo, current bill, and the projected increase for each of the next two years:[1][2]

BWP example home	Monthly use	FY 24-25 bill	FY 25-26 increase	FY 25-26 bill	FY 26-27 increase	FY 26-27 bill
Small single-family, little turf grass (~25% of customers use less)	8 hcf	$52.77	+$8.89	$61.75	+$7.10	$68.85
Medium single-family, native landscaping (~50% use less)	12 hcf	$75.64	+$11.37	$87.01	+$9.79	$96.81
Medium single-family with turf grass ("average customer")	16 hcf	$98.51	+$13.76	$112.28	+$12.49	$124.77
Large single-family with pool and turf (~75% use less)	26 hcf	$160.12	+$20.26	$180.38	+$19.98	$200.36

As printed on council presentation slide 18, "Residential Water Bill Impacts." The mailed notice shows the same table with three figures a few cents different ($61.66, $112.27, $124.76 and $68.76), consistent with an earlier draft. 1 hcf (hundred cubic feet) is 748 gallons.

2. The adopted rates

Single-family water service, 1" meter or smaller. The bill prints each tier as one rate; the fee schedule splits it into a quantity charge plus a Water Cost Adjustment Charge (WCAC), and the two add up to the printed rate exactly.[3][5]

Component	2025, as billed	2026	2027	2025 → 2026	2026 → 2027
Water availability charge, per month	$19.25	$24.87	$28.63	+29.2%	+15.1%
Tier 1, first 8 hcf	$4.190	$4.610	$5.027	+10.0%	+9.0%
Tier 2, next 12 hcf	$5.718	$6.316	$6.990	+10.5%	+10.7%
Tier 3, all additional hcf	$6.456	$7.140	$7.939	+10.6%	+11.2%

2026 and 2027 tier rates are quantity charge + WCAC: $1.785 + $2.825, $3.491 + $2.825, $4.315 + $2.825 for 2026; $2.055 + $2.972, $4.018 + $2.972, $4.967 + $2.972 for 2027. Water carries no utility users tax or in-lieu transfer.

3. Projected versus actual

Pricing BWP's four example usage levels with the rates on the Example Account's 2025 bills and with the adopted 2026 and 2027 schedules reproduces BWP's table. Unlike electric, the "before" column was the rate customers were being charged.

Monthly use	BWP projected, FY 24-25	From 2025 bills	BWP projected, FY 25-26	From adopted 2026 rate	BWP projecte
8 hcf	$52.77	**$52.77**	$61.75	**$61.75**	
12 hcf	$75.64	**$75.64**	$87.01	**$87.01**	
16 hcf	$98.51	**$98.51**	$112.28	**$112.28**	
26 hcf	$160.12	**$160.13**	$180.38	**$180.38**	

The Example Account's seven 2026 water bills (February through August) also match the adopted 2026 schedule to the cent: for example 9.95 hcf billed at $74.07, 31.97 hcf at $223.01. The percentages are higher than "14%" for low users and lower for high users because the flat availability charge rose 29% while the per-hcf rates rose about 10%.

4. The Example Account's twelve 2025 bills, priced three ways

The actual 2025 water charges for the Example Account, then the same monthly usage priced at the 2026 and 2027 rates.[3][5]

Bill	hcf	Paid, 2025 rate	At 2026 rate	At 2027 rate	2025 → 2026	2026 → 2027	2025 → 2027
Jan 2025	11.35	$71.92	$82.91	$92.27	15.3%	11.3%	28.3%
Feb 2025	10.67	$68.04	$78.61	$87.51	15.5%	11.3%	28.6%
Mar 2025	3.18	$32.57	$39.53	$44.62	21.4%	12.9%	37.0%
Apr 2025	7.82	$52.02	$60.92	$67.94	17.1%	11.5%	30.6%
May 2025	18.40	$112.24	$127.44	$141.55	13.5%	11.1%	26.1%
Jun 2025	28.00	$173.03	$194.66	$216.24	12.5%	11.1%	25.0%
Jul 2025	31.45	$195.30	$219.29	$243.63	12.3%	11.1%	24.7%
Aug 2025	31.81	$197.62	$221.86	$246.49	12.3%	11.1%	24.7%
Sep 2025	29.58	$183.23	$205.94	$228.79	12.4%	11.1%	24.9%
Oct 2025	21.38	$130.29	$147.39	$163.69	13.1%	11.1%	25.6%
Nov 2025	12.41	$77.99	$89.60	$99.68	14.9%	11.3%	27.8%
Dec 2025	6.60	$46.91	$55.30	$61.81	17.9%	11.8%	31.8%
Twelve 2025 bills	**212.65**	**$1,341.16**	**$1,523.45**	**$1,694.22**	**13.6%**	**11.2%**	**26.3%**

The Example Account's usage is strongly seasonal, from 3 hcf in March to 32 hcf in August. Most of its water dollars fall in summer, where the percentage increase is lowest, so its annual increase lands close to BWP's "14%."

5. Water versus electric

	Water	Electric
Advertised to customers	14% each year	9.9% each year
Bill projections sent to customers	Yes, four usage levels, both years, in the mailed notice	None. One "+$19.80/month" figure on the website
Projections match adopted rates and actual bills	Yes, to the cent	No. The "before" bill used an ECAC of 13.69¢ while bills carried 11.78¢
Residential increase in 2026, typical home	12.6% to 17%, disclosed	About 24%, not disclosed (14.9% in council documents only)
Increase from 2025 bills to 2027 rate, Example Account	+26.3%	+40.2%
Why the difference in disclosure	Water is covered by Proposition 218, which requires a mailed notice and allows a majority protest	Electric is exempt from Proposition 218

BWP knew how to present a rate increase plainly. For water, the law required it and BWP did it: real bills, real usage levels, both years, mailed to every customer. For electric, where no notice was required, customers got a system-wide average and one dollar figure computed from a rate they were not paying. The electric analysis is on the companion page.

Sources

1. Notice of Public Hearing and customer letter mailed April 4, 2025 (Attachment 2 to the May 20, 2025 staff report), including the "Residential Water Bill Impacts" table. burbank.granicus.com, meta_id 444418
2. Council presentations, slide 18 "Residential Water Bill Impacts": March 25, 2025 study session meta_id 442602; May 20, 2025 public hearing meta_id 444478
3. City of Burbank, FY 2026-27 Adopted Citywide Fee Schedule, Article XI, Section 1, Single-Family Residential Service (Resolution 25-29,616). burbankwaterandpower.com/documents/d/guest/burbank_adopted_fee_schedule
4. BWP, "Approved Rate Increases." burbankwaterandpower.com/approved-rate-increases
5. The Example Account's BWP bills dated January 11, 2025 through August 11, 2026 (water tier rates $4.19 / $5.718 / $6.456 and availability charge $19.25 on every 2025 bill; $4.61 / $6.316 / $7.14 and $24.87 from the February 2026 bill).

Prepared September 17, 2026 from the documents listed above. Bill calculations use the adopted single-family water rates and reproduce BWP's published example bills to within one cent. Corrections welcome; every figure can be checked against the cited page.