

New rates

Sewer, water bills rising Jan. 1

The new year will bring new — and larger — sewer and water bills for suburban homeowners and businesses.

While the new rates established by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department have been known since last summer, Chief U.S. District Judge John Feikens left no doubt last week that the rates would take effect Tuesday, Jan. 1, as scheduled.

The new rates represent a 38 percent average increase, wholesale, for western Wayne and southern Oakland communities.

Feikens signed a temporary order requested by Detroit to allow the rates in lieu of challenges from suburban counties and metropolitan area industries.

The challenges will still be heard in Feikens' court in early January.

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for western Wayne and southern Oakland County communities.

The wholesale sewage rate charged to county sewage districts will be \$3.60 per 1,000 cubic feet of water. The rate is higher for northern Oakland communities.

The increase is passed on to suburban communities through the sewage districts which act as the middlemen between the Detroit system and suburbs.

The new rates will add from \$15-\$25 annually to south Oakland and western Wayne homeowners' water bills.

The increases will be higher for residents of West Bloomfield and Avon townships. Like most northern Oakland County communities, they are customers of the Clinton Oakland Sewage District which will absorb a higher wholesale rate increase for transportation costs.

A \$1.5 million budget surplus in the South Oakland County Sewage Disposal System allowed a small portion of the sewer and water increase for 14 communities, including Troy, Southfield

and the Birmingham area, to be absorbed.

The rates may increase slightly after local governments, which handle billing, tack on administrative cost increases.

COMMERCIAL AND industrial customers of the Detroit system will pay from 50 percent to more than 400 percent more for sewage treatment.

Industries will also pay surcharges when pollutants in three different categories exceed a pre-established level.

The new rates are expected to raise \$184 million through June 30, 1981 to help pay for renovating the Detroit sewage treatment plant which serves 3.2 million people in southeast Michigan.

Suburban and industrial customers took their rate challenges to Feikens, who has presided over the federal U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lawsuit filed several years ago to force Detroit to clean up the treatment plant.

The challenges have been the subject of negotiations between lawyers representing all sides since early December.

IF THEY FAIL to reach a settlement by early January, Feikens may order the issue to be decided by a three-man masters' panel. Members are engineering and law professors from the University of Michigan.

The last rate challenge settled by the masters panel resulted in a rebate for suburban users.

Feikens also ordered Macomb County last week to temporarily pay an \$11 million bill for repair of a huge sewer break in Fraser in July 1978.

Macomb wanted the cost spread over the sewer and water system. The revenue from the \$1.51 extra charge to 105,000 Macomb residents will be held in escrow until Feikens makes a final ruling.

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New machine speaks to blind

The University of Michigan is buying more than \$35,000 worth of special library equipment to aid blind students, including a machine that converts ordinary printed material into spoken English.

The U-M's Disabled Student Services (DSS) office was awarded \$28,113 from the Michigan Commission for the Blind, with the remaining 20 percent share of \$7,028 supplied by the University, according to DSS program manager James Kubaiko.

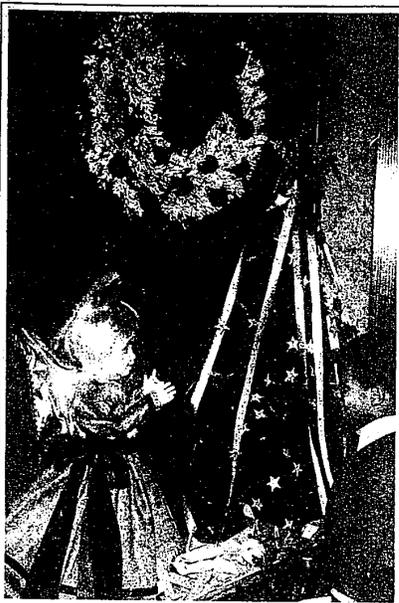
"The equipment will greatly improve the ability of blind students to study independently and compete on a more equitable basis with their sighted peers," he said. "It will also benefit other disabled students who have reading or writing handicaps."

The U-M is the first public institution in the state — and one of the first in the country — to acquire a Kurzweil Reading Machine.

The \$22,000 desk top device "reads"

pages of books, magazines, letters and other printed matter and converts it to a synthesized voice. It has been called the biggest technological breakthrough for blind persons since the development of Braille, Kubaiko noted.

FOR PERSONS who are legally blind but can distinguish light and darkness, the U-M has purchased an Apollo Laser Electronic Vision Aid which magnifies print up to any size on a closed-circuit television screen.



International Spirit

"Christmas Around the World" is the theme of a new exhibit on display at the General Motors Building. George Giles Jr. of Detroit examines one of the 20 mechanical displays depicting holiday customs in other countries. The exhibits portray children in the traditional dress of the country carrying out a holiday custom. Brief explanations of the celebration of Christmas in each country also are featured. The mechanical displays are in operation at the GM Building, 3044 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week throughout the holidays.

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