



## Frequently Asked Questions

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## About Jersey WaterCheck

### What is Jersey WaterCheck?

Jersey WaterCheck was created by Jersey Water Works, a collaborative working to improve water (i.e., drinking water and wastewater) infrastructure in New Jersey. Jersey WaterCheck was designed to help people understand and connect to their water and wastewater systems and to measure key parts of our state's water infrastructure. By putting all this information in one place, Jersey WaterCheck can help New Jersey residents, decision makers, and water system managers understand the status of water utility systems at the state and utility level.

### I have more current information about the utility I work in and would like that information updated on the website. How do I submit the information?

Please use the feedback form to provide the updated information or contact information and we will get back to you quickly.

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## Information on Jersey WaterCheck

### What information does Jersey WaterCheck include?

- Jersey WaterCheck includes 55 metrics, which are measures of specific conditions. Most of them show information about water and wastewater systems. There are a few metrics that show information related to municipalities, such as green stormwater infrastructure. Note, when you select a JWW goal or visit a drinking water or a wastewater system on Jersey WaterCheck, only relevant metrics for that system or JWW goal show up with information .
- Data for metrics come from four primary sources: 1) publicly available information provided by government agencies such as New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Delaware River Basin Commission; 2) self-reported survey data from utilities and municipalities; 3) data and information gathered from utility websites; and 4) information from a statewide public opinion survey.



- In total, Jersey WaterCheck contains information on 388 drinking water systems and 155 wastewater systems. Note that in some cases, more than one system will have the same ownership, such as when one drinking water system has multiple, separate service areas.
- For drinking water systems, only public community water systems (PCWS) are included in Jersey WaterCheck as the goals of Jersey Water Works focus on residents and communities. Drinking water systems classified as “private” on Jersey WaterCheck refer to investor-owned systems and systems classified as “public” refer to publicly-owned systems. Both types of ownership are included in the PCWS category, which is defined by federal law.
- For wastewater systems, Jersey WaterCheck includes systems with active New Jersey Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) permits classified as Domestic Treatment Works (DTW). Currently, Jersey WaterCheck does not include wastewater systems that are collection systems only *and* do not have a NJPDES permit. This decision was made based on data gathering challenges, but future updates may include adding collection systems to the dashboard. To learn more on how the New Jersey water sector is organized see “Understanding How Water Sector is Organized” in the document library tab.

### **I have a question about the information depicted on Jersey WaterCheck. Who should I contact?**

Please use the feedback form to send in your question and we will get back to you quickly.

### **How were the metrics for Jersey WaterCheck selected?**

Jersey WaterCheck metrics reflect the Jersey Water Works goals and subgoals, availability of relevant information, and a priority-setting process designed to limit the number of metrics. The metrics currently seen in Jersey WaterCheck were selected by a data advisory committee of Jersey Water Works representing utility, academia, and industry experience. A coalition of drinking water and wastewater utilities was engaged to provide feedback on metric descriptors and user testing. To learn more about the process, go to the “About Page.”

### **How is information organized on Jersey WaterCheck?**

- Metrics are organized by the four Jersey Water Works goals that can be seen in JWW Shared Goals page and in the Benchmark Hub page.



- Metrics are also organized by five “communication categories” displayed on cards seen on each individual system page.

### Where can I find more information about how Jersey WaterCheck got the information for each metric on Jersey WaterCheck?

Jersey WaterCheck has information from three sources: publicly available governmental sources, utility websites, and self reported survey information. Metric descriptions under each metric provide information on the source of information. The document library has more detailed information on general terms, metrics, and how information was gathered for every metric. Every system with information on Jersey WaterCheck was sent a file with their information to review and provide feedback.

### How frequently is information updated on Jersey WaterCheck, and what changes can I expect in the coming years?

**Jersey WaterCheck does not update information on a real time basis.** *The focus is on trend analysis rather than on the current state.* Updates happen on an annual basis and to reflect corrections provided by utilities. Metric descriptions include links to the [New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection \(NJDEP\) Drinking Water Watch](#) to get more real time information on your drinking water system. New metrics will be added based on a collaborative process engaging the data advisory committee members and as they align with Jersey Water Works goals. User interface updates will be based on feedback received as more users experience Jersey WaterCheck.

### How can I use information from Jersey WaterCheck as a community member?

Jersey WaterCheck is your connection to learn more about your drinking water and wastewater system and get connected with them. For example, you can look up your drinking water system’s Consumer Confidence Report or learn about how our state is resolving the lead in drinking water problem.

### Can I compare one system to another using Jersey WaterCheck?

When viewing your drinking water or wastewater system’s information, it is important keep the following in mind: drinking water and wastewater systems are unique and complex. Characteristics like source water (e.g., groundwater, surface water), system age and



condition, types of customer, whether a sophisticated treatment plant is part of the system, governing structures and complexities related to regulatory requirements mean there is more nuance behind understanding a system's set of information. Use caution before making any comparisons.

### **What years do the data and information address in Jersey WaterCheck?**

For most of the metrics, 2019 is the most recent year for which information is available on Jersey WaterCheck. Drinking water and sewer system costs were developed using 2020 rate schedules. For a very small group of metrics, you can see historical data going back to 2015.

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## **About Information Related to My System**

### **If my system was shown to be not in compliance during a given year, should I be worried? How can I find out more information?**

*Jersey WaterCheck does not provide current information.* Metric descriptions explain this. Your system might have already resolved any compliance or violation issue. For drinking water systems, Jersey WaterCheck provides links to the [New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's \(NJDEP\) Drinking Water Watch](#) for more current information. Please see the relevant consumer confidence report in the individual system page and connect with your system to learn more.

### **Where can I find more information on my drinking water system or wastewater system?**

Jersey WaterCheck website provides you links to your drinking water system and wastewater system. Additional information on your systems can be found by going to their websites and to [NJDEP's Drinking Water Watch](#) and [NJDEP's Data Miner](#).



### **Something is wrong with my water. What should I do?**

Contact your local drinking water utility to find out more. Jersey WaterCheck provides you with their website links so you can contact them directly.

### **I have a complaint about my water or wastewater system. Can I report it to Jersey WaterCheck?**

No. Jersey WaterCheck is a website that collects information from multiple sources. Your drinking water and wastewater systems have contact information on how to report concerns.

### **Why is my town and/or my drinking water or wastewater system not on Jersey WaterCheck?**

Your town may not be served by a public community water system or your water or wastewater system is very small in size. Jersey WaterCheck includes information on 388 drinking water systems and 155 wastewater systems. These systems serve more than 96% of the people with drinking water and wastewater service in New Jersey. Systems that are very small in size are not included due to data gathering challenges. Wastewater systems that are only collection systems, and do not have a NJPDES permit, are not included. Drinking water systems that do not serve a year-round population of at least 25 customers are not included. Jersey WaterCheck also does not include information on private wells or any water systems that are small enough to fall outside of state and federal regulation.

### **How can I find out who serves my town?**

On the home page there is a “system finder” button. This search feature allows you to search by “municipality served” which will pull up all systems that serve those municipalities.

### **What do I do if I’m concerned about my water or sewer utility? How can I learn more?**

Drinking water and wastewater systems are working every day to provide us with safe drinking water and protect our waterways from pollution. Find your utility’s web link on Jersey WaterCheck and connect with them to learn more about the work they do.

## Understanding Your System Response for Select Jersey WaterCheck Metrics

Metric	What does it really mean? (Note: Some of this information is a repeat of content in the metric description)
<p>Percentage of treated drinking water sent out for distribution that is not billed to customers</p>	<p>Once water is treated, it is sent out to be distributed to customers. But not all of the water that is treated and sent out to be distributed will eventually be read by a customer’s water meter. There are a variety of reasons why water may not be billed: water given for free to local governments such as for firefighting, water used for flushing mains, water theft, water lost through leaks, etc. Seismic activity, cold/hot cycles, and impacts of other activities or utilities near the pipe can all cause pipe leaks and breaks. Information from this metric can help educate your community about opportunities to reduce water loss and increase efficiency.</p>
<p>Monthly residential cost/price of drinking water</p>	<p>This metric gives you an <b>estimate</b> of the monthly cost of drinking water services for a household using 45,000 gallons of drinking water annually. It is calculated based on a research study "A New Jersey Affordability Methodology and Assessment for Water and Sewer Utility Costs" (Van Abs, 2021). The study assumes that the customers use the same amount of water each month and that the water rates (amount charged for water) do not change during the year. It can help convey how the cost of tap water compares to that of bottled water, which is often more expensive and contributes to pollution.</p> <p>To make tap water potable and deliver it reliably, your drinking water system’s rate structure needs to ensure there is enough revenue to meet all its needs. These needs include pumping, treating, distributing, operating, and maintaining the system to meet all state and federal regulations. In general, systems that rely on groundwater or that are relatively new will have lower costs than those that rely on surface water (requiring more treatment) or that are older. Low rates do not necessarily mean that the water system is better managed than a system with high rates. Drinking water systems need revenues to upgrade and maintain pipes and treatment plants to keep them running as efficiently and reliably as possible, to comply with government regulations, and to meet customers’ expectations. It is important to understand this when looking at an individual system response and making any comparisons with other systems and/or personal utility bills. Your system should regularly update its rate schedule (i.e., how it charges for services) to reflect the true cost of providing that service.</p>

<p>Monthly residential cost/price of sewer services</p>	<p>This metric helps give you an <b>estimate</b> of the monthly cost of sewer services for a household using 45,000 gallons of drinking water annually. It is calculated based on a research study "A New Jersey Affordability Methodology and Assessment for Water and Sewer Utility Costs" (Van Abs, 2021). The study assumes that the customers use the same amount of water each month and that the rates (amount charged for the service) do not change during the year. It can help convey how your system's rate structure ensures that it has enough revenue to operate in a financially sound manner and meet current and future needs. Low rates do not necessarily mean that the system is better managed than a system with high rates, since your sewer service system's rate structure must meet the goals of safe, dependable service to comply with government regulations, and to meet customers' expectations. Factors such as the necessary wastewater treatment levels, system size, system age, and mix of customers all affect rates. It's important to understand this when looking at individual system responses and making any comparisons to other systems and/or your own utility bill. Your system should regularly update how it charges for service to reflect the true cost of providing that service.</p>
<p>Percentage of households in the service area that may struggle to pay water and sewer utility bills</p>	<p>This metric shows the percentage of households in your system's service area that may have difficulty paying water and/or sewer bills in the absence of subsidies. It is calculated based on a research study "A New Jersey Affordability Methodology and Assessment for Water and Sewer Utility Costs" (Van Abs, et al., 2021). Information in this metric can help communities to identify opportunities to provide assistance to low-income customers.</p>
<p>Complied with primary drinking water standards that protect against harmful bacteria</p>	<p>Bacteria is present in all water, but that does not necessarily mean water is unsafe to drink. Only certain bacteria cause disease. This metric shows how well your system is meeting regulatory requirements to ensure water is potable and bacteria does not exceed a set regulatory limit. All systems must test throughout the year to ensure they are within regulatory limits. In Jersey WaterCheck, a "YES" response indicates that there was neither a major monitoring violation nor an exceedance of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for E. coli. A "NO" response indicates that the system was reported by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to have had at least one major monitoring violation and/or exceedance of the MCL for E. coli. <b>Jersey WaterCheck does not show real time information so a system with "NO" response may have already resolved this issue.</b> To learn more, please read the Consumer Confidence Report available by going to your system's page or go to <a href="#">NJDEP Drinking Water Watch</a> for updated information.</p>



<p>Complied with primary drinking water quality standards</p>	<p>All water has minerals and inorganic compounds in it. Synthetic (human-made) chemicals can be a concern in some water sources. Drinking water is treated to ensure levels of contaminants meet regulatory requirements (called “Maximum Contaminant Levels” or MCLs) so that they have minimal potential to cause harm. All systems must test throughout the year to ensure they are within regulatory limits. In Jersey WaterCheck, a “YES” response indicates that reported data for the system in the past year showed no exceedance to this regulatory requirement. A “NO” response indicates that reported data for the system may have had at least one instance of exceedance of an MCL. <b>Jersey WaterCheck cannot show real time information so a system with “NO” response may have already resolved this issue.</b> To learn more please read the Consumer Confidence Report available by going to your system’s page or go to <a href="#">NJDEP Drinking Water Watch</a> for additional details that this dashboard does not provide.</p>
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