

RUSS--Common Questions

Unincorporated LEE COUNTY

Regional Utility Service Systems

WHAT is Regional Utility Service Systems Commission or RUSS?

The Regional Utility Service Systems, commonly referred to as RUSS, is a 10-county entity organized under Chapter 28E of the Iowa Code which permits state and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their powers by enabling them to provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to co-operate in other ways of mutual advantage.

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/IACODE/2003/28E/>

WHO makes up the Regional Utility Service Systems or RUSS?

Participating counties in RUSS consists of Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Mahaska, Van Buren, Wapello, and Washington. A county supervisor from each participating county serves on the RUSS board. Service on the RUSS board is part of the day to day responsibilities of the County Supervisors; therefore they receive no additional compensation for serving on the board.

WHY was RUSS created?

RUSS was created because very small incorporated cities and unincorporated clusters of rural homes were experiencing difficulties in securing certain essential services. This is due to the inability of small communities to plan, finance, own, operate and maintain the desired improvements. The creation of this organization was through the encouragement of financing entities, regulatory agencies and regional service providers.

HOW is RUSS funded?

RUSS is funded through contributions from counties, project development costs along with operation and maintenance fees assessed to users. RUSS works diligently to leverage grants and low interest financing to provide an affordable system for all users.

QUESTION 1: WHY do we have to put in the new sewer system?

Exposure to improperly treated sewage can result in illnesses caused by bacteria or viruses. The sewage may also reach groundwater and pollute drinking water supplies. If the sewage flows into streams, it can harm fish, animals, and change the stream itself.

Based on these health, safety and environmental concerns, the State of Iowa prohibits the discharge of improperly treated sewage to any lake, stream, ditch, drainage way or artificial waterway.

<http://search.legis.state.ia.us/NXT/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm>

QUESTION 2: WILL a home owner have to pay a hook up fee?

There will be no charge to homeowners for hook-up. RUSS will incur this cost which is reflected in the sewer rates.

QUESTION 3: WHAT are the utility rates for customers of other recently built or planned wastewater systems?

Sewer rates are based on metered water usage, with a 3000 gallon base (monthly minimum). An additional charge of \$8/1000 gallons will be added for those with water usage in excess of the base 3000 gallons.

Persons with well water connections are charged the base rate plus \$10 per month.

Mt Sterling (2002)	\$29+\$8
Kinross (2003)	\$29+\$8
Martinsburg (2006)	\$34+\$8
Mt. Union (2010)	\$43+\$8

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QUESTION 4: WHAT will the monthly cost for our community be per home owner?

That will depend on the type of treatment system installed which will be based on the recommendations of the engineer in the Preliminary Engineering Report and the amount of grant and/or loan secured to pay for the system. All users will pay a monthly bill to repay the loan portion of the funding and cover present + future operation/maintenance expenses of the system.

QUESTION 5: WHAT is the home owner's monetary responsibility if their house is destroyed?

If the house gets destroyed or is deemed uninhabitable by the administrative authority, RUSS requires the homeowner to continue to pay the minimum monthly rate for five years from the date that the service started. The project cost for the community is based on an initial count of the properties within a designated area. While this house is no longer there, the cost of constructing the sewer system still exists. The 5-year minimum payment term reduces the debt of the hook-up.

QUESTION 6: IF a home owner passes away, what is the responsibility of the heirs?

The responsibility of the monthly bill will transfer to the new owner of the property. Even if the residence is unoccupied the responsibility of payment remains. The monthly minimum, or base fee, will be charged during periods of no use.

QUESTION 7: IF a sewer line breaks or is damaged, who is responsible for repairs?

If it is the line that runs from the house to the main (service line), it depends on when it happens and the cause. There is a **one year warranty** given by the contractor who installs the pipe.

After the warranty period, **the homeowner is responsible** for the maintenance of the sewer line that runs from their home to the main.

If the sewer main itself incurs damages, it is the responsibility of RUSS to make repairs.

QUESTION 8: IS RUSS a sanitary sewer district?

No. RUSS is strictly a utility service provider. RUSS is given the authority to provide sewer service by the City if serving an incorporated area or by the County if serving an unincorporated area.

QUESTION 9: Does RUSS have the ability to condemn property.

No. The City or the County is the administrative authority that has the ability to use eminent domain, not RUSS.

QUESTION 10: AM I required to hook-up to the new systems?

Iowa Law requires that when a Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) becomes available within 200 ft., the building is to be connected to the POTW. It will be up to the administrative authority, the County, if existing permitted on-site systems which are in "compliance" will be required to connect or not. Abandoned on-site systems shall have the tank pumped and filled with sand or soil.

http://www.iowadnr.gov/water/septic/files/c_hapter69.pdf

QUESTION 11: WHAT happens if I refuse to hook-up to the system?

According to the Iowa Code, the administrative authority for the system will enforce the required hook-up to a Publicly Owned Treatment Works. RUSS does not enforce the law. That is the responsibility of the City, County Health Department and/or the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

QUESTION 12: RUSS easement refusal fee?

According to RUSS Resolution 11-193, when a private easement is not granted for the public sewer system prior to construction of the system, RUSS will collect an "Easement Refusal Fee" from the owner of the property prior when the property owner does initiation a sewer utility connection at a later date. The fee shall amount to \$5/lineal foot of easement not originally granted and \$2,000 per sewer connection. This fee shall be in addition to ordinary connection fees and other associated costs with providing the utility. Existing utility customers will not have these additional costs

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added to their project costs that have already been funded.

QUESTION 13: DOES gray water and sewer water go into the septic?

Most homeowners do not route gray water into their septic tanks, but the law now requires that "gray" water must be directed to the treatment system. For those properties hooking up to the new system, their gray water will go into the system.

QUESTION 14: DOES gray water and sewer water go into the sewer line?

Yes. RUSS will pay for the connection of one suitable service line located near the foundation of the property being serviced. Both the gray water and the sewer water will go into the system.

QUESTION 15: Is it possible the monthly sewer rate will fluctuate in the future?

RUSS is a public body that intends to retire debt, cover maintenance, operation and administration costs and not make a profit. As treatment, operation and maintenance requirements change, the rates will likely change accordingly. It is the intent of RUSS to provide a reliable, affordable service for the communities and rural areas which it serves.

QUESTION 16: What if someone decides to build a new house on a vacant lot within the designated area that is sewerred? Will the proposed system be able to support additional hook-ups?

The collection system has additional capacity. Additional treatment capacity will only be able to be determined once the actual use is established.

HOW DO I REACH RUSS?

RUSS can be reached in the following ways:

- RUSS--641.209.1011
- Geode RC&D, Inc.--319.752.6395
- www.russonline.org
- Email: russ@lisco.com

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