

Frequently Asked Questions About Drain Special Assessments

Q. What is a Drain Special Assessment?

County Drainage Districts are separate public corporations with their own financial records. Each drainage district is supported by a drain special assessment that covers the cost of maintaining the drainage system. County Drains are not maintained by Oceana County general fund taxes.

Q. What is a Drainage District?

A drainage district is a legally established area of land that drains to a common outlet. Drainage district boundaries are determined by the natural topography of the land and rarely correspond to political boundaries such as Townships or Counties. Common words for drainage district include “watershed” and “drainage basin”.

Q. Where is the Storm Drain for which I am being assessed?

The Oceana County Drain Commissioner’s office has maps and aerial photos that can show the location of your property and the county drain within the drainage district. Even if your property is not adjacent to the county drain, stormwater may flow toward and into the county drain.

Q. Why did I receive more than one special assessment Notice?

Each notice informs you of a drain special assessment for a different drainage district. Your property can be in multiple drainage districts because stormwater moves from smaller watershed through larger watershed, ultimately discharging to the Great Lakes. For example if your property were located in a small water shed that is “nested” inside a larger watershed, you could receive an assessment for each district should they both be assessed in the same year.

Q. Is this the only way I would receive multiple drain assessments in one year?

No. Depending on the topography of your property, water may flow in more than one direction and portions of your property may be in different drainage districts. Drain assessments are only levied when costs are incurred to a specific drainage district.

Q. How are assessments determined?

The law requires that assessments be based on benefit derived as determined by the Drain Commissioner. All properties with the drainage district are assessed based on size of the parcel, type of land use and other factors.

Q. Do all property owners pay drain assessments?

No. Only if you are within a drainage district. All property owners within a drainage district receive an assessment, unless specifically exempted by law. In addition, cities, villages, townships, railroads, Oceana County, and MDOT may also receive an assessment for a portion of the maintenance costs if applicable. The Drain Code does not exempt most non-profit or religious properties from assessment.

Q. I recently purchased my property. Why am I being billed for work done prior to my ownership?

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Although the work for which you are being assessed may have been completed prior to your purchase of the land, the Drain Code requires that assessments be levied to the property, and assessed to the current owner of record. In most cases, the work performed will benefit the property for years to come.

Q. What if I cannot attend the day of review?

If you are unable to attend the Day of Review of apportionments and have questions regarding your assessment or the assessment process, please call the Drain Commissioner's Office. It is possible to make an appointment at times other than the Day of Review of apportionments, although the appeal period begins after the date of the Day of Review of apportionments.

Q. What if I disagree with the proposed apportionment for my property?

Appeal of apportionments may be made to the Oceana County Probate Court within 10 days after the Day of Review.