



## WHAT'S AN EDU?

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What's an EDU? It stands for equivalent dwelling unit, but what is it? The basic textbook definition is the unit of measure by which sewer services are charged for a single-family residence. Simple, right? But what is a single-family residence? The basic, legal definition is a residential dwelling, intended to be occupied by one (1) family, and containing one (1) kitchen. So, armed with these definitions, you now have all the information you need to develop your EDU schedule, right?

First, let's take an overly simplistic look at this. Using those guidelines, any house occupied by a single family, regardless of size, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms or number of occupants, is charged 1 EDU as long as it has only 1 kitchen. That's fair, right? So, a house with 6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 7 occupants and 1 kitchen pay the same as a house with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 4 occupants and 1 kitchen. I don't see any problems there, do you?

That was an overly simplistic look at how EDUs are assessed and billed, but, unfortunately, in many instances, this is exactly how they are assessed and billed. There has to be a better, fairer way to assess EDUs. Many municipalities use water consumption, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms or a combination of these to develop an EDU schedule. The Town of Hague was one such municipality that had the one house, one EDU schedule. The Town had completed a Wastewater Infrastructure Sustainability Management Plan, and part of that plan called for reviewing their current EDU schedule. A subcommittee of the sustainability committee was formed to review the EDU schedule and address the inequities of the schedule.

The first thing the subcommittee did was to define what an EDU was. The subcommittee explored using the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, square footage, maximum occupancy and water consumption for their schedule. After much discussion, it was decided that one EDU was going to be defined as a single-family dwelling consisting of up to three bedrooms with an estimated water consumption of 450 gallons per day.

The next step was to assign EDUs to all the properties. For residential properties, the County assessment rolls were used to determine number of bedrooms. Houses up to three bedrooms were assessed one EDU. Each additional bedroom was assessed 1/3 EDU. Using generally accepted industry estimated water consumption values, some commercial businesses such as offices or stores were assessed by gallons per day, per square foot of the facility divided by

450 gallons (the estimated water consumption for a single-family residence, or one EDU). Other facilities such as restaurants, meeting halls, etc. were assessed using gallons per day per the maximum occupancy of the facility divided by 450 gallons. Hotels/motels were assessed 1/3 EDU per sleeping unit.

Once all the properties were assessed EDUs, a rate per EDU was established. The subcommittee recommended keeping the old rate in place for the first year. The new EDU schedule was presented to the Town Board and public comments were solicited before the Board adopted it. The Town addressed and responded to written comments and concerns regarding the new schedule. It is interesting to note that the bills for most of the properties either remained the same or decreased slightly. Most of the residents found the new rate schedule fairer and more equitable.

In this day and age of transparency, it is important to be able to explain to residents why they are being charged a specific amount. Defining what an EDU is and how it's applied to individual circumstances is vital for good public relations. If you would like to know more about updating your EDU schedule, please contact me at 518-828-3155 ext. 180 or [grimm@nyruralwater.org](mailto:grimm@nyruralwater.org). Cheers. 💧💧