

Lukins water rates to jump 36%



By Kathryn Reed

For the first time in nine years, the 953 Lukins Brothers Water District customers are about to open bills that reflect a general rate hike.

Annual water bills for the small water company that serves customers near the Y along Emerald Bay Road in South Lake Tahoe will go from \$294.84 to \$395.52. This is an increase of 36.03 percent.

Jennifer Lukins said ratepayers knew the increase would be coming because the proposal has been before the state Public Utilities Commission for a year and public meetings have been conducted, as well as letters having been sent.

Smaller cost of living increases based on the Consumer Price Index occur about every two years. The last one was Sept. 1, 2008.

The previous general rate increase was 25.46 percent in 2000. Prior to that that it was in the early 1990s that Lukins had a general rate increase.

South Tahoe Public Utility District, which encompasses most of the South Shore on the California side, has small annual rate increases. Single-family residences in that jurisdiction pay \$467.88 a year.

Lukins said the company that was started by her grandparents in the 1940s would like to have smaller, more consistent rate increases but the firm doesn't have the staff to deal with the work involved to make that happen.

The company has three full-time employees. The rate increase will allow the hiring of a part-time person to work in the field.

Lukins had wanted to increase prices by 66.7 percent, but the state PUC scaled that back.

The company plans to use the additional \$126,460 in annual revenue for operating expenses.

Lukins is still trying to obtain funding to upgrade its old and outdated infrastructure. A meeting with Lukins and city staff is expected soon so all are on the same page as to what is being done to secure state, federal and private money for that endeavor.