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## New police bills arriving this week

County » Residents, businesses in unincorporated areas face new fee.

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You have mail -- and it's going to cost you.

This week, Salt Lake County will fill the mailboxes of 40,000 homes, 111 churches, 31 fast-food restaurants and eight drugstores in unincorporated areas such as Magna and Millcreek with a new police bill.

It's the first of a three-times-a-year mailing that will cost homeowners \$174 annually and some businesses much, much more to help the county recoup millions in recession-related losses for law enforcement.

If all goes as planned, the fee will raise almost \$13 million for the Unified Police Department. The first payments are due April 1.

But the billing hasn't come without political bruises -- particularly for Mayor Peter Corroon and County Council members Jim Bradley and Michael Jensen who, as members of the law-enforcement district board, approved the fee.

Residents packed public meetings in Kearns, Magna and Millcreek last week to sound off about the fee, which also is seen as a contributing factor in Snowbird ski resort's quest to possibly break away from the county and join Sandy.

Still, the county's law-enforcement district board hasn't backed away from the fee, arguing that it appropriately charges homes, businesses and other organizations based on how much demand they place on police services.

For example, a church will pay less than a Wal-Mart Supercenter (\$1,008 a year compared with \$81,912). A car dealership will shoulder a smaller bill than a convenience store with gas pumps (\$756 compared with \$4,548).

"Fundamentally, it is a sound plan," Bradley said Monday. "At this point, we have no plans to really alter anything that we have done."

The only change has come with home-based businesses. Officials discovered that those properties were scheduled for a double bill -- one for the home and another for the business. Those residents now can expect just one bill.

The county's mailing list includes 161 auto dealerships, 26 private clubs, 10 grocery stores and one big-box lumber retailer. The county also will impose the fee on 4,575 storage units and 1,491 assisted-living and adult-treatment beds.

Rep. Wayne Harper, R-West Jordan, has sponsored legislation that would allow the county to dump the police fee and tax electricity, natural gas, cable TV and telephone bills instead -- a more traditional revenue stream afforded to cities but not to counties -- but his measure has made little progress.

That leaves residents such as Aimee McConkie, chairwoman of the Canyon Rim Community Council in Millcreek, with no alternative in sight to the police fee. She still has more questions than answers about why the county created a fee for police protection instead of sticking with a more conventional tax. She also wonders why her community council wasn't included in the decision-making process.

"The county has asked us for input on monster homes, chicken ordinances and other planning and development proposals," she said. "But there was no conversation with the community councils at all about this fee."

While unincorporated areas will pay more for law enforcement, it's not because the price of policing has gone up. The Unified Police Department is expected to

cost the county about 6 percent less than last year's Sheriff's Office model.

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Who will get the bill?

Here's a sampling of the homes, businesses and organizations that will be getting a bill this week for police protection in unincorporated areas:

40,000 » Single-family households

161 » Auto dealerships

111 » Churches

36 » Convenience stores

26 » Private clubs

16 » Nonprofits

10 » Grocery stores

8 » drug stores

1 » big-box lumber store

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