



CITY OF INGLEWOOD



Finance Department
One Manchester Blvd., 1st Floor, Inglewood Ca 90301 - (310) 412-5500 - Fax (310) 330-5735

POLICY FOR THE DISCONTINUATION OF RESIDENTIAL WATER SERVICE FOR NONPAYMENT OF BILLS

Purpose

To update the City's policy for discontinuing residential water service for nonpayment of bills to be in compliance with changes in State law.

Background

The City's current Water System Rules and Regulations was adopted in 1973 (Rules and Regulations). The Rules and Regulations include procedures for discontinuing water service for customers for non-payment of bills. Since then, the State has adopted various laws governing the discontinuance of water service for residential customers. To be in compliance with State law, the City is adopting this Policy for the Discontinuance of Residential Water Service For Nonpayment of Bills (Policy). To the extent this Policy conflicts with the Rules and Regulations, this Policy shall control only as to the matters set forth herein, and does not replace or supersede any other portion of the Rules and Regulations.

This Policy will be made available to the public on the City's website for the Public Works Department, Divisions, in Water Works section. The Policy, and any written notice to discontinue residential water service for non-payment of bills, shall be available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean and any other language spoken by at least 10 percent of the people residing in the service area.

The City can be contacted by phone at (310) 412-5500 to discuss water service bills and options for averting interruption of water services for nonpayment under the terms of this policy.

The City shall report the number of annual discontinuations for residential water service on its website and to the State Water Resources Control Board.

Discontinuance of Service

The City shall not discontinue water service for residential customers for nonpayment until a payment has been past due for at least 60 days from the due date. Water service shall not be disconnected on any Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or at any time



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during which the business offices of the Finance Department responsible for water service is not open to the public.

Written Notice to Customer

The City shall provide written notice by mail at least seven (7) business days before discontinuing water service for nonpayment of bills. The written notice shall be mailed to the following people:

1. The customer of record; and
2. If the customer's mailing address is different than the residential service address, the written notice shall also be mailed to "Occupant" at the residential service address.

The City assumes no responsibility for contact information that has not been kept up to date by the customer.

Content of Written Notice

The written notice shall contain the following information:

1. The customer's name and address.
2. The amount of the delinquency.
3. The date by which payment or arrangement for payment is required in order to avoid discontinuation of residential service.
4. A description of the process to apply for an extension of time to pay the delinquent charges.
5. A description of the procedure to petition for bill review and appeal.
6. A description of the procedure by which the customer may request a deferred, reduced, or alternative payment schedule, including an amortization of the delinquent residential service charges, consistent with this Policy.
7. The City phone number and web link to this Policy.

Undeliverable Notice

If the written notice is returned to the City as undeliverable, the City shall try to contact the customer of record, or an adult occupying the residence, by telephone (if available). If the City reaches either person, the City shall offer to provide a copy of this Policy in writing and offer to discuss options to avert discontinuation of water service for nonpayment, including, but not limited to, alternative payment schedules, deferred payments, minimum payments, procedures for requesting amortization of the unpaid balance, and petition for bill review.



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If the City is unable to reach the customer of record or an adult occupying the residence by mail or telephone, the City shall make a good faith effort to visit the residence and leave, or post in a conspicuous place, a notice of imminent discontinuation of service and a copy of this Policy.

Written Notice to Residential Tenants/Occupants in an Individually Metered Residence

If the City furnishes individually metered water services to residential occupants of a detached single-family dwelling, multiunit residential structure, mobile home park, or permanent residential structure in a labor camp, and the customer of record is the owner, manager, or operator of the residence, the City shall make a good faith effort to inform the residential occupants, by written notice, when the account is past due and that services will be shut off due to nonpayment.

The written notice shall be mailed, or posted in a conspicuous location at the residence, at least 7 days prior to the termination and inform the residential occupants that they have the right to become the customer of record for billing of water service without being required to pay the delinquent amount owed by the landlord. Any residential occupant who wishes to become the customer of record must meet the requirements of the City for being a customer.

Written Notice to Residential Tenants/Occupants in Master Meter Residence

If the City furnishes water services to residential occupants of a multiunit residential structure, mobile home park, or permanent residential structure in a labor camp, through a master meter, and the customer of record is the owner, manager, or operator of the residence, the City shall make a good faith effort to inform the residential occupants, by written notice, when the account is past due and that services will be shut off due to nonpayment. The written notice shall inform residential occupants that they have the right to become utility customers who will then be billed for the service, without being required to pay the amount due on the delinquent account. The notice shall specify what residential occupants are required to do in order to prevent the termination of, or to reestablish service; the estimated monthly cost of service; the title, address, and telephone number of a City representative who can assist with continuing water service; and the address and telephone number of a qualified legal services project as defined in Section 6213 of the Business and Professions Code which has been recommended by the Los Angeles County Bar Association.

The written notice shall be posted on the door of each residential unit at least 15 days prior to the termination. If it is not reasonable or practicable to post the notice on the door of each residential unit, the City shall post two copies of the notice in each accessible common area and at each point of access to the structure or structures.



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Any residential occupant who wishes to become the customer of record must meet the requirements of the City for being a customer.

Who needs a security deposit?

All applicants are required a deposit to establish or reestablish an account. The deposit is twice the estimated average monthly bill. In no event shall the deposit exceed the amount authorized by Public Utilities Code section 10009.6(c).

Disputed Bills

When a customer calls the Customer Service Department (310) 412-5500 and asks for an explanation of a billing, City's Customer Service Representative will endeavor to answer the customer's questions immediately. In some cases, research is required to answer the customer's questions. Customer Service will endeavor to answer all questions about billing in a timely manner. If it is impossible to obtain an answer within that time period, the customer will be notified of the delay and the reason for the delay and will be provided with a reasonable estimate of when to expect resolution of their question. The customer service staff will make certain there were no errors in the billing.

If, after this review, the customer still believes the bill is wrong, or would like to dispute the bill, they may take the bill to the Appeals Committee as stated in the Water System Rules and Regulation, Rule 8C subpart 3.

Water services shall not be discontinued while the appeal is pending.

Returned Checks

When a customer writes a check to pay a utility account and the check is subsequently not honored by the bank, the customer's account will be assessed a returned check fee.

When a customer writes a check to reestablish utility service which had been discontinued for non-payment, and the bank subsequently does not honor the check, the customer's utility account will be assessed a returned check fee and service can immediately be discontinued without additional notice.

Extension of Payment of Bill:

The customer may request an arrangement to pay the utility bill. The customer of record may apply for one of the options listed below.



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1. The customer of record may apply for an extension to pay the amount of the bill. The extension may be granted for 180 days.
2. If additional time is needed to pay the amount of the bill, the customer of record may apply for an alternative payment arrangement as described below.

Alternative Payment Arrangements:

Any customer who is unable to pay for water service by the 60th day after the bill is issued, may request an alternative payment arrangement to avoid interruption of service. In compliance with SB 998, the City will consider all circumstances surrounding the request and make a determination as to whether the payment arrangement is warranted.

a. Certification by Primary Care Provider

Certification by a Primary Care Provider (General Practitioner, Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Pediatrician, Family Practice Physician, Primary Care Clinic, Hospital, or Outpatient Clinic) who certifies that the disruption of service will be life threatening or pose a serious threat to the health and safety of any resident of the premises where water service is provided will obligate the City to enter an amortized repayment plan.

b. Financially Unable to Pay

The customer demonstrates that he or she is financially unable to pay for residential service within the water system's normal billing cycle. The customer or any member of customers household, must be a current recipient of CalWORKs, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or the customer declares that the household's annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

c. Alternate Payment Schedule

The customer is willing to enter into an alternative payment schedule for payment arrangements. Payment arrangements that extend into the next billing period are considered an amortization plan, which must be in writing and signed by the customer. An amortization plan will amortize the unpaid balance over a 12 month period from the



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date of the approved payment plan. The amortized payments will be due on a monthly basis. The customer must comply with the terms of the amortization plan and remain current as charges accrue in each subsequent billing period. The customer may not request further amortization of any subsequent unpaid charges while paying delinquent charges pursuant to an amortization plan. Failure to comply with the terms of an amortization plan will result in the issuance of a written interruption notice.

The City may shut off water service after posting a final written notice of intent to disconnect service in a prominent and conspicuous location at the residential property at least five business days before the disconnect date if either: (1) the customer fails to comply with an amortization agreement, an alternative payment schedule, or a deferral or reduction in payment plan for delinquent charges (collectively "repayment plans") for 60 days or more; or (2) fails to pay current service charges for 60 days or more, while undertaking any repayment plan.

Vital Service

The City shall not discontinue water service for non-payment if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The customer, or a tenant of the customer, submits a certification from a primary care provider that discontinuation of water service will be life threatening, or pose a serious threat to the health and safety of, a resident of the premises where water service is provided; and
2. The customer demonstrates that he or she is financially unable to pay for residential water service within the City's normal billing cycle. The customer shall be deemed unable to pay within the City's normal billing cycle if any member of the customer's household is a current recipient of CalWORKs, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or the customer declares that the household's annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level; and
3. The customer is willing to enter into an amortization agreement, alternative payment schedule, or a plan for deferred or reduced payment with respect to all delinquent charges.

The City has the option of offering one or more of the above repayment options. The Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer may make an exception to the payment requirement listed above for Vital Service. The exception must be communicated in writing and include the length of time approved for the exception.



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Late Fee

Per Resolution 92-94, a late payment penalty of up to 1 ½ per cent per month for the late payment of charge for the utility users whose billing becomes delinquent thirty (30) days after initial billing and is greater than \$250.00.

For customers who demonstrate to the City that their household income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty line, the City shall waive interest charges on delinquent bills once every 12 months. A customer is deemed to qualify for this exemption if any member of the household is a current recipient of CalWORKS, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or the customer declares that the household’s annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Restoration of Service.

To have your service restored, the City will endeavor to reconnect service as soon as practicable but, at a minimum, will restore service before the end of the next regular working day following payment due.

In order to obtain restoration service discontinued under provisions of section 9B of the Water System Rules and Regulations, the consumer shall pay a charge of \$20.00 per day, with a maximum of \$40.00 for the expense of turning on the service. The maximum charge shall not exceed the actual cost of reconnection.