

City of Hartford Utility Collection Policy and Procedure

Section 1: Utility Billing and Services

1.1 Due Dates and Penalties

1.1.1 Utility bills are due by the 10th of every month. If the 10th falls on a weekend, customers have until the following Monday to make payment without penalty. Penalties will be added on the next business day.

1.1.2 After the 10th, a 10% penalty will be applied to any outstanding balance from the current bill, capped at \$20.00.

1.1.3 Penalties, up to \$20.00, will be carried over to the next month without disconnection of water services.

1.2 Payment Deadlines and Disconnections

1.2.1 Bills must be paid before the 25th of the month.

1.2.2 Payments placed in the night deposit box on the 24th will be accepted on the 25th without additional fees.

1.2.3 If the 25th falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or a holiday when the office is closed, customers have until the following business day to pay without penalty. Disconnections will take place on the next business day, still allowing customers until 8:00 am to make payment without disconnection or fees.

1.3 Disconnection for Non-Payment and Fees

1.3.1 Upon the first occurrence of non-payment, water service will be disconnected and a \$50.00 fee will be applied.

1.3.2 Subsequent non-payment incidents within the next three (3) years from the date of disconnect will result in a \$100.00 fee. If the customer goes three years and a day past the last disconnection for non-payment, the next disconnection fee for non-payment reverts to \$50.00.

1.3.3 Disconnect notices are not sent, but a courtesy reminder will be sent via Reach Alert.

1.3.4 A one-time courtesy will be extended to customers with a history of timely payments within the past three-year period, waiving the first offense \$50.00 fee and adding a pop-up message to their account for documentation once the bill is paid. Any subsequent non-payments, though, will be subject to the multiple offenses fees if they occur within three years of the disconnect date.

1.4 Meter Readings and Billing Cycles

1.4.1 Meters are read around the 10th of every month, and bills are printed the day after cutoff.

1.4.2 New account start dates determine the billing cycle. If an account is started after meter readings are entered but before billing, the first meter reading will be on the following 10th. If started after billing, the first

meter reading will be the following month.

1.5 Water Meter Disconnection/Reconnection Fees

1.5.1 Customers who request water meter disconnection and reconnection will be charged a \$25.00 fee for each action, totaling \$50.00, collected at the time of reconnection.

1.6 Utility Services Offered, Trash Pickup, Large Item Disposal

1.6.1 The City of Hartford utility bills consist of water, sewer, and garbage disposal (as applicable).

1.6.2 All trash must be set out before 6:00am on the designated collection date. The minimum residential trash fee is currently \$12 a month for a single 90-gallon container. The minimum commercial trash fee is currently \$14 a month for a single 90-gallon container. Additional containers may be added for an additional \$5.00 each.

1.6.3 All trash must be properly bagged and consist of only household trash. No hazardous materials, tires, or chemicals are accepted. All trash must be securely tied and placed in a trash can or tote with a lid or otherwise secured to keep out vermin.

1.6.4 Trash that is not properly bagged and secured is not eligible for pickup. No boxes, drums, or barrels may be used as regular trash collection containers.

1.6.5 Customers may call City Hall to schedule a pickup for large items. One large item is \$15.00. Loads that fit in a standard pickup truck cost \$25.00 each.

1.6.6 Any large pickup orders must be scheduled with City Hall and placed out with trash on the scheduled day in the normal designated pickup spot.

1.6.7 No televisions, electronics, tires, oil paint, anything with freon compressors, or hazardous materials are accepted.

Section 2: Returned Check/ACH Procedure

2.1 Pre-Cutoff Date Return Check/ACH Procedure

2.1.1 The City will attempt to make one phone call to the customer to inform them of the returned check/ACH. If they do not answer, a message will be left, if applicable.

2.1.2 All returned checks/ACH incur a \$50.00 returned check fee.

2.1.3 The customer will pay the returned check fee and make another payment in full for the utility bill before 8:00 am on the 25th or their water will be disconnected.

2.1.4 If a check/ACH is returned on a customer three times, then only credit cards, cash, or money orders will be accepted as payment from that point forward.

2.2 Post-Cutoff Date Return Check/ACH Procedure

2.2.1 If a check is returned after the 25th (cutoff date), the City will attempt to make a phone call to inform the customer of the returned check/ACH. If the customer does not answer, a voicemail is left, if applicable.

2.2.2 All returned checks incur a \$50.00 returned check fee.

2.2.3 The customer shall have three business days to pay the balance in full, plus the returned check fee. If all fees not paid in full after three days, water will be disconnected.

2.2.4 Before water is reconnected, the customer must pay the full balance owed, including the returned check fee and any applicable Disconnection/Reconnection Fees as set out in in Section 1.3.

2.2.5 If a check is returned on a customer three times, then only credit cards, cash, or money orders will be accepted as payment from that point forward.

Section 3: Billing Notices and Communication

3.1 Billing Notices

3.1.1 No late notices will be sent.

3.1.2 Customers are encouraged to rely on the bill's disconnection date for timely payments. Typically, all cutoff dates occur on the 25th of the month.

3.2 Courtesy Communication

3.2.1 The billing policy will be updated to reflect the use of various communication methods, including phone calls and text messages, to contact customers if time allows.

3.2.2 The City may utilize the Reach Alert system (or similar system) for communication with customers who have signed up for notifications.

3.2.3 It is the customer's responsibility to make sure a valid phone number or communication method is on file.

Section 4: Billing Adjustments and Account Management

4.1 Contracts

4.1.1 Customers are allowed up to three (3) repayment contracts per calendar year for outstanding balances owed.

4.1.2 If a customer is in default of a contract, then the contract becomes void and all amounts owed are accelerated and immediately payable. If not paid in full by the 25th (cutoff date), then services will be disconnected.

4.1.3 If a customer is in default of a contract they will not be eligible for another contract until all amounts are paid and at least one (1) year from the date of default has passed. If a customer voids a contract, the customer will not be eligible for another contract for at least one year.

4.2 Inactive Accounts and Deposit Application

4.2.1 After 60 days of non-payment, the customer's deposit will be applied and the account will be closed.

4.2.2 To restore their account and services once an account is closed for non-payment, customers will have to deposit a new security deposit and pay all outstanding charges.

4.2.3 A customer may make a request to have their accounts suspended temporarily in the event of extended travel, construction, etc. Any and all outstanding bills and fees must be paid before service is turned back on.

4.3 Adjustment Policy Revision

4.3.1 Customers are currently allowed two adjustments per calendar year for leaks or pool fill-ups. The customer must provide notice before the next read date, which occurs around the 10th of the month.

4.3.2 Any additional adjustments must be for good cause and are subject to approval from the Mayor. All adjustments will be documented in the customer's account.

4.3.3 Any adjustments will only be for water usage, not sewer use or sewer surcharge. To calculate an adjustment, the last six (6) months' bills will be used to determine the average water usage.

Section 5: Water Leaks, Tampering, and Meter Issues

5.1 Tampering Fees

5.1.1 Any customer who attempts to tamper, alter, manipulate, repair, obstruct, or otherwise interfere with the city's water meters, erts, meter well, or service lines will be charged a tampering fee of \$100.00, and may be subject to criminal investigation.

5.1.2 Any damages to a meter, ert, meter well, or city lines will be assessed by the City's Water Department Supervisor and the customer will be billed for the costs of all such repairs, including materials and costs.

5.1.3 If all amounts owed for repairs and the tampering fee are not paid in full by the 25th, together with other outstanding utility charges, then services will be disconnected.

5.2 Water Leaks

5.2.1 If a customer discovers a water leak, they should immediately notify the City. If it is after hours, the customer needs to contact Ohio County Dispatch through the non-emergency number. All new services since August 1, 2023 have an inline shut off valve for the customer that they are allowed to operate and turn off water in the event of a leak, but the customer will be responsible for all costs and fees if any damages occur.

5.2.2 In the event of a customer water leak, the City will make arrangements to investigate and evaluate to

determine if the leak is on the City or on the homeowner so the leak can be repaired as soon as possible. Customers shall take all reasonable precautions to mitigate leaks on their side of the meter until the water is turned off by a city personnel to the best of their knowledge and ability.

5.3 Meter Replacement Policy

5.3.1 The city will replace malfunctioning meters from meters on hand. If a meter needs to be replaced and none are in stock, one will be ordered.

5.3.2 If a customer requests a meter to be replaced, then after a meter is replaced, the removed meter will undergo an accuracy test.

5.3.3 If the accuracy test confirms the meter is properly functioning, the resident will be responsible for paying the test fee along with the cost of the meter and labor, including benefits.

5.4 Meter Reading Issues

5.4.1 When a meter does not read usage properly or provides a zero reading, then for accounts with consistent zero readings, customers will be charged the minimum bill.

5.4.2 For accounts with erratic or zero readings but have a history of usage, customers will be charged based on their average usage before the meter issue occurred.

Adopted at City Council Meeting held September 28, 2023. These policies and procedures are subject to change as approved by the Hartford City Council. All applicable ordinances and laws, as may be amended, remain in effect.

NOTICE TO ALL WATER AND SEWER CUSTOMERS:

The City of Hartford has easements for all utility lines serviced by the city to a property. Any interference with access to service lines, pumps, or meters, may result in legal action to obtain timely access. Reasonable notice to customers will be provided, to the best of the City's ability, but all customers should keep access open and freely accessible to the City's employees and agents.

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