

City of Healdsburg Utility Billing Policies

The policy, passed by City Council on January 21, 2020, is available on the City's Internet Web site www.cityofhealdsburg.org in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Tagalog. For questions regarding this policy, please call the Utility Billing Customer Service line @ 707-431-3307.

1. Disconnection for Nonpayment of Electric Service:

- a. Electric service shall not be discontinued before the past due balance has been delinquent for at least 30 days.
 - i. Seven (7) or more business days prior to disconnection of residential electric service for non-payment, the City has contacted the account holder by telephone or written notice.

2. Disconnection for Nonpayment of Water Service:

- a. Non-Residential water service shall not be disconnected before the past due balance has been delinquent for at least 30 days.
 - i. Seven (7) or more business days prior to disconnection of water service, the City has contacted the account holder by telephone or written notice.
- b. Residential water service shall not be discontinued before the past due balance has been delinquent for at least 60 days (per Senate Bill No. 998).
 - i. Seven (7) or more business days prior to disconnection of water service, the City has contacted the account holder and occupant (per Senate Bill No. 998) by telephone or written notice.

3. Residential Health & Safety Disconnection Exceptions:

- a. Service shall NOT be discontinued for nonpayment if ALL the following conditions are met:
 - i. A customer submits a certification from a primary care provider that discontinuation of residential service will be life threatening to or poses a serious threat to the health and safety of, a resident of the premises where residential service is provided, and
 - ii. The customer demonstrates they are financially unable to pay for the service within the City's normal billing cycle by completing City of Healdsburg C.A.R.E application and demonstrating the household's annual income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level, and
 - iii. The customer is willing to enter into an amortization agreement or a plan for deferred payment, with respect to all delinquent charges.
- b. If ALL conditions above are met, the City shall offer the customer one of the following options:
 - i. Amortization of the past due balance.
 - ii. Temporary deferral of the past due balance.

- c. Residential service may be disconnected five (5) or more days after the City posts a final notice of intent to disconnect service in a prominent and conspicuous location at the property, under either of the following circumstances:
 - i. The customer fails to comply with the amortization agreement or plan for deferred payment for the delinquent charges.
 - ii. While undertaking the amortization agreement or deferred payment, the customer does not pay their current residential service charges per to the standard disconnection schedule (Section 1.a.i and Section 2.b.i).

4. Notifications of Imminent Disconnect:

- a. If a utility customer is contacted via written notice, the notice will be sent to the customer mailing address on record. If residential customer's mailing address for water service is not the address of service, the notice will also be sent to "occupant" at the service address (per Senate Bill No. 998). The notice will include the following:
 - i. The customer's name and address.
 - ii. The amount of the delinquency.
 - iii. The date by which payment or arrangement for payment is required in order to avoid discontinuation of service.
 - iv. A description of the process to apply for an extension of time to pay the delinquent charges.
 - v. A description of the procedure to petition for a bill review and appeal.
 - vi. A description of the procedure by which the customer may request a deferred payment schedule or an amortization of the delinquent charges.
- b. If a utility customer is contacted via telephone, the customer will be offered a copy of the disconnection policy, and
 - i. Provided options available to avert disconnection, including deferred payment of the past due amount, amortization of the past due balance, or petition for bill review and appeal.
- c. If the City is unable to reach the customer via phone and the written notice is returned through the mail as undeliverable, the City shall make a good faith effort to place a written notice at the service location.
- d. Customers 62 years or older, who are dependent adults as defined by the Welfare & Institutions Code, may request a third party notification service whereby the City will attempt to notify a person delegated by the customer to receive notification when the customer's account is past due and subject to termination. The written consent requires the third party's approval and the third party is not obligated to pay overdue charges, nor shall it prevent or delay termination of service.
- e. Residential service may be disconnected five (5) or more days after the City posts a final notice of intent to disconnect service in a prominent and conspicuous location at the property, under either of the following circumstances:
 - i. The customer fails to comply with the amortization agreement or plan for deferred payment for the delinquent charges.

- ii. While undertaking the amortization agreement or deferred payment, the customer does not pay their current residential service charges per the standard disconnection schedule (Section 1.a.i and Section 2.b.i).
- 5. **Upon disconnection of utility service**, the customer's entire account balance, including a reconnection service fee and deposit payment in an amount sufficient to restore or augment a deposit to current requirements, must be paid prior to reconnection of service.
 - a. Reconnection Fees (per Senate Bill No. 998):
 - i. During City business office operating hours, a reconnection service fee is \$50.00,
 - ii. During non-operating hours, a reconnection of service fee is \$150.00,
 - iii. The fee will not exceed the actual cost of reconnection and will be subject to an annual adjustment for changes in the Consumer Price Index beginning January 1, 2021 (per Senate Bill No. 998).
 - b. Disconnections for nonpayment will not occur on any Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday or at any time during which the City business offices are not open to the public.

6. Appeal Process:

- a. Utility customers have 25 days from receipt of the bill to initiate an appeal.
- b. If the customer believes they have been billed incorrectly, an appeal can be filed by sending the bill and a statement supporting the claim to:
 - The City of Healdsburg
 - Attention: Administrative Services Director
 - 401 Grove Street
 - Healdsburg, CA 95448
- c. Services shall not be disconnected while an appeal is pending.

7. Deposits:

- a. Initial deposits will be required for all customers, residential and non-residential for each customer account.
 - i. The account applicant may substitute the deposit payment with 1) a letter from the account applicant's prior utility evidencing their credit worthiness, or 2) a written guarantee for the amount of the deposit from an in-City property owner with a City utility account in good standing.
 - ii. In the event a customer relocates within the City, the deposit requirement will be waived if their pending closed account shows no delinquencies within the last six (6) months.
 - iii. Deposit payments will be credited to a customer's account, or the guarantee released, following the account being maintained in good standing for twelve (12) consecutive monthly billings.

8. Late fees:

- a. A monthly late fee will be assessed on all accounts with balances not paid by the due date.
- b. Late fees are listed separately on billing statements.
- c. Upon request, late fees shall be waived on a delinquent account once every twelve months.

9. Leak Adjustments:

- a. The City will make a reasonable effort to contact customers of potential leaks when:
 - i. Usage is excessive compared to normal usage for the same period in the prior year, and
 - ii. visual evidence indicates there may be a leak.
- b. Customers can request, and may be eligible, for a leak adjustment on water and sewer bills for up to two (2) billing periods based on the usage difference during the leak period and the same period the prior year.
- c. To request an adjustment, a letter of request must be submitted to the City within 6 months of the impacted billing period, by the account holder, with a written description of the nature of the leak and proof of repair.
- d. Adjustments are limited to one instance per calendar year.