

POLICY/PROCEDURE

SUBJECT	ISSUANCE	
DISCONTINUATION OF RESIDENTIAL WATER SERVICES FOR NON-PAYMENT	ORIGINAL DATE 07/15/2024	EFFECTIVE 07/15/2024
	CURRENT DATE 07/15/2024	EFFECTIVE 07/15/2024
CATEGORY	POLICY NO.	SUPERSEDES
PUBLIC WORKS	PW-07152024	N/A

MANAGEMENT POLICY/PROCEDURES

SECTION I. PURPOSE

In compliance with the Water Shutoff Protection Act (Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 116900 – 116926) and City of San Fernando Municipal Code Sections 94-151 through 94-164 of Division I, Chapter 94 (Utilities), Article III (Water), the City hereby adopts a written policy containing certain procedures before the discontinuation of residential water service for nonpayment. In addition, residential water service must be delinquent for at least sixty (60) days before the account is eligible for disconnection.

SECTION II. POLICY STATEMENT

If a residential water service account is delinquent for sixty (60) days or more, the City will discontinue water service after complying with the Water Shutoff Protection Act, as applicable. This policy will serve as a guide to inform City customers on options to bring delinquent accounts current and avoid discontinuation of residential water service for nonpayment. To the extent that this Policy conflicts with any other City rules, regulations, or policies, this Policy shall prevail. This policy does not apply to any accounts for non-residential service.

SECTION III. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A customer may request an extension on the payment of their account only after a disconnection notice has been delivered. The City may grant an extension, in its sole discretion. Any such extension may not exceed thirty (30) days after the final due date on the disconnection notice. Only one such extension or waiver shall be granted in a calendar year, except in hardship situations as determined by the Administrative Services Director, who shall maintain a record of reasons for granting the extension. Late fines and penalties will not be waived as a result of an approved extension. Accounts with four or more bills outstanding will not be granted an extension.

A customer may also request an installment payment plan after a disconnection notice has been delivered. To avoid undue hardship to the customer, the City may grant an installment payment plan, in its sole discretion. Any such payment plan shall provide for full payment of past-due amounts within a period no longer than twelve (12) months. The written agreement shall be for a period not to extend beyond twelve (12) months; provided, however, that the Administrative Services Director, in his or her reasonable discretion, may apply a term of longer than twelve (12) months to avoid undue hardship on the consumer.

The City may discontinue water service if a customer who has been granted an extension or payment plan under this Section 3 fails to pay by the extended due date or a due date under the payment plan.

SECTION IV. SPECIAL MEDICAL AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH SERVICES WILL NOT BE DISCONTINUED

Conditions

The City will not discontinue water service if all of the following three (3) conditions are met:

1. The customer, or tenant of the customer, submits to the City the certification of a licensed primary care provider that discontinuation of water service will be life threatening to, or pose a serious threat to the health and safety of, a resident of the premises where residential service is provided.
2. The customer is unable to pay for residential service within the City's normal billing cycle. The customer is deemed financially unable to pay during the normal billing cycle if any member of the customer's household is a current recipient of CalWORKs, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, California SSI/SSP or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and children, or The customer declares under penalty of perjury that the household's income is less than two hundred percent (200%) of the federal poverty level. A certification form will be provided for the customer to make the declaration.
3. The customer is willing to enter into a written agreement with the City regarding an extension or other payment plan for delinquent charges. The City will select terms and conditions of the payment plan that will be set forth in a written agreement. The written agreement shall be for a period not to extend beyond twelve (12) months; provided, however, that the Administrative Services Director, in his or her reasonable discretion, may apply a term of longer than twelve (12) months to avoid undue hardship on the consumer.

Customer Demonstration, and the City Review, of Qualifications

The customer is responsible for demonstrating that the qualifications in Section 4.A above have been met. Upon receipt of documentation from the customer, the City will review the documentation within seven (7) calendar days and either: (a) notify the customer of the terms and conditions selected by the City and require the customer's signature on the payment plan agreement; (b) request additional information from the customer; or (c) notify the customer they do not meet the qualifications.

Failure to Comply

The City may discontinue water service if a customer who has been granted a payment arrangement under this Section 4 fails to do either the following for sixty (60) days or more: (i) pay any amount due under the payment plan; or (ii) pay their current charges for water service while the payment plan is in effect. The City will post a final notice to discontinue service in a prominent and conspicuous location at the service address at least seven (7) business days before discontinuation of service. The final notice will not entitle the customer to any investigation or review by the City under Section 5.

PROCEDURE TO CONTEST OR DISPUTE A BILL***Procedures to Contest or Dispute a Bill***

Whenever the accuracy of a bill for water service is questioned, the customer of record may initiate a written dispute or request an investigation regarding the amount of the bill within ten (10) days of receiving the disputed bill. The written dispute must include supporting information or evidence. The Public Works Department will review all timely disputes or requests for an investigation. The review will include consideration of whether the customer may receive an installment payment plan for the unpaid balance. Water service will not be discontinued for nonpayment while the investigation dispute is pending, or during an appeal. The City, in its sole discretion, may review untimely disputes or requests for investigation, but such disputes or requests are not be subject to appeal.

Appeal to the Administrative Services Department

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Public Works Department, he or she may file a written appeal with the Administrative Services Department within ten (10) days of the Public Works Department decision. After submission of the appeal, the Administrative Services Director shall reply in writing within ten (10) days to the complainant regarding the appeal. If the customer is not satisfied with the City's written reply, he or she then has ten (10) days from the date of such written reply to appeal the reply by requesting a conference with the City. The conference shall be set as expeditiously as possible, and the complainant shall receive written notice of the time and place of the conference. After the conference, the City shall report within ten (10) days in writing to the complainant regarding their decision.

SECTION VI. CITY CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions or assistance regarding water bills, including options to avoid discontinuation of service for nonpayment, the City's Water Customer Service staff can be reached during normal business hours at (818) 898-1245. Normal business hours are Monday through Thursday, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., with closures/amended hours for observed holidays.