

**CITY OF VINITA
VINITA UTILITIES AUTHORITY
BILLING AND SERVICE INFORMATION**

This Policy Summary is established to inform our customers of the required terms and conditions of receiving utility services from the Vinita Utilities Authority and City of Vinita. Utilities include water, sewer and garbage collection.

PURPOSE:

To establish a method for obtaining payment from customers of the Vinita Utilities Authority.

To assess penalties and/or fees to defray costs of preparation and mailing of delinquent notices, shut-off notices, service disconnections and resumptions.

UTILITY DEPOSIT:

Each customer is required to put up a deposit of \$100.00 for each meter when making application for utility service. When applying for utility service and an outstanding bill from a previous address exists, the entire amount of the delinquent account must be paid before new service will be provided.

The deposit will be applied to the customer's final utility bill. It is the responsibility of the customer to notify the Vinita Utilities Authority when service is no longer desired. The customer is responsible for the utility bill until such notice is given, regardless of whether or not the customer continues to occupy the premises.

BILLING:

Bills will be mailed to customers as early as the 22nd but no later than the last day of each month. Bills are for utility services used by the customer in the previous month.

If the bill is not paid in full by 4:30 p.m. on the 10th of the month, a 5% penalty is added to the customer's account balance. If the 10th falls on a weekend or holiday, the penalty will not be assessed until 4:30 p.m. on the first working day following the weekend or holiday.

A notice is mailed to customers whose account balance is more than \$25.00 on the day after penalties are assessed, informing customers that their account balance is due by the 20th of the month and that if not paid in full, their service may be subject to disconnection. If the 20th falls on a weekend or city observed holiday, payment will be accepted without disruption in service until 4:30 p.m. on the next regular working day.

If a customer feels there is an error on the utility bill, or otherwise questions or disputes the amount of the bill, the customer should discuss the situation with one of the Customer Service Representatives. If the customer is still not satisfied, he/she may discuss the situation with the City Clerk. If the City Clerk cannot provide the customer with satisfaction, the issue will be referred to the Water/Sewer Committee.

The Vinita Utilities Authority is not responsible for lost bills.

PAYMENT AGREEMENTS TO EXTEND PAYMENT:

The disconnect notice also advises of the option of payment arrangements which must be made in person at the Water Department in City Hall. The agreement allows the customer to postpone payment until the last working day of the month, at which time the full amount, including the penalty, is due.

Payment agreements are limited to one every six months, and must be made by 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of each month. If the 20th falls on a weekend or city observed holiday, payment agreements will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on the next regular working day.

Letters of guarantee from state agencies, tribal authorities, or any other entity, do not constitute payment, but will keep services from being disconnected. Letters of intent must be presented by fax, mail or in person to the Water Department at City Hall no later than 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of each month to prevent disruption in service.

RETURNED CHECK POLICY:

If a customer's check is returned to us from the financial institution due to insufficient funds, attempt will be made to contact the customer to allow him/her to take care of the issue with the bank so that we do not have to pick up the check. If we do pick up the check, the customer will be charged a \$25.00 returned check fee and will be required to pay by cash, cashier's check, or money order.

Customers who have paid by check with insufficient funds in their financial institution will not be allowed to pay by check for a one year period, or longer if circumstances warrant.

If the customer has been notified of a pending disconnection and the financial institution returns the check due to insufficient funds, service will be disconnected upon notification from the bank of insufficient funds.

DISCONNECTION FOR NONPAYMENT:

Shut-off notices are prepared for those accounts which meet the criteria. This notice will indicate to the customer that a default fee of \$50.00 has been added to their account balance, which must be paid in full prior to service reconnection. The notice will also notify the customer whose deposit is less than \$100.00 of an increase in the deposit. The second time the customer service is disconnected for failure to pay, an additional meter deposit of \$100.00 will be assessed. (See Fees). These notices will be placed as a door hanger at the location of disconnection.

The night drop box will be checked at 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of the month. Payments may not be placed in the night drop box after 4:30 p.m. on the 20th and all day on the day of shut-offs. If payment in full has been received, the customer's name will be removed from the disconnect list before given to the utility serviceman. After 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of the month, full payment of the past due balance, default fee, and updated deposit must be made, even if the customer comes in to pay before the service has been disconnected.

If the 20th falls on a weekend or city observed holiday, payment will be accepted without disruption in service until 4:30 p.m. on the next regular working day.

The serviceman is required only to turn off the water, place the door hanger on the door, and place a lock on the meter. He is not required to contact the customer, and is not authorized to accept payment.

RECONNECTION OF SERVICE:

After a customer's water has been shut off, payment in full is required before service can be re-established. Payment must be made in cash, money order, cashier's check, or by credit card and must be brought in person to the Water Department at City Hall.

Once payment is received, an appointment will be made for water to be turned on. At the time scheduled for turn on, a person over the age of 18 must be present at the residence. Contact will be made with the customer at the time the serviceman turns on the water. If the customer is not present at the scheduled time, the serviceman will not turn on the water, and the customer must call City Hall and reschedule.

FEES:

1. The meter deposit fee to establish a new account is \$100.00.
2. Those customers whose meter deposit is less than \$100.00 will be assessed a fee to increase the deposit to \$100.00 at the time they are served their first shut-off notice. (Example: If a customer's original deposit was \$50.00, he/she will be charged an additional \$50.00 which will be credited to their deposit.) The second time the customer service is disconnected for failure to pay, an additional meter deposit of \$100.00 will be collected before service is restored.
3. A penalty of 5% of the unpaid balance will be added to the customer's account at 4:30 p.m. the tenth of each month.
4. A default fee of \$50.00 will be added to each account not paid in full by 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of the month.
5. Landlords, who have a floating deposit, who desire water service in order to clean the premises will be charged \$10.00, plus \$7.50 weekly, if they use less than 2,000 gallons of water.
6. A \$20.00 fee will be charged for real estate agents or inspections to turn the water off and back on. No deposit is required for this service.
7. The fee for turning the water off and back on will be waived for installation of a shut-off valve between the meter and the house. (Items 5, 6, and 7 were approved by the VUA 3-6-07.)

TAMPERING WITH PUBLIC UTILITY:

It is unlawful for customers to turn their water off and on. This act is referred to as "tampering". Only authorized city personnel and licensed plumbers are allowed to turn water off and on. "TAMPER" shall include, but not be limited to, attaching any pipe, wire or other conduit or thing onto any utility or to turn on or off any such service, or break or deface. Upon any act of tampering, the person shall be required, as a condition to continue service, to deposit \$100.00, in addition to the water meter deposit. Upon a 2nd occurrence, the deposit shall be forfeited to the city and service terminated after notice, unless the city council shall otherwise determine.

In cases of emergency, the customer is allowed to turn their water off/on. Emergency is defined as a water leak in the customer's water line of significant magnitude to cause damage to property. If damage is caused to the city's water system because the customer has turned their water off/on, the customer is responsible for cost to repair the damage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Customers must allow access to the water meter and city water lines at all times, and should not park vehicles or place any item over a water meter. Driving over a water meter can cause damage to the meter and/or meter components, for which the customer will be billed. If a customer has a dog, the dog must be kept in an area to allow city or utilities authority personnel access to the meter or city water lines.

No service will be shut off on Fridays or the day prior to a City holiday, except for failure to meet a payment agreement, to allow the customer the opportunity to pay their bill and have service reconnected in a timely manner. Every effort will be made by City employees to complete all shut-offs by noon.

A \$25.00 fee will be added to a customer's account when they transfer service from one address to another. The account balance must be current prior to transfer of service.

The polycart (garbage can) placed at a residence is owned by the City of Vinita. At the time of application for service, customers are informed of the day trash will be picked up. It is the customer's responsibility to place the polycart at the curb or street, and return the polycart to a location away from the curb or street following pickup.

Adopted by Vinita Utilities Authority on August 7, 2012
Revised: April 16, 2013
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Reviewed: by City Clerk on March 01, 2017