



CITY OF HEMET ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES: WATER DISCONNECTION POLICY FOR RESIDENTIAL UTILITY ACCOUNTS

Subject:

This policy informs the City of Hemet utility customers about their rights and obligations concerning their utility accounts. This policy will address disconnection of water for nonpayment, how to avoid a water shutoff, how to appeal bills, how to request payment arrangements, customers rights, shutoff fees and how to be an income-qualified customer.

Purpose:

This policy complies with SB998 and the City of Hemet (City) Ordinance. This policy is meant to inform our customers how our billing and collection process works, how to avoid water disconnection for nonpayment and how to appeal a bill. It explains how income-qualified customers with medical needs can avoid interruption of service.

Billing Process:

The City of Hemet sends utility bills on a monthly basis. Per Municipal Code 1984 – 14205 Sec. 82-77, utility bills are due and payable upon mailing bills to the property owner or agent and shall be delinquent 15 days thereafter.

Collection Process:

Per SB998, residential accounts shall be delinquent 60 days before account is disconnected for nonpayment and shall receive a shut off notice at least 7 days prior to interruption of service.

Per SB998, the shut off notice will include the due date, past due amount, the City's contact phone number and information on avoiding interruption of service.

If the mailing address and the service address are not the same, the City will mail a subsequent notice to the "Occupant" to inform resident of a possible interruption of service. The notice will include, account holder's name, delinquent amount, due date and information to avoid interruption of service.

If the City is not able to contact customer or the shut off notice is returned undeliverable, the City will place a pink tag to inform the resident of the delinquent amount, due date and information to avoid interruption of service.

The City will mail a shut off notice to customers 15 business days prior to interruption of service, 7 days more than required by SB998. The customer will incur a \$31 fee when the shut off notice is created and the fee will be due along with their past due balance. If customer fails to pay or is unable to make a payment arrangement by the due date, the services will be interrupted without further notice.

Appeal Process:

The customer or an adult resident has the right to appeal a bill and the City will not disconnect service until the appeal process is complete.

Customer may appeal the bill in writing within 15 days of the bill date. The City will review and decide the outcome of the appeal and will notify customer within 3 business days from receiving the request.

Income-Qualified Customers with Medical Needs:

The City will not disconnect the water if all of the following conditions are met:

- Customer or tenant of customer submits a certification from their primary care provider that states that having the water shut off is life threatening to, or poses a serious threat to the health and safety of the resident.
- Customer provides proof that he or she is income-qualified.
- Customer is willing to enter into a payment agreement.

Payment Arrangements/Extensions:

Customers may request a payment arrangement or a payment extension if he/she is an income-qualified customer with medical needs. If customer does not meet these two requirements, they can request one payment extension per year.

If the customer agrees to a payment arrangement/extension, the City will offer an option that helps the customer pay off their balance and keep the services on. The arrangement will require the customer to pay the arrangement and their future bills on time to avoid interruption of service.

If the customer fails to pay the arrangement as agreed, the City will post a shut off notice 5 days prior to interruption of services and will include a \$31 shut off notice fee.

If customer fails to pay future bills, the customer will have 60 days to pay before services are disconnected for nonpayment.

Reconnection fees:

City of Hemet shall charge \$73.00 reconnection fee during regular business hours and \$125 for a reconnection during non-regular business hours. The City of Hemet shall be limited to charging \$50 reconnection fee during regular business hours to customers that are low income. The City can adjust these fees per the Consumer Price Index effective 1/1/2021.

Income-Qualified:

A customer is Income-Qualified if they are low income and bring documents showing he/she or a member of their household is recipient of: CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

Occupants:

City of Hemet shall inform occupants of a multi-unit residential structure 15 days prior to a water shutoff. The customer will incur a \$31 fee for notifying the first 3 occupants and then \$7 for notifying

any additional occupant. Occupants will be informed of their right to be account holders. All occupants need to agree to becoming the account holder without being required to pay the owner's delinquent balance. In order to have the owner's delinquent balance waived, the occupant who becomes the account holder needs to provide proof that the delinquent balance belongs to the landlord, manager or agent of dwelling.

Reports:

City of Hemet will report and update the number of disconnects for the year. This amount will be available on the City website and will be updated weekly.

The City of Hemet website will report all residential disconnections and will have a copy of this policy.

Please contact 951-765-2350 for questions about this policy.