

POLICY FOR DISCONTINUATION OF RESIDENTIAL WATER SERVICE DUE TO NONPAYMENT

This policy can be found online at:
www.toaks.org/departments/finance/water-wastewater-billing

For information regarding City of Thousand Oaks utility accounts, payment options, or for questions regarding this policy, please contact:

CITY OF THOUSAND OAKS FINANCE (805) 449-2201

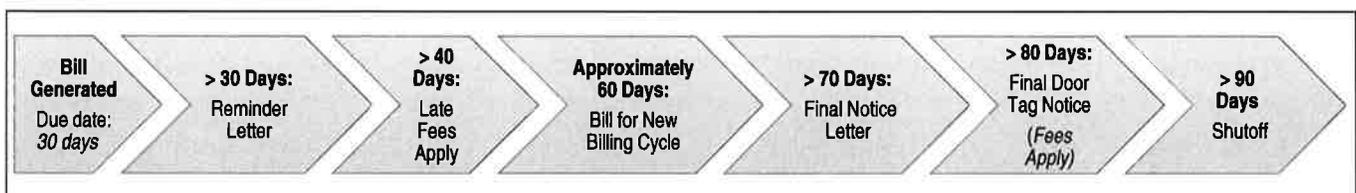
Excluding holidays, staff is available during City Hall hours:
Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST
Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST. City Hall is closed alternate Fridays

1. Purpose:

To provide clarification and identify steps taken by the Finance Department's billing personnel in responding to delinquencies and any other situations which could lead to shutoff due to nonpayment for City of Thousand Oaks residential water utility service customers. The term, "residential" shall mean water service to a residential connection that includes single-family residences, multifamily residences, mobile homes; including, but not limited to, mobile homes in mobile home parks, or farmworker housing.

2. Timeline:

The City of Thousand Oaks utilizes bi-monthly billing for residential water utility service. Days shall be defined as calendar days. An at-a-glance timeline for residential utility billing and the actions for nonpayment are shown below:



3. Billing & Due Dates:

- a) City utility bills are payable upon receipt. Bills for service are rendered at approximately sixty (60) day intervals. For questions about bills, or to discuss options for averting discontinuation of water service for nonpayment under the terms of this policy, please call City of Thousand Oaks Finance Customer Service at (805) 449-2201.
- b) All water bills with the exception of those covered under "Miscellaneous Uses" shall become due and payable upon presentation. Such bills shall be delinquent and subject to penalty charges in an amount set by Council action if not paid in full on or before forty (40) days after the billing date. Reminder letters shall be mailed to

customers whose bills have not been paid within thirty (30) days to advise them that unless the outstanding bill is paid on or before an additional ten (10) days, the customer's account shall be subject to penalties to be assessed and subject to discontinuance of service if not paid in full within sixty (60) calendar days from the due date printed on the front of the bill. Payments shall be to the City of Thousand Oaks Finance Department and may not be given to or received by the field personnel.

4. **Delinquent Accounts:**

Delinquent accounts are defined as an account that remains unpaid (and without having made payment arrangements or established an alternative payment schedule) if payment has not been received by the City of Thousand Oaks within thirty (30) days of the billing date printed on the front of the bill, by close of business. Water service becomes subject to shutoff if not paid in full within sixty (60) calendar days of the due date printed on the front of the bill, by close of business.

5. **Late Charges (Fees):**

A charge of 10% of the overdue balance will be assessed for charges not paid within forty (40) days of the billing date printed on the front of the bill. An additional late payment charge of one-half of one percent (0.5%) of the unpaid service charge and basic late payment charge shall be charged to the account each month, or fraction thereof, that the service charge and basic late charge of the previous month remains unpaid.

6. **Waiver of Late Fee:**

At the request of the customer, the City shall waive the water late fee if the customer has not received late fee waivers for delinquent payment in the preceding 12 months.

7. **Additional Notification (Reminder Letter):**

Upon an account becoming delinquent, as a courtesy, the City will make a reasonable, good faith effort to notify customers that the account remains past due and further collection action shall be forthcoming approximately 60 days after bill due date. The means of notification shall be via USPS mail. The City assumes no responsibility for contact information that has not been kept up-to-date by the customer.

8. **Written Disconnection Notice (Final Notice Letter):**

The City shall not discontinue water service for non-payment until the customer has been delinquent for at least 60 days. Any residential customer with a bill that is 40 days or more delinquent shall be sent a notice stating that amounts not paid within 60 days of the due date shall constitute cause to discontinue water service, and all past due balances shall be paid before the service is restored. The final disconnection notice shall be mailed to the mailing address designated on the account. If the mailing address and the property to which water service is provided are different, a second final notice shall be mailed to the service address and addressed to "occupant". A written disconnection notice shall include:

Discontinuation of Residential Water Service

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- a) Customer's name and address
- b) Amount past due
- c) Date by which payment or payment arrangements are required to avoid discontinuation of service
- d) Description of the process to apply for an extension of time to pay and/or payment plan
- e) Description of the process to dispute or appeal a bill
- f) City phone number

If the written disconnection notice is returned through the mail as undeliverable, the City shall make a reasonable, good faith effort to contact the customer by phone. The City may give verbal notice by telephone or in-person in emergency or otherwise time-sensitive situations.

9. Written Disconnection Notice (Final Door Tag):

Any residential customer with a bill that is 50 days or more delinquent shall receive a written reminder, via door tag hanger at the property location, indicating that amounts not paid within 60 days of the due date shall constitute cause to discontinue water service, and all past due balances shall be paid before the service is restored. A charge of \$35 will be assessed for Final Door Tag Notices.

10. Payment Deadlines:

All delinquent water service charges and associated fees shall be received by the City by 5:00 p.m. PST on the day specified in the written disconnection notice.

11. Deferred Payment Schedules (Payment Extension)

Any customer who is unable to pay for water service within the normal payment period may request a payment extension to avoid disruption of service. An additional 2-week time extension shall be granted upon request. Late charges still apply.

12. Alternate Payment Schedule (Payment Plan):

A Customer may request to pay bill amounts by an installment payment plan. All installment payment plans shall be in writing and approved by the Revenue Operations Supervisor, or designee.

Installment payment plans on delinquent amounts shall only be available to customers meeting eligibility criteria (Item 20. Exemptions). Payment plans shall not be granted more than once in a twelve-month period and payoff of a delinquent balance shall not exceed twelve months. All future bills shall become payable when due. Failure to comply with the terms of a deferred payment schedule shall result in the issuance of a written disconnection notice. The disconnection notice shall be in the form of a door-hanger delivered to the premises no less than 5 business days in advance of discontinuance of service.

13. Underpayments:

Pursuant to the terms of this policy, any underpayment of a water bill shall be deemed as delinquent and service shall be subject to discontinuation. In all cases, underpayment or nonpayment shall be subject to late charges.

14. Returned Payments:

Upon receipt of a returned payment, the City will consider the account delinquent. The City shall make a reasonable, good faith effort to notify the customer by phone or mail. In the event of a returned payment in which the customer becomes eligible for discontinuation or service, a door-hanger indicating a 48-hour notice of termination, shall be delivered. Water service shall be discontinued if the amount of the returned payment is not paid on or before the date specified in the notice of termination. Returned payments shall be subject to a \$35 returned item fee. Any customer issuing a returned payment as payment to restore service discontinued for nonpayment shall be required to pay cash or credit card to restore service.

15. Disconnection of Water Service for Non-Payment:

The City shall disconnect water service by turning off, and in most cases locking off, the meter. If City staff has been dispatched for a disconnection, the customer may be charged a fee in the billing system regardless of whether the meter has physically been turned off. Field-personnel are not permitted to collect payment but shall instruct the customer to contact the City of Thousand Oaks Finance department at (805)449-2201.

16. Re-establishment of Service During City Hall Hours:

In order to resume or continue service that has been discontinued for non-payment, the customer shall pay all past due amounts and delinquent fees attributable to the discontinuation of service. All assessed charges must be paid before service is restored. The total fees for reconnection during City Hall hours is \$70.00. The reconnection charges include: \$35.00 to disconnect service and \$35.00 to reconnect service. Regular City Hall business hours are Monday through Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST and alternate Fridays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST Water service that is turned on by any person other than City personnel or without authorization shall be subject to fines or additional charges or fees.

17. Re-establishment of Service After Business Hours:

Service restored outside of City Hall business hours; such as alternate Fridays, weekends, or holidays shall be charged an after-hours re-establishment fee of \$105.00. After-hours personnel, responding to service request calls, are not permitted to collect payment but shall instruct the customer to contact the City of Thousand Oaks Finance Department before 12:00 p.m. PST the next business day.

18. Notice to Residential Tenants/Occupants:

At least 10 days prior to water service being discontinued, the City shall make a reasonable, good faith effort to inform occupants, by means of door tag written notice,

when the water service account is delinquent and subject to disconnection of water service. The written notice shall advise the tenant/occupant that they have the right to become customers of the City without being required to pay the amount due on the delinquent account, if they agree to the terms and conditions of service and are willing to assume financial responsibility for subsequent charges for water service at that address. In order for the amount due on the delinquent property owner, manager, landlord, or agent account to be waived for the new customer, the tenant/occupant must provide verification of tenancy.

19. Bill Reviews/Disputes/Appeals/Adjustments:

A water customer who has a complaint or question concerning their bill shall have the opportunity to review the matter with representatives of either or both the Public Works Department or the Finance Department. If a customer wishes to appeal, dispute, or request a review or adjustment of a water account, that request shall be made prior to the date subject to discontinuation of service and shall be submitted in writing, to the City's Finance Department at UtilityBill@toaks.org (email) or mailed directly to City of Thousand Oaks Finance Dept. 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd. Thousand Oaks, CA. 91362. The City shall not discontinue water service for non-payment while the adjustment request is pending.

20. Exemptions:

The City shall not discontinue residential water service for nonpayment if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The customer, or a tenant of the customer, submits to the City a certification of a primary care provider, as that term is defined in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 14088 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, that discontinuation of residential 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 water service is provided.

(2) The customer demonstrates that he or she is financially unable to pay for residential water service within the City's water system's normal billing cycle. The customer shall be deemed financially unable to pay for residential water service within the City's normal billing cycle if any member of the customer's household is a current recipient of CalWORKs, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or the customer declares that the household's annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

(3) The customer is willing to enter into an alternative payment schedule or a plan for deferred or payment, with respect to all delinquent charges.

If the conditions listed are met, the City shall offer the customer one or more of the following options:

- a) Temporary deferral of payment (See Page 3, Section 12)
- b) Participation in an alternative payment schedule (See Page 3, Section 13)

21. Emergency Water Service:

For emergencies occurring during nonbusiness hours, please call the City of Thousand Oaks' Municipal Service Center at (805) 449-2499.

22. References:

- a) Senate Bill No. 998: Discontinuation of Residential Water Service
- b) California Government Code Sections 60370-60375.5
- c) Thousand Oaks Municipal Code (TOMC) Article 9. Billing and Payment

*All rates are subject to review and changed upon action by the City Council

POLICY FOR DISCONTINUATION OF RESIDENTIAL WATER SERVICE DUE TO NONPAYMENT		City of Thousand Oaks FINANCE DEPARTMENT - PUBLIC SERVICES	
		 Jaime Boscarino, Finance Director	
			
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ⁱ Due dates for miscellaneous uses: All bills for fire hydrant service, wastewater lines flushing service, water for street washing and/or sprinkling, or water for flushing storm drains, culverts and the like, as well as any charges for City performed operations or for unauthorized use of water issued during any calendar month shall be due and payable on presentation and shall become delinquent thirty (30) days after presentation