



CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH DISCONTINUATION OF RESIDENTIAL WATER SERVICE POLICY *Effective February 1, 2020*

Adopted by Resolution 20-0009 on January 21, 2020

GENERAL POLICY:

The City of Manhattan Beach provides water and sewer service to the residents and commercial businesses within its jurisdiction. The purpose of this policy is to establish general guidelines and procedures for handling the discontinuation of water service for residential customers due to non-payment in accordance with Senate Bill 998, chaptered September 28, 2018. The provisions in this policy are not all inclusive and are used in conjunction with known best practices for municipal water service billing.

PROVISIONS:

A. Billing

- 1) The City of Manhattan Beach issues bills for water service bi-monthly. Account holders receive a bill approximately every 60 calendar days (all due dates and collection dates are as-printed and may vary slightly from 60 calendar days due to weekends and holidays).
- 2) Account holders are responsible for paying their bills on or before the printed due date.
- 3) If a bill is not received, it is the account holder's responsibility to contact the City and request a copy of the bill or use the City's website to check the balance and/or submit electronic payment.
- 4) Mailings are assumed to be delivered if they are not returned to the City by the United States Postal Service (USPS). The City is not responsible for misdirection, undelivered, or lost mail. Account holders are responsible for all billing amounts accrued under their name.

B. Appealing a Bill

- a) Whenever the accuracy of any bill for water service is questioned, the City will investigate the claim and make a determination in a timely manner. Investigation may include a "Meter Check" where a current read will be taken, and the working condition of the water meter will be noted by checking water flow and movement through the water meter.
- b) City Staff will check the meter for indication of a continuous leak and will advise the resident if the low flow indicator shows current meter movement or the leak indicator icon is present. City staff cannot determine the possibility of intermittent (off and on) leaks on older style meters if the meter is not moving at the time, but in all cases will advise the resident of possible causes of water use. City Staff cannot assist in determining specific causes that are unrelated to the equipment. The account holder is responsible for hiring a plumber or other leak detection agent to aid in defining the cause of the leak and how it should be corrected (at account holder's expense).

C. Late Payments

- 1) Payment is due by the due date listed on the bill, approximately 30 calendar days from the date the bill is printed (all due dates are as-printed and may vary slightly from 30 calendar days due to weekends and holidays).
- 2) Accounts are deemed delinquent when carrying a balance beyond the due date. Delinquency starts on the first calendar day after the billing due date.
- 3) A Late Fee equal to 5% of the current billing amount will be assessed after the account has been delinquent for 6 calendar days.
- 4) A Late Penalty Notice will be mailed to the account mailing address on file.
- 5) At the discretion of the Finance Director or his or her designee, one late penalty may be waived for every 12 bills (approximately once every 2 years).

D. Discontinuation of Service

- 1) Accounts that have been delinquent for at least 60 calendar days will be scheduled for discontinuation of water service. Accounts are deemed delinquent when carrying a balance beyond the due date. Delinquency starts on the first calendar day after the billing due date.
- 2) A Late Notice will be mailed to the service address and account mailing address on file, if different, approximately 30 calendar days after the billing date, providing the total amount due, and scheduled date of discontinuation if bill remains unpaid.
- 3) A Shut-Off Notice will be mailed approximately 7 calendar days before the scheduled discontinuation (shut-off) date. Notification will include the total amount due, including penalties and scheduled date of discontinuation.
- 4) On the scheduled date of discontinuation, Public Works will attach a door-hanger notification at the service location in order to allow the resident a final opportunity to make payment.
 - a) When a door-hanger is delivered and water service is not discontinued because of payment by the resident, a field collection fee may be assessed.
 - b) When a door-hanger is delivered and water service is (shut-off) discontinued, a turn on fee may be assessed if water service is restored during normal business hours.
 - c) When water service is restored outside of normal business hours (Weekends, Holidays, or after 4:00PM on a regular business day) an after-hours turn on fee may apply. The customer must sign an acknowledgement of their responsibility for this fee before water service will be restored.

E. Exceptions for Discontinuation of Water Service due to Non-Payment

- 1) If the account holder has submitted a request to appeal the water bill, water service shall not be discontinued while the appeal is pending
- 2) Water service shall not be discontinued if all of the following conditions are met:
 - a) The account holder submits certification of a primary care provider that discontinuation of residential service will be life threatening to, or pose a serious threat to the health and safety of, a resident on the premises where residential service is provided.
 - b) The account holder demonstrates that he or she is financially unable to pay for residential service within the normal billing cycle. The account holder shall be

deemed financially unable to pay if any member of the household is a current recipient of:

- i. CalWORKs
 - ii. CalFresh
 - iii. General assistance
 - iv. Medi-Cal
 - v. Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program
 - vi. California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- c) The account holder declares that the household's annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
 - d) The customer is willing to enter into an alternative payment arrangement.

II. ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A. Payment Plan

- 1) The City is able to offer an alternative payment arrangement upon the request of an account holder.
- 2) Payment Plans are available to account holders willing to enter into a signed agreement establishing a specific payment schedule of specific amounts
 - a) Final due dates will be set 30 calendar days after the initial shut-off date
- 3) Entering into a payment plan does not change or affect the timing of future billings.
- 4) Accounts that have been delinquent for less than 60 days and entered into a Payment Plan Agreement will not be scheduled for a discontinuation of service while the payment plan and account is active and in good standing.
- 5) Failure to abide by the terms of a payment plan or pay current charges for at least 60 days will result in discontinuation of service (Shut-off).
 - a) Notification of discontinuation of water service will be delivered at least 5 business days prior to scheduled discontinuation.

B. Payment Deferment

- 1) Account holders can request a deferment for current water service bills. Bills may be deferred for a maximum of 30 calendar days after the regularly scheduled shut-off date. Payment deferment will be granted to account holders willing to enter into a Payment Plan Agreement.