



TITLE: Water Service Disconnection for Non-Payment

NUMBER: 41

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 6, 2025

Purpose Statement

This policy outlines the procedures regarding water service disconnection for non-payment for all customers within the jurisdiction of the county waterworks districts and county service areas where public water is provided by county facilities. It is established in accordance with the Water Shutoff Protection Act (SB 998, California Health and Safety Code 116900, et seq.) and Fresno County's Ordinance Codes (Sections 14.10.010 - 14.10.080). Where this policy conflicts with any provision of County ordinance, the SB 998 standard shall control.

Policy

A. Scope

This policy applies to all residential and commercial customers within the county waterworks districts and county service areas where public water is provided by the County, including those using the water service for drinking, irrigation, sanitation, and other uses.

B. Non-Payment of Water Bills

The County's water service charges must be paid in full within the terms specified in the billing statement. Water bills shall be issued to the customer on a monthly or bimonthly basis and shall become due thirty (30) days after the date of issuance. Failure to pay the water bill in full within sixty days following the date of the invoice shall result in the bill being deemed delinquent.

Failure to pay the amount due may result in water service disconnection.

Responsible Person

Resources Division Manager

Procedures

A. Notice of Past Due Charges and Pending Shut-off

The County will take the following steps before disconnecting water service for non-payment:

1. Fifteen-Day Warning: Customers who are delinquent sixty days after the date of the invoice shall receive a fifteen-day warning notice. Failure to pay the bill within the additional fifteen days shall automatically initiate a forty-eight-hour notice. All written notices will include the following:
 - a. Customer's name and address
 - b. Amount of delinquency
 - c. Date by which payment or arrangement for payment is required to avoid disconnection of service
 - d. Process to apply for an extension of time to pay the delinquent charges

- e. Procedure to petition for bill review and appeal
 - f. Process by which customer may request a deferred payment or payment arrangement
 - g. A telephone number for a customer to contact to discuss options for averting disconnection of service for nonpayment.
2. Forty-Eight-Hour Notice: If the account remains unpaid at the end of the fifteen-day warning period, the county shall post a forty-eight-hour shut-off notice at the customer's property. Failure to pay the delinquent water charge within forty-eight hours (not including Saturday, Sunday or county holidays) after the posting of the notice shall result in disconnection of water service.

B. Prohibitions on Disconnection of Service

Disconnection of water service for non-payment is prohibited under the following circumstances:

- 1. Pending Appeal: If the customer has appealed their water bill to the County or any administrative or legal body, the County shall not disconnect water service while the appeal is under review and pending resolution.
- 2. Residential Service Protections: The County shall not discontinue residential water service if all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. Health Conditions: The customer or a tenant of the customer submits certification from a primary care provider stating that disconnection of water service would (1) be life-threatening to a resident at the property, or (2) pose a serious threat to the health and safety of any resident at the address. Certification may be provided on the provider's letterhead or on a County-supplied form and delivered by mail, e-mail, or fax.
 - b. Financial Inability: The customer demonstrates a financial inability to pay within the County's normal billing cycle. A customer shall be deemed "financially unable to pay" if any member of the household is currently receiving benefits from one or more of the following programs: CalWORKS, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, SSI/State Supplementary Payment Program, or the California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). A customer may also qualify by declaring that the household's annual income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The County shall not require documentation to verify the income declaration.
 - c. Alternative Payment Arrangements: The customer agrees to enter into an alternative payment plan consistent with County policy (see Section C below).
- 3. Tenant Option to Become Direct Customer: Where service is provided through a master meter and the landlord's account becomes delinquent, tenants will be offered the opportunity to assume responsibility for future water service to avoid disconnection.

C. Payment Arrangements

Customers who are unable to pay the full amount owed may request a payment arrangement. Upon request, the County will provide a payment plan that equally distributes the outstanding balance over a period of up to twelve (12) months, or longer if the customer demonstrates continued financial hardship. Failure to remain current on the alternative schedule for sixty (60)

days, or to miss two (2) scheduled payments, will constitute default and may result in immediate initiation of the water disconnection process described in Section D.

D. Water Service Disconnection Procedure

If payment is not made and no payment arrangement is established or a dispute is unresolved prior to the forty-eight hour notice deadline, the following steps will be taken to disconnect water service:

1. Shut-off Location: Water service will be turned off at the water meter, and a fee will be charged for the disconnection and reconnection of the service.
2. Reconnection: Water service will be restored only upon payment of the overdue balance and reconnection fee, or upon verification of an approved payment arrangement.
3. Emergency Leak or Water Waste: Nothing in this policy limits the County's authority under Fresno County Code § 14.01.120 to shut off service immediately, without prior notice, to abate a leak or other misuse that poses an imminent threat to health, safety, or significant water waste.

E. Reconnection Process, Water service will be reinstated as soon as possible, provided that:

1. The customer has settled the full outstanding amount, including any fees associated with the shut-off and reconnection process.
 - a. Reconnection fees for residential customers who qualify under Section B.2.b. shall not exceed fifty dollars (\$50) during regular business hours or one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) after hours, or the County's actual cost, whichever is less, as adjusted annually for inflation pursuant to SB 998 § 116914(b).
2. A payment arrangement has been established.

F. Dispute Resolution

If a customer disputes water service charges or seeks to contest a disconnection notice, they may initiate a formal appeal through the County's designated procedure. The following steps outline the appeal process:

1. Initial Contact:

The customer must first contact the Water Desk by phone or in person to discuss the issue. This informal discussion allows the customer to receive clarification and potentially resolve the dispute without a formal appeal.
2. Submission of Written Appeal:

If the issue remains unresolved, the customer may submit a formal written request for an appeal. This request must include:

 - a. The customer's name and contact information
 - b. Service address
 - c. Account number
 - d. A detailed explanation of the dispute or the reason for contesting the charges or shut-off notice
 - e. Any supporting documentation
 - f. The written appeal must be submitted within ten (10) business days of the disputed charge or receipt of the shut-off notice, whichever applies.

G. Review by Special Districts Administration:

Upon receipt of the written appeal, Water Desk and Special Districts Administration will conduct

a thorough review of the account, the customer's concerns, and any relevant policies or billing history. Additional information may be requested from the customer if needed.

H. Decision and Notification:

A decision by the Director of Public Works and Planning, or his or her designee, will be rendered in writing within fifteen (15) business days of receiving all required documentation. The decision will include a summary of findings and any corrective action, if applicable.

I. Service Continuity During Dispute:

Water service will not be discontinued while a timely appeal is under review. However, if the customer fails to follow the appeal process or does not comply with an alternative payment arrangement, service may be subject to shut-off.

G. Water Desk Contact

A contact number for customers to reach the Water Desk for questions, concerns, or emergency situations regarding their water service can be found on the customer's water bill. Customers are encouraged to reach out promptly if they have any questions or need to arrange a payment plan.

H. Enforcement

This policy will be enforced consistently across all customers within the County's waterworks districts and service areas. The County will comply with all applicable state laws, including SB 998, and County Ordinance Code provisions, to ensure the proper and lawful management of water service disconnection.

I. Amendments and Updates

The County reserves the right to amend or update this policy at any time to ensure compliance with state law or to address emerging needs and challenges regarding the provision of water service. Customers will be notified of any significant policy changes as required by law.

Attachments

None