

# City of Lancaster, Ohio

**Utilities Collection Office**

**General Rules and Regulations**

**Office Hours**

**Monday through Friday (Excluding Holidays)  
7:30 a.m. to 4:25 p.m.**

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**1. APPLYING FOR SERVICE**

Any person, firm or corporation desiring utility service shall sign an application for service and pay the appropriate deposit before service will be provided. Service may be refused to any customer having a delinquent account with the City. Tenants may have service put in their name when there is a landlord /tenant dispute or when the property owner owes past due bills and can not have service in the property owner's name because of collection proceedings.

When two or more consumers are using gas and/or water from the same meter, the property owner will be required to sign for the service and be responsible for receiving and paying the bill.

a. Any person or entity, shall have the right to establish a service account to pay for future service to the premises unless:

1. The applicant is a person or an entity who has a delinquent service account for any premises in the applicant's own name; or
2. The applicant is a person or entity who has failed to cure the breach for which service was terminated; or
3. Conditions exist at the unit for which service is sought which would be grounds for termination of the service.

b. Any person or entity making application to establish a service account shall execute an application agreeing to be responsible for all charges to the premises. The City reserves the right to require an applicant to submit proof of identification.

c. No person or entity may be denied the right to establish a service account to a premises because of an outstanding obligation of some other person or entity for past service to that premises, including but not limited to the owner of

the premises to be served, the applicant's landlord, or other persons who live or may live at the premises to be served.

d. Whenever the City denies an applicant the right to establish a service account, the City shall give the applicant a written notice of the reasons for the denial, Denial of Service, and of the right of the person or entity to request a hearing, at which to contest the reasons for the denial. Thereafter, the applicant may request a hearing, and, if so requested, the City shall grant the hearing. The City in accordance with the customer's hearing rights shall conduct any such hearing.

## **2. DEPOSIT**

A deposit is required if the following situations apply:

- a. New customer.
- b. Service disconnected for unpaid bills.
- c. Continuation of service after filing bankruptcy.

A new customer is one that has not had service in his or her name with the City of Lancaster in the last thirty-six months.

The deposit is due at the time service is requested or reconnected. The deposit is held for six months. At the end of six months, the deposit will be applied to the account.

If service is discontinued at the current address, the deposit will be transferred to the new account or applied toward the final bill.

On a final bill, any remaining deposit in excess of any indebtedness will be refunded to the customer. If a government program paid the deposit, the excess of any indebtedness will be refunded to the government program.

Residential Deposit

Gas	\$75.00
Water	\$50.00
Sewer	\$50.00
Sanitation	\$50.00
All service	\$100.00

Commercial Deposit

Any or all service	\$150.00
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Industrial Deposit

Any or all service	\$150.00
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\*\* Reconnection Deposit

All Class	\$150.00
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Bankruptcy Deposit

All Class	\$150.00
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**\*\* Personal checks not accepted for Reconnection Deposit**

**3. SERVICE CHARGE**

The City will assess a charge for the following:

Account Set-Up	\$5.00
Returned Check	\$25.00
Trip Charge	\$20.00

Account set-up charge is a non-refundable fee that covers initial administrative start-up costs and is assessed when service is started or transferred.

Returned check charge is a non-refundable fee that covers administrative costs when a check is returned to our office for non-sufficient funds, stopped payment or account closed.

Trip charge is a non-refundable fee that covers administrative and labor cost to **turn on or off service.**

#### **4. BILLING**

a. The City shall at least monthly render a bill for the actual amount shown by the meter reading to be due, except estimated bills may be rendered if access to a customer's meter was unobtainable for a timely reading. The monthly bill shall also include non-metered charges for sanitation, landfill, storm water, and wellhead.

b. Each gas and/or water service account bill shall represent gas and/or water used as determined by an actual meter reading or an estimated reading based upon previously used gas and/or water at the same premises, or a minimum service charge. Estimated readings shall be noted as such on the bill. Bills for each service account shall be mailed to the customer on a monthly basis.

c. Bills shall be due in full by the due date on the bill. If bill is not paid in full by the due date a late fee of 5% of the current charges will be charged to the service account. If the bill for service remains unpaid after the due date this constitutes a past due balance. Final Notices Before Termination for non-payment shall either be issued via regular mail or may be displayed on your current bill. Gas and/or water service shall not be restored until all service charges and deposits are paid in full. A Notice of Termination of Utility Service shall be left at the premises if the service is terminated.

#### **5. FINAL BILLS**

Customers must provide to the City an address to which the City may mail a final service bill, and must specify a final date, which is at least 1 working day after the date on which the customer notified the City of his desire to have the service finalized. The City shall read the gas and/or water meter and finalize the service as near as possible to the requested final date. A final bill shall be prepared, mailed and become due 15 days after the final bill date.

**6. PAYMENTS**

a. All payments to the City shall be in currency, by check, money order or credit card. All checks will be accepted subject to collection at the bank. In the event a check is not honored by the bank and is returned for refund, the account to which payment has been credited will be charged a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) service charge.

b. If a check has been received by the City that is returned by the bank as a dishonored check, upon notification to the payor (contacted by hand delivered notice) of the return of the dishonored check, the payor shall make restitution on the dishonored check as soon as possible (within 10 days) in cash, by cashier's check or money order, only. If the dishonored check was for turning service back on because of termination for non-payment, the restitution shall be made within 24 hours or the service shall be discontinued for reason of non-payment without further notice.

**7. VOUCHERS**

a. The City shall accept vouchers from social agencies. Vouchers are not credited to a service account until payment is made by the social agency. However, it is noted on the account that payment of a voucher is pending.

b. Customers will receive a receipt for a voucher. Receipt will include name of agency, voucher number, account number, date and amount of voucher.

**8. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITY**

a. The customer shall be notified that the City, upon contact by a customer whose account is delinquent or who desires to avoid a delinquency, will make extended payment arrangements appropriate for both the customer and the City. The City may require the customer to establish an inability to pay. The City may exercise discretion in the application of such plans based upon the amount of the delinquent account, the length of time that the balance has been outstanding, the

customer's recent payment history, the reasons why payment has not been made, and any other reasons why payment has not been made, and any other relevant factors concerning the circumstances of the customer including health and age. If the customer fails to propose payment terms acceptable to the City and the customer is not currently in default on a previously agreed upon extended payment plan, the City shall then advise the customer of the availability of one of the extended payment plans as set forth in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this rule. If the customer fails to propose payment terms acceptable to the City and the customer is in default on an extended payment plan other than the one set forth in paragraph (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this rule, the City shall advise the customer of the availability of those plans orally. A customer who is in default on an extended payment plan other than one set forth in paragraph (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this rule is eligible for such plans.

The City shall offer:

1. A plan that requires either six equal monthly payments on the arrearages in addition to full payment of current bills; or
2. A plan that requires three equal monthly payments on the arrearages in addition to full payment of current bills.

If a customer informs the City of a medical problem, the City shall inform the customer of the medical certification program.

b. The City shall provide an optional uniform payment plan (level billing) on an annual basis for any customer who is not in default on a previously agreed upon extended payment plan.

c. A customer's failure to make any payment provided for under paragraph (a) of this rule shall entitle the City to terminate service in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Service Termination Policy, rule VI Termination Procedures.

d. The City shall furnish upon the request of the customer entering into an extended payment plan a written, typed, printed, or computer generated copy of the plan and, if the extended payment plan was arranged by a City employee, the name of that employee.

**9. MEDICAL CERTIFICATION**

a. The City shall not disconnect Gas/Water utility service for non-payment if the disconnection of Gas/Water utility service would make operation of medically necessary life-supporting equipment impossible or impractical, if the customer enters into and makes payments in accordance with an approved Extended Payment Agreement. Proper certification by a Licensed Medical Professional and or Local Board of Health Physician is required. Medical Certificates can be mailed, delivered in person or faxed to the Utilities Collection Office at (740) 681-5040.

b. Any consumer who is a permanent resident of the premises where the service is rendered may qualify for certification.

c. A Licensed Physician or Local Board of Health Physician must certify the condition to the City.

d. The Medical Certification shall be in writing and shall include the name of the person to be certified, a statement that the person is a permanent resident of the premises in question, the name, business address, and telephone number of the certifying party, the nature of the condition, the medically necessary life-supporting equipment needed, and the period of time during which termination of Gas/Water utility service will be especially dangerous to health.

e. Initial certification by the certifying party may be by telephone if written certification is forwarded to the City within seven days.

f. For a customer subject to disconnection for non-payment, an approved medical certificate shall prohibit the disconnection for a period of thirty (30) days

and may be invoked as long as the customer has made a payment equivalent to 25% of the outstanding arrears balance within the past thirty (30) days. For a customer already disconnected for non-payment, a period of thirty (30) days may be invoked as long as the customer has made a payment equivalent to 25% of the outstanding arrears balance within the past thirty (30) days.

g. Two additional thirty (30) day medical certificates, **which cannot be utilized consecutively**, may be granted up to a limit of ninety (90) days in any given twelve (12) month period. The Superintendent or the Customer Service Manager must approve a medical certificate.

#### **10. LIMIT ON CORRECTIONS TO RESIDENTIAL UTILITY BILLINGS**

a. Whenever the City has undercharged any residential customer as the result of a meter or metering inaccuracy or other continuing problem under its control, the City may only bill the customer for the amount of the unmetered gas, water, or sewer rendered in the three hundred sixty-five days immediately prior to the date the City remedies the meter inaccuracy. The maximum portion of the undercharge for unmetered gas, water, or sewer rendered that may be recovered from the customer in any billing month shall be determined by dividing the amount of the undercharge by twelve and the quotient is the maximum portion of the undercharge that the City may, subject to division (c) of this section, recover from the customer in any billing month, in addition to either regular monthly charges of any type or regular level payment amounts billed in accordance with an agreement between the customer and the City. Subject to division (c) of this section, the time period over which the undercharge may be collected shall be twelve consecutive months.

b. The City shall not recover any interest charge, service charge, or fee, whether or not a percentage is utilized for its computation, for billings made pursuant to this section.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the customer from paying an undercharge or any portion thereof in a time shorter than that stated in this section. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the City from collecting an undercharge or any portion thereof in a time longer than that stated in this section.

d. The City may not collect any amount otherwise permitted to be collected under this section unless the City, in the first bill the purpose of which is to collect the amount for unmetered gas, water or sewer service, states the entire amount that it seeks to collect.

e. The City, in order to collect an undercharge from a customer, may not shut off the service of the customer except for safety reasons, except in the event of a request by the customer, and except to enforce a shut-off provision that is triggered by non-payment by a customer of a lawfully owing past due amount.

f. This section does not apply to any act that is a theft offense, as defined in section 2913.01 of the Revised Code, and that involves tampering with utility equipment or theft of utility service, or where a physical act of a customer or its agent causes inaccurate or no recording of the meter reading, or inaccurate or no measurement of the gas, water or sewer rendered.

## **11. SEWAGE ADJUSTMENT**

a. When a water leak occurs and does not enter the sewer system (outside faucet leak, leak in basement with no drains or crawl space) an adjustment may be given for sewer usage in excess of the normal consumption. The customer must provide a letter stating where and when the leak occurred and any documentation that supports their statement.

b. The City may conduct an investigation at the service location to determine where the leak occurred and assure the leak has been properly repaired.

c. No adjustment will be given when the leak is in a bathtub, toilet, sink or basement with drains.

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## 12. WATER AND SEWER MONTHLY CUSTOMER CHARGE

a. When water is terminated, voluntarily or involuntarily, the rate code on water and sewer will be changed to N/C (No Charge) after usage and/or monthly customer charge, up to the termination date, is billed.

b. Water service **must** be terminated at the curb. If there is more than one meter on the service line and only one curb stop, the service **must** be terminated at the meter and locked. When water is terminated voluntarily, it is the responsibility of the customer to make the meter accessible to the City.

c. If there is no lock valve on the water line before the meter, customers will continue to be charged until a lock valve is in place and locked. The lock valve must be purchased from the Division of Water and installed by a plumber. The Division of Water must inspect the valve after installation. When the valve is inspected the Division of Water will read the meter, lock the valve and notify the Utilities Collection Office.

d. Monthly meter reading will continue during the period which service is marked as terminated. Any usage on the meter during that period will be charged to the customer.

e. Customers will be charged a \$20.00 trip charge for each time the service is terminated or restored. A reading must be obtained and recorded on the work order when service is terminated and when service is restored.

f. The rate code will be changed back to regular codes once the service is restored by turning it on at the curb or removing the lock.

g. Residential customers who vacation for periods of two to six months are eligible to receive credit for water and sewer monthly charges during that period. The customer must complete and return a Vacation Form to the Utilities Collection Office prior to leaving and notify Utilities upon their return to receive credit.

Effective February 1, 2005

### **13. Sanitation Charge**

The City of Lancaster will no longer allow sanitation pickup to be temporarily suspended at an address when other utilities remain connected. This will assure the proper billing for services received and also eliminate the possibility of residents continuing to place trash out for pickup when they are not paying for the service. The only time sanitation service can be stopped is when a house is vacated and all utilities are turned off at the curb or locked at the meter when there is more than one meter on the service line.

Residential customers who vacation for periods of two to six months are eligible to receive credit for sanitation pick-up during that period. If there is water usage during that period, no credit will be given for the month there is usage. Customers must complete and return a Vacation Form to the Utilities Collection Office prior to leaving and notify Utilities upon their return to receive credit.

Effective July 29, 2004 - Rev ~~09/15/2010~~ [02/17/2011](#)