

FAQ's

The City of Lancaster provides five (5) utility services including gas, water, sewer, sanitation, and storm water within our corporation limits.

For general information, City wide, please go to www.ci.lancaster.oh.us

What to do when you **SMELL GAS?**

A natural gas odor smells like rotten eggs or oily petroleum. Should you suspect a gas leak **INSIDE THE RESIDENCE OR BUSINESS, EVACUATE** the building immediately. **DO NOT OPERATE ANY ELECTRICAL DEVICES SUCH AS LIGHT SWITCHES, DOORBELLS, OR ANSWER TELEPHONES. IF YOU ARE ON THE TELEPHONE, DO NOT HANG UP, LAY THE PHONE DOWN. DO NOT START YOUR VEHICLE OR OPERATE ANY DEVICE WITH OPEN FLAME INCLUDING CIGARETTE SMOKING. ONCE YOU ARE AT A SAFE LOCATION, CALL "911" IMMEDIATELY AND WAIT FOR THEIR ARRIVAL.**

If leak is **OUTSIDE THE RESIDENCE OR BUSINESS, WALK AWAY** from the area. Once you are at a safe location, **CALL "911"**.

Establishing Service(s)

Q - What is needed to establish service(s) in my name?

A – You will need the following:

- 1. Valid photo identification (such as a driver's license or state, college, or military identification card)*
 - 2. If renting, a copy of your lease agreement signed by both lessor and lessees, OR, if buying, a copy of your settlement statement,*
 - 3. Payment (if applicable) for deposit and service charge,*
 - 4. Payment (if applicable) for any past due balances under active and inactive accounts, AND*
 - 5. Application for Utility Service Packet signed by all lessees listed on the lease agreement.*
- Forms are available under <http://www.ci.lancaster.oh.us/641/Rules-and-Forms>.*

Q – Am I required to pay a security deposit?

A – Deposits are required for "new" customers defined as any individual that has not had service(s) in his or her name with the City of Lancaster in the last three (3) years; Service(s) terminated for unpaid bills; Customers establishing "new" service after bankruptcy (does not apply to existing service); Customers establishing service(s) with outstanding unpaid bills.

*Please note you may **NOT pay** a security deposit **via credit/debit card or e-check** as our office does NOT have the capability of processing these types of payments in our office. Recommended forms of payment are cash, check (no starter or counter checks) and money orders, however, **checks will NOT be accepted** when paying off an **outstanding balance** in order to establish service at a new location.*

Readings and Billing

Q - When will my meter be read?

A - *Monthly readings are obtained around the same time each month.*

Q - My meter is inside and I am gone during the day so how will my meter be read?

A - *If the meter reader doesn't have access to the meter, your meter will be estimated. Estimation is generally based upon what was consumed at that same service location approximately one (1) year prior although other factors may be taken into consideration. Water meters are typically inside but we are able to obtain actual readings via a small black box on the outside of the home.*

Q - When will I receive my "monthly" bill?

A - *Once readings are obtained, the bills are generated and mailed the next business day. Bills are available to view online as well. You may opt to go paperless by visiting and registering at <https://lanasteroh.authoritypay.com/>.*

(You will need your utility account number and CID number found on your most recent bill.)

Q - How do I go paperless?

A - *Register at <https://lanasteroh.authoritypay.com/>*

(You will need your utility account number and CID number found on your most recent bill.)

Q - When will my bill be due?

A - *Once your meter is read, bills are normally generated the next business day. The due date will be approximately 15 days after the bill generation date. (Your scheduled read date is determined by the section of town in which you reside.)*

Q - What happens if I don't pay my bill on or before the due date?

A - *All unpaid "current" charges from the previous month will be assessed a 5% penalty or late fee prior to the new monthly charges being applied to your account. Paying on or before the due date will avoid penalties or late fees.*

Payment Information

Q - What are my payment options?

A – Please see below:

Payment Options						
Payment Method	Forms of Payment Accepted	Contact Information	Convenience Fee	Maximum Payment Amount per Transaction	Information Required	Helpful Notes
Phone	Debit & Credit Cards	(888) 592-6221	\$3.35 <small>(Charged by third-party merchant)</small>	\$500.00	Utility Account Number and CID Number both found on bill	The suffix on the account number is not utilized (i.e. 99999-1 should be entered as 99999)
Online	Debit & Credit Cards	www.ci.lancaster.oh.us (Click on Government, Utilities Collection, View/Pay My Bill)	\$3.35 <small>(Charged by third-party merchant)</small>	\$500.00	Utility Account Number and CID Number both found on bill. Autopay available;	Account number suffix is required (i.e. 99999-1)
Customer Portal	ACH (e-checks), Debit & Credit Cards	lancasteroh.authoritypay.com	No Charge	No Limit	Registration Required, will need Utility Account number and CID Number both found on your current bill. Autopay available;	Account number suffix is required (i.e. 99999-1)
Direct Pay (Processed in-house.)	Checking or Savings Account (Automatic Deduction on Due Date)	Bank draft authorization form must be completed and signed by Accountholder. Go to http://www.ci.lancaster.oh.us/641/Rules-and-Forms	N/A	N/A	Automatically deducted on the due date each month. Copy of voided check recommended.	May take up to 30-days for processing
Drop Box	Checks, Money Orders (City not responsible for CASH payments placed in this deposit box.)	City Hall, 104 E. Main St, Lancaster, Located beside Broad Street Entrance, Beside flagpole.	N/A	N/A	Make sure Utility Account Number, Name, Service Address and Phone Number are listed with payment to assure proper credit.	Payments deposited before 7 a.m. will be posted before noon; Payments deposited after 7 a.m. will be posted NEXT BUSINESS DAY.
Mail	U.S. Postal Service	Payment should be mailed to: <i>Lancaster Utilities</i> PO Box 1099 Lancaster, OH 43130	N/A	N/A	Include remittance portion of bill with payment.	Allow 10 days from the mail date for payment to post.
Office-Lobby	Cash, Money Orders, Personal Checks (Please note we do not have the capability of processing credit/debit cards in our office as they are process via third-party merchant.	Lancaster Utilities 104 E. Main St, Ste 105 Lancaster, OH	N/A	N/A	Personal checks are not accepted on a Notice of Disconnection AFTER the DUE DATE.	Hours: 8 a.m. – 3:55 p.m. Monday thru Friday, excluding Holidays

[IMPORTANT - If your account is in *disconnection status* and you are paying via credit/debit or e-check, please make sure you pay at least two (2) business days before the disconnection due date to allow for processing. Credit/debit and e-checks are NOT posted to the utility account the same day they are made and may not prevent disruption of services.]

Disconnection Status –

Please note the amount shown on the disconnection notice is also considered the minimum amount needed to prevent disruption of service(s).

Q – Will a partial payment towards my disconnection amount keep my service(s) ON?

A – No, the full amount of the notice MUST be paid to prevent disruption of services.

Q – Can I pay disconnection amount with a personal check?

*A – Personal checks are accepted when paying on or before the disconnection due date. However, if paying **AFTER** the disconnection due date, the required form of payment is **cash, money order or certified bank check** as personal checks are **NOT** accepted.*

Q – Can I get an extension on the amount owed under my disconnection notice?

*A – Effective December 31, 2018, **EXTENSIONS WILL NOT BE GRANTED** unless an agency calls on your behalf stating they are working with you to prevent disruption of service(s). We will grant the agency a two (2) day maximum extension.*

Q - Are there any agencies that will assist financially with my Notice of Disconnection?

A – Please see below:

Need assistance paying my bill....

Funding is available to those meeting eligibility requirements, please see below...

• Fairfield County 211 Information & Referral	2-1-1
• Fairfield County Jobs & Family Services	(740) 652-7889
• Community Action	(740) 653-4146
• Fairfield County Veteran Services	(740) 652-7920
• State of OHIO, Home Energy Assistance Program	(800) 282-0880
• Fairfield Metro Housing Authority	(740) 653-6618
• Meals on Wheels	(740) 681-5050
• Lutheran Social Services	(740) 653-2012
• Fairfield County Child Protection Services	(740) 652-7887

Q - Can my service(s) be terminated during winter months?

A - *Yes, service(s) can be terminated Monday thru Thursday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. & 3:55 p.m. Service(s) can be terminated on Fridays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (Excluding holidays)*

Q - What happens if I haven't paid my Notice of Disconnection amount by the due date?

A - *You will receive an automated "courtesy" call to the phone number on file stating payment has NOT been received and services are still eligible for termination. Service(s) can be terminated Monday thru Thursday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. & 3:55 p.m. Service(s) can be terminated on Fridays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (Excluding holidays) Please note - our office is NOT responsible for invalid or incorrect phone numbers or e-mail addresses. Utility account holders are responsible for notifying our office of any account changes.*

Q - Can I pay the technician that comes out to terminate service(s) for non-payment?

A - *No, technicians are NOT permitted to accept payment of any kind.*

Q - Does Lancaster Utilities Collection Office participate in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP Program)?

A - *No, we are a municipality not regulated by Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) which requires the PIPP Program.*

Restoration of Services

Q - What are the requirements for restoration?

A - *The TOTAL account balance **plus** reconnection fees (up to \$190.00) must be paid and or secured by an agency before service(s) can be restored as well as completing and signing a new **Contract for Service Packet** along with submitting a valid photo ID (driver's license or state ID). An updated lease agreement may be required as well. [Once service(s) are terminated for delinquency, that voids the original Contract for Service, thus, the reason for having to complete and sign a new contract for service.]*

Q - Once I have paid to restore, will my service(s) be restored that same day?

A - *No, restoration of service(s) will be scheduled for next business day.*

Q - Do I have to be home while service(s) is being restored?

A - *Yes, you or someone on your behalf, 18 years of age or older, MUST be home when we restore.*

Typically, two departments will arrive at the same time when restoring services. Lancaster Municipal Gas will restore the gas service providing necessary safety requirements discussed below have been met and Lancaster Utilities Collection Office will restore the water service once the primary source of heat has been reinstated.

Q - Can I restore my water while my primary source of heat remains off?

A - *No, the primary source of heat must be ON in order to restore the water service.*

Q - What if my gas service has been OFF longer than 60-days?

A - *For re-establishment of gas service, a "DOT" Qualified Plumber of your choosing and expense must contact the gas department [(740) 687-6670, press "O" for dispatching] and must be on the job with the pressure test ON and HOLDING when the gas department personnel arrive. Once gas department passes inspection, service will be turned ON. Lancaster Municipal Gas has provided a list of local plumbing companies that meet these qualifications and is available at <http://www.ci.lancaster.oh.us/dept/gas/>.*

Q - What is a "DOT" Qualified Plumber?

A - *Individual/plumber/contractor who installs, replaces, or repairs service lines and meter settings are required to be qualified in accordance with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations. Department of Transportation Part 192, Subpart N. According to Federal Requirements, only workers with these qualifications are permitted to work on these facilities, even though owned by the customer. The gas service cannot be re-established without written documentation of these qualifications from the individual/plumber/contractor. The written documentation is a card indicating the compliance with "DOT" Operator Qualifications and Drug Alcohol requirements.*

Level Billing Plan:

Q- Can I pay the same amount each month for my services?

A - *Our office offers a level billing plan enabling you to pay a fixed amount for utilities each month. Your account **must** include our gas service. Unfortunately, accounts without our gas service are not eligible. Customers wishing to participate must contact our office during open enrollment which are the months of July and August. Open enrollment ends on the last business day of August. Those eligible must have a zero-account balance and twelve months of billing history under his/her name at the respective location. The level billing plan is based on your most recent eleven months usage along with current or future rate for each service.*

Q- Will my level billing amount be reviewed at any point during the year?

A - *Yes, your account is reviewed between six and eight months into the plan to determine the impact of the usage and/or rate changes at which time your level charge may be adjusted accordingly. It is possible to review more often due to substantial change in outside temperatures and/or rate changes.*

Q- Do I have a settlement or reconciliation month?

A - *Yes, the June billing is the settlement bill for everyone participating in the plan. This bill includes the current charges and the difference between the actual charges and the level payments made over the past eleven months. The total of these charges is due on the billing due date.*

Q. What if my level billing amount becomes past due?

A - *In the event your level charge remains unpaid after the due date, your account will return to regular billing and the total balance will be due, including current charges, by the due date displayed on the bill. **Your account will remain on regular billing for the remainder of the level billing year.** (Level Billing Year = July thru June.)*

Miscellaneous Information:

Q - Do senior citizens get any type of break on their utility charges?

A - *Sanitation Service ONLY (trash service) – Any, one (1) or two (2) persons, sixty-two (62) years of age or older occupying a residential unit may be issued one (1) thirty-five (35) gallon trash cart at a rate of \$9.00 per month versus the one (1) ninety-five (95) gallon trash cart at a rate of \$13.50 per month. Please note additional trash cannot be stacked on top of the trash cart – all trash must fit in trash carts with lid closed. Any changes to your current trash service shall be directed to the Sanitation Department by calling (740) 687-6660.*

Q - What is summer sewer average?

A - *Summer sewer average allows customers to be charged sewer based upon their “winter” water usage typically lower than “summer” water usage. “Summer” water usage is higher due to increased outside activity such as filling pools, power washing, watering grass, etc. This average applies to all **residential** water and sewer accounts but only affects (reduces) the sewer portion of the bill. This average starts with “readings” taken May 1st with bills due the middle of May through October 31st with bills due the middle of November of each year. The average is figured on the lower usage obtained November 1st through April 30th of each year.*

Q - Will Community Action assist with all services past due?

A - Typically, Community Action assists with gas ONLY, however, due to COVID there may be other programs available that include other services versus just gas.