



UTILITY BILLING POLICIES & PROCEDURES



City Hall, 122 Broadway Street
West Burlington, IA 52655

Hours:
Monday - Friday: 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(Excluding Holidays)

Contact:
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Utility Bills

Customers receive monthly bills from the city. Bills are mailed the last business day of the previous month & should arrive in the first few days of the new month. Payments are **always** due by the 20th to avoid penalty.

Bills may consist of all the listed services or in a combination of:

- Water (billed in gallons)
- Sewer (billed in gallons)
- Capital Project Fee (billed congruent with sewer services)
- Trash
- Recycling

[Utility rates](#) are established through the budgeting process, approved by the City Council. Rates can be viewed on the website, or contact the office for more information.

How are Meters Read

The City of West Burlington reads water meters monthly to determine the consumption of water and sewer for utility bills. Each water meter contains a built-in device called an MIU or "meter interface unit". The MIU transmits the reading from your meter to the city's vehicle data collector. Near the end of each month, the city drives through each neighborhood and collects this data over radio-way frequency. This technology allows the city to obtain monthly readings accurately and efficiently without entering your premises.

Sharing Account Records

Utility account information is only shared with account holders and property owners. Customers may allow other individuals access to the utility records by signing an authorization form or providing legal documentation.

Starting Service

All new and existing customers must complete an application for services at a new location. Applications are available at City Hall and at www.westburlington.org.

Along with the completed Service Application, the city requires:

- Identification (such as a driver's license)
- Deposit minimum of \$125 **cash or check only** *OR for large consumers, the average billed rate of the property for three months.*

Rental properties - in addition to the items listed above, rentals also require one of these two items:

1. Copy of the lease
2. Letter written by the property owner or landlord granting permission for the tenant to be living at the property.

A minimum notice of 24hr is required to guarantee water connection. If the property requires connection, arrangements must be made M-F, 7am-3pm. Customers are responsible for making sure all fixtures & private service lines are in proper condition and requested to be available during connection or disconnection. The city is not liable for damages caused by broken or neglected material(s). The meter will be read on the date requested, service turned on, and the account will be activated for billing once all procedures are satisfied.

Discontinuing Service

Customers must contact City Hall to discontinue service. Customers are requested to be available during disconnection to ensure all fixtures and private services lines are in proper conditions. A notice of 24hr is required to guarantee service disconnection. The city will read the meter on the requested date. A final bill will be generated applying the account's deposit. If the account holds a credit, the city will mail the reimbursement after it is approved by City Council to the last provided address. If the account holds a debt, the bill will be mailed to the last provided address.

Payments

Utility bill payments can be made by:

- [Automatic Clearing House](#) payment (ACH): payments are automatically deducted from the customer's bank account. The file is uploaded to the bank around the 12th of every month. The bank may take a few days to process before you see the deduction from your account.
- Credit Card: payments may be at City Hall or on our website at www.westburlington.org. A convenience fee may apply. By mail; 122 Broadway St., West Burlington, IA 52655
- In office, at the Utility Billing counter, inside City Hall
- Two (2) drop box locations:
 - Front entrance to City Hall, off Broadway St
 - Rear parking lot of City Hall, east side of the building

Delinquent Accounts

Customers receive monthly billings. Customers are responsible for all billings while the account is in their name. Account balances over \$ 10.00 after the 20th of the month are subject to a 10% per service monthly penalty. Late notices are emailed and mailed out around the 23rd of the month to all customers with an arrear balance over \$10.00. The late notice states the account balance and the upcoming disconnection day, near the 5th of the following month. After the late notices, accounts still delinquent will receive a 24-hr door notices, and a fee of \$10.00 will apply to the past-due balance. If disconnection for non-payment occurs, a \$25 fee will be charged to the account. The water will not be reconnected until the entire past-due balance, including the \$ 10 24-hr notice fee and the \$25 disconnection fee, is paid in full. After payment is made, services will be reconnected in a timely manner, M-F 8a-3p. Overtime charges may apply if payment is not made during these hours and reconnection is requested, and if staff is available. Service will not be turned on in a new customer's name unless established that the new customer had not occupied the premise when the past due balance occurred. Failure to receive a bill, a late notice, or a 24-hr notice hung on the account holder's address shall not entitle the customer relief from penalties or disconnection. If an account has been disconnected for non-payment for a week without a status update, the account will be considered inactive, and the city will produce a final bill.

Delinquent Rentals

When a rental account is subject to disconnection, the property owner may opt to receive a mailed notice in addition to the occupied tenant. Landlords and property owners may receive balance information on tenants providing the property is registered with the City and is known to own or manage the property. If a property occupying a tenant has been disconnected for non-payment, the landlord/owner will not be reinstated immediately.

Final Bills

Final bills not paid will be turned over to the Des Moines County Treasurer as a property lien or submitted to the State of Iowa Offset Program with your state tax return held. Notice of payment deadline will be mailed to the owner before liens or submission to the Offset Program. A postage fee, rounded to the nearest dollar, will be applied.

Returned Checks

A \$30 charge shall be assessed to any customer whose check or draft payment was rejected by the bank on which the payment was drawn. The service charge shall be in addition to the payment if the ACH or check is not made before the 20th and the service fee not paid prior to the delinquent date of the bill. The account will have 5 days from a letter's notice date pay the returned check and fees. Failure to make payment will put the account in jeopardy of disconnection. Once the service has been turned off, the \$ 25 disconnection fee will apply to the balance and will need to be satisfied before reconnection.

Payment Agreement

The City of West Burlington offers customers in jeopardy of disconnection and cannot make payment, enter a payment arrangement with the city. The arrangement may extend the disconnection date no later than the 15th of the following month to help ease financial issues. Agreements require the customer(s) to stop in City Hall and complete an arrangement form during regular business hours and no later than the day before set disconnection.

Afterhours

Afterhours service calls for non-emergency water assistance for customers and contractors may be complete if staff is available. These callouts are considered "afterhours" and shall incur an afterhours callout fee, which is in addition to any other regular fees associated with the requested work. Afterhours is considered any time outside of regular City of West Burlington Public Works business hours or work on City recognized holidays. Regular business hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Operation of Curb-Box**AKA Shut-off Valve*

No person other than the Public Works Director or designee shall attempt to operate the curb-box*.

Maintenance of the Curb-Box**AKA Shut-off Valve*

The property owner is required to keep the curb-box* in good condition and ready to use at all times. Should the owner neglect to maintain either, the City shall have the right to repair after the owner is noticed.

Temporary Disconnection *AKA Snowbirds*

Upon reasonable notice by a customer, the city may make temporary disconnects for the customer's convenience. A property owner may request water service be temporarily discontinued and shut off at the curb valve when the property is expected to be vacant for a minimum of three (3) months. A fifteen-dollar (\$15.00) charge collected shall be when the water is reinstated. When service is temporarily discontinued as provided herein, there shall be no minimum service charge. The city will not drain the pipes or pull meters for temporary vacancies. Only the City may reconnect the water service and with reasonable notice.

Meter Tests

Whenever a water customer has reasonable grounds to believe a water meter is not operating according to the performance standards of the American Water Works Association, the customer may have their meter tested. The City of West Burlington will ship the meter to a third-party vendor for testing. If the meter is proven to be working accurately, the customer will pay for a meter replacement and bear the cost of shipping and testing. If the meter is proven inaccurate, the city will refund the customer for the overcharges collected for up to 3 months and more than 5% of the total water bill.

Owner's Duty to Protect Meter

The owner of the premises, where a meter is installed shall be responsible for its care and protection. If a meter is found to have encountered damages due to carelessness or negligence, then the property owner shall be responsible for the cost of repairs. Meter couplings are not to be removed during repairs. Authorized city personnel shall be granted access to the meter during reasonable hours. A 10-day notice will be given. Failure to permit entry on the scheduled date and time may result in administrative penalty charges per each notification. *example - meter freezing*

Name Change

Customers wishing to make name changes to an account for any reason other than marriage** may do so by completing a Service Application. The current account holder must authorize the changes to the account. If the current account holder is deceased or incapacitated, the person requesting such changes must provide legal documentation stating that they hold authorization for such changes.

***name change including marriage, divorce, or adoption*

Frequently Asked Questions (**FAQ**)

Why is my water bill so high?

Running toilets are the most common cause of high-utility bills, even though they are not always the easiest to find. The best way to check for a leak in the toilet is to add a couple of drops of food coloring to the water in the back tank of the stool. Wait 15- 20 minutes without flushing the toilet, check the water in the toilet bowl. If the water in the bowl has changed color, then there is evidence that your toilet needs repair. This also may require several testings to discover the leak.

Other explanations:

- A change in the number of people in the household
- New appliances such as dishwasher, hot water tank, heating system, or lawn sprinklers
- Result of higher seasonal demands such as filling pools, watering lawns, or washing cars

Why is my bill so much higher than my neighbor's?

Many times, neighbors like to compare water bills. However, this comparison does not accurately reflect what may be occurring in your household. Water usage habits vary from the number of people in your household to how often hands are washed to how long you shower. Other factors could include what type of toilet(s) you have, the size of your washing machine or if you bathe rather than shower.

What is the purpose of hydrant flushing?

The city flushes the water system annually. Flushing occurs in the autumn months, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. for a few days. Residence may notice a temporary drop in water pressure and, occasionally, water discoloration. The discoloration is due to sediment accumulation in water lines and is not harmful. The purpose of the flushing is to remove the sediment from the mains and to exercise and check the operation of the city's fire hydrants.

Why is the sewer charge more than water?

Whenever water is used – not consumed – it goes down the drain and must be treated. Water usage goes hand in hand with how much sewage needs to be treated. Although water and sewer may have the same gallons of consumption, it is not unusual for sewer charges to be higher than water as they are charged by different rates. Today's strict federal standards means higher costs to filter and disinfect wastewater to return it to the environment.

Why does my bill state a penalty?

Payments are always due by the 20th to avoid a penalty. There is a box labeled penalty on every bill. This field displays the penalty amount if bills were to be paid late but does not mean you were charged a penalty. If your account were penalized, the box that states **pervious balance** would display an amount.