

POLICY IV.B BILLING AND COLLECTIONS POLICY

A. NEW ACCOUNTS

1. NEW CUSTOMERS: Must request service by written application for utility service and pay required fees and deposits as identified in the Fee Resolution as adopted by the Bonners Ferry City Council and listed in Appendix A.
 - a. If the customer has a prior account with the City that has been closed or retired, but has a balance owing or a balance in collections, the customer must pay all past-due balances before a new account may be opened.
2. NEW SERVICES: If a service connection does not exist, the customer must request a facilities extension, pay pre-service application fee, and pay amounts as defined in the City's Facility Extension policy IV.C.

B. SECURITY DEPOSITS

1. REQUIREMENTS: Required for all new residential electrical accounts unless a letter of payment history is provided or the customer agrees to enroll in auto-pay. Required for all new commercial and industrial accounts.
2. AMOUNT: See Fee Resolution as adopted by the Bonners Ferry City Council and listed in Appendix A.
3. LETTER OF PAYMENT HISTORY: The security deposit will be waived on residential accounts if the customer has the previous 12 months consistent on-time full payment history with the City or can document the previous 12 months consistent on-time full payment history with another utility by correspondence on utility letterhead. This letter must show historic payment obligation for like sized account.
4. AUTO PAY: To enroll in auto-pay the customer must complete the form available at City Hall. Auto-pay may only be withdrawn from a checking or savings account.
5. DUE DATE: The deposit will be collected at the time of application. If payment arrangement is needed on the deposit, a minimum of fifty percent of the deposit amount will be collected at the time of application and the remaining amount by the due date of the first billing cycle on the account. Payment of deposit will take priority during the first billing cycle and remaining amount will be applied to utility service balance.
6. DEPOSIT REFUNDS: The City will credit the deposits to the customer's account only when requested after 12 months of consistent on-time full payment history or when the account is closed.
7. INTEREST: Will not be paid on security deposits.
8. BANKRUPTCY: If a customer has previously declared bankruptcy while a utility customer of the City of Bonners Ferry, the security deposit required shall double. Additionally, the deposit shall not be refunded to the account until there has been 24 months of consistent on-time full payment history or when the account is closed.

C. BILLING POLICY

1. DUE DATE: Payment shall be due and payable by the date printed on the bill.
2. RATES: Billing rates are as adopted by the Bonners Ferry City Council.
3. If an error is found in billing or a mechanical meter malfunction is found, the billing will be corrected retroactively for up to a three year period.

D. BILLING PROCESS

1. Bill mailed and due 14 days later
2. On the 15th day a Payment Reminder Letter is mailed if there is a past due (30 day) balance over \$20.00 letting the customer know it must be paid within five days or an arrangement for payment is made.
3. An order to disconnect service is then generated if the balance is not paid or arrangement for payment made within the five day period from the date the Payment Reminder Letter is mailed. A door hanger fee will be charged.
4. Arrangements will only be made to bring past due balances current. Current amounts due will remain due on the regular billing cycle. Arrangements shall bring the past due balances current within ninety (90) days. Balances past due ninety (90) days will be subject to immediate disconnect.

5. A customer can delay termination of service for an additional thirty (30) days from scheduled disconnect date by obtaining a certificate from a doctor or public health official stating that a medical emergency would exist or a medical condition would be aggravated if the service is turned off. Payment arrangements must be made before the thirty day window expires. The certificate must be signed by the person diagnosing the medical condition and must name the person affected.

E. CONNECT AND DISCONNECT POLICY

1. CHARGES: Connect and disconnect charges will be made for all connects and disconnects at the rates shown in Appendix A.
2. IMMEDIATE DISCONNECT REASONS: The City may immediately and without notice disconnect services for the following reasons:
 - a. Past due balance over ninety (90) days.
 - b. Diversion or unauthorized use of City utility services.
 - c. Discovery of a condition determined by the City to be hazardous.
 - d. Violation of and/or noncompliance with any applicable Federal, State or other local laws, regulations and codes.
 - e. Discovery of meter tampering.
 - f. Other appropriate circumstances.
3. DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS AND DISCONNECT:
 - a. A "Door Hanger Charge" will be required each time City personnel are required to make a personal visit to the premises for the purposes of collections on a delinquent account. The customer will be charged as identified in the Fee Resolution as adopted by the Bonners Ferry City Council and listed in Appendix A.
 - b. Delinquent accounts shall be disconnected after receipt of disconnect notice unless payment arrangements have been made with the City.
 - c. Account holder shall have the right to a hearing before the Utility Grievance Board in order to show cause why the service should not be disconnected. Account holder shall be responsible for scheduling and participating in the hearing prior to the scheduled date of disconnect. The Utility Grievance Board shall be composed of one staff member from the Utility Billing Department (typically the billing supervisor) and a staff member from City Administration (typically the City Administrator).
 - d. Accounts shall not be reconnected until the connect charges, disconnect charges, past due balance, and any required deposits have been paid in full.
4. RECONNECT REQUIREMENTS: After a service has been disconnected by customer request or for non-payment, the City shall require the service to be brought up to current State and National Code requirements and City standards before reconnection.
5. DISCONNECT FOR MAINTENANCE AND CONVENIENCE: By request of the customer and when it is convenient to the City; the City will provide routine off-on service to its customers during normal working hours at no cost to the customer. If such service becomes excessive, generally more than two hours of labor per year or outside of normal working hours, the City may charge for such service. The charge will be the actual labor cost expended for such service.

F. CLOSED ACCOUNTS

1. CUSTOMER REQUESTED CLOSURE:
 - a. Customer must complete a request to discontinue utility services form.
 - b. The customer receives a closing bill that is due 14 days later on regular billing cycle. Customer continues to be billed until account is paid or turned over to collection agency.
 - c. When an account is closed, meters may be removed.
2. INACTIVITY CLOSURE:
 - a. When an account has been disconnected and inactive for thirty (30) days, account will be closed and any past due balance sent to collections.
 - b. Reconnection of an account closed due to inactivity will require a new application and payment of all associated fees and deposits.

- c. When an account is closed, meters may be removed.

G. COLLECTION POLICY FOR CLOSED ACCOUNTS

1. PROCESS:

- a. Closing bill mailed (due 14 days later)
- b. Final collection notice mailed 30 days before sending to Credit Bureau

H. RETIRED SERVICE

1. A service may be retired by written request of the property owner. When a service is retired, meters will be removed.
2. REQUEST FOR SERVICE AT A LOCATION FROM WHICH A SERVICE HAD BEEN RETIRED
 - a. The new service will be installed per the Extension Policy 4C

I. PROJECT SHARE

- a. Funds remain in Boundary County to assist local customers.
- b. Boundary County Community Action Partnership
PO Box 627
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805
(208) 267-3663
- c. Any refund of \$2.50 or less will be donated to Project Share.

J. NON-SUFFICIENT FUND (NSF) CHECK POLICY

1. When the City receives a bad check the receipt is cancelled from accounts receivable and the customer is charged a bad check fee.
2. NOTIFICATION: The Clerk will attempt to contact the party to inform them of the NSF check to make arrangements for alternate payment method or to redeposit the check.
3. NSF ACTION:
 - a. The customer will be charged a bad check fee each time a check is deemed NSF.
 - b. The City Clerk will advise the Police Department of the NSF check when appropriate.

K. BUDGET PLAN BILLING

1. CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS: Customer must have 12 months of complete timely payment history with the City before they can participate in budget plan billing.
2. EXPLANATION: Budget Plan billing is an equalized payment method based on the prior 12 months billing history.

L. LANDLORD/RENTAL DWELLING POLICY

1. TRANSFER OF SERVICE: Upon tenant vacating a property the utility accounts shall revert back to the landlord's name unless requested otherwise by landlord.
2. TENANT'S LIABILITY: If the service is placed in the landlord's name and the tenant has outstanding utility bills, the tenant will be subject to the collection process.
3. LANDLORD NOTIFICATION: When a tenant is thirty (30) days or more past due, the City may attempt to contact the landlord to notify of the past due status.

M. METER READING

1. Meters are read monthly or when a final read is necessary.

N. ESTIMATED BILLING

1. When the City is unable to gain reasonable access to a meter, the City will estimate the reading for a billing period based on the historical usage of that service.

2. When a meter fails in service the City will estimate the reading for that billing period based on the historical usage of that service.

O. WATER LEAKS

1. When a major water leak is discovered on the customer's lines the City will provide bill relief under the following conditions.
 - a. Only for the billing cycle in which the leak is detected.
 - b. The leak must be external to any structures.
 - c. Not greater than ½ of the amount in excess of the normal water usage, as estimated by the City
 - d. The consumer must notify City Hall within thirty days of the billing date.
 - e. The consumer must provide a detailed explanation, in writing, of the conditions.
 - f. If the leak is caused by customer negligence, the City will not absorb any of the loss.