



City of Urbana
POLICIES & PROCEDURES
Administrative Regulation 30
Water Division
Effective January 1, 2022

PROCEDURES

30.1 Reserved

30.2 Water Regulations

30.2.1 Establishing Utility Service (Water & Sewer)

Property owners must complete and sign a property ownership card at the Utility Billing Office before utility service can be established. The property ownership card is a contract between the City of Urbana Utilities and the property owner. Ownership cards must be completed and signed prior to occupancy of a new building, home, or structure, or when a property changes ownership. The Utilities Division shall determine whether circumstances necessitate mailing ownership cards. Cards received through the mail must be completed, signed, notarized, and returned within 10 days after receiving the card.

Tenant/Landlord Relationship

Once utility service is established for a property, utility charges will be billed to the tenant as long as the property has an equal number of utility accounts, meters and curb stops. Existing properties that do not meet these criteria are grandfathered for tenant direct billing as long as all utility accounts associated with the property remain current. Once a property enters delinquency status, all future utility bills will be sent directly to the landlord/property owner indefinitely.

The Utility Billing Office will not send utility bills to tenants unless authorized by the property owner. Legal obligations to pay all outstanding utility bills remain with the property owners.

The property owner of any building, real estate, home, or structure receiving utility service from the City of Urbana is responsible for any and all city utility bills incurred against the property. Following the transfer of a property, new property owners assume responsibility for any unpaid utility charges associated with the property.

Absentee property owners may appoint an agent to act on their behalf, but the agent must be registered with the Utility Billing Office. Absentee property owners must inform the Utility Billing Office when changing permanent residency or mailing address.

All persons - property owners, tenants, and agents - registering with the Utility Billing Office must provide accurate information, including their legal name and current address. See Section 16 Termination of Service

30.2.2 Establishing Utility Service for New Construction

Utility tap permits shall not be issued for new construction until all requirements of the Utilities, Engineering, and Building & Zoning divisions have been met. See Section 30.2.4 regarding Tapping into Water Mains.

Once a permit is issued, the water service line may be installed, and water provided, after payment of a one-time fee, for the construction of initial buildings, houses, and structures. Construction water usage fees are set by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee and are subject to change. Water service will be discontinued when construction is completed. The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee is authorized to determine the location of water meters for new construction. Water meter will not be installed if his/her determination is not followed.

Fees for a privately owned water line may be waived by the Public Works Superintendent and the Water Superintendent. Private lines are defined lines servicing property/properties where the city has no involvement in its repair and/or maintenance.

Turning on or shutting off of water service at the curb or in a pit shall only be done by an authorized city employee. Turning on water service must be requested by the property owner or authorized agent. After hours request to have water shut off may be subject to a service call fee (determined by the City Water Superintendent). **Example: A functioning valve located inside residence was not used by owner/tenant to shut water off and the Water Department was called in.

Location of Meter The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee is authorized to determine the location of water meters for new construction in the City. The installation of water meters in a crawl space or unheated structure is prohibited. If a problem arises with an existing meter located in a crawl space or other unheated location, including pits, The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee may require the meter to be relocated.

Water meters will not be installed if the determination is not followed. Building contractors, using water for any type of construction are required to utilize the tap which will be used for consumer water service for construction water. The contractors must make the tap ready for metering. The contractor will be billed at the rate outlined in Administrative Regulation D-I, Water Rates. If tapping the water line and metering the water is not feasible (as determined by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee), then the contractor will be assessed a flat fee per month per unit for construction water until a metered tap is available. The flat fee will be assessed as soon as the shut-off valve is turned on by an authorized city employee.

30.2.3 Water Taps

The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee, with approval by Council, is authorized to set fees for taps into the City of Urbana water main. Fees vary depending on the size of tap, and are subject to change. Current fees are established in accordance with Chapter 939 of the city's Codified Ordinances.

City Water Division employees may make taps up to and including two inches in diameter. Tapping fees will include costs for all materials and labor to make the tap and install the appropriate size water meter and outside reader. Taps made by the Water Department will include a service line from the water main to the property line. Excavation, backfill, and street right-of-way restoration shall be the owner's responsibility when a new tap is installed where there was not a tap there before.

Taps larger than two inches shall be made by a private plumbing contractor registered with the Champaign County Board of Health.

All taps into the water main, made by a registered plumbing contractor, shall be inspected at the time of installation and approved by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee before backfilling excavation. Water main taps provided by the city in exchange for use of right-of-way, must be filed by the property owner with the Utilities Division. Taps provided by the city shall not be extended to other properties. When a lot is subdivided, each lot shall be required to have a separate tap into the water main. Existing Taps will not be terminated unless by majority agreement with Water Superintendent or his/her appointee, City Administrator and/or Director of Finance.

Existing separate properties connected to the same water service line shall submit plans for installing separate service lines on individual curb stops if mandated by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee. *See Section regarding Service Lines.*

The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee shall review the plans and may make necessary alterations based on the most practical and economical method for establishing separate service lines of separate curb stops.

The property first serviced by the existing service shall have claim to the existing water tap while additional properties may be required to obtain tapping permission and separate taps at the property owner's expense.

Property owners shall be given a reasonable amount of time, but not longer than one year after the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee's decision, to complete service separation.

Failure to initiate service separation plans or carry out approved service separation plans shall result in termination of service.

30.2.4 Water Service Lines

For every new service line, there shall be an outside reader for the water meter. For every water meter, there must be a corresponding curb stop located in the City of Urbana right-of-way or an acceptable alternative location or an acceptable location as approved by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee.

Property owners that maintain separate apartments, businesses, companies or corporations may obtain approval for divided service lines.

Properties containing a single service line, branching into separate lines for each apartment, building, structure or unit, must install a meter, outside reader, and shut-off valve at the property owner's expense. Service lines shall not be divided

unless plans for dividing the lines receive approval from the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee.

Maintenance of all plumbing, except the water meter, beyond the curb-line into the building, house, or structure, is the responsibility of the property owner. Property owners, whose property is first connected to a service line, are responsible for any and all outstanding bills related to that property.

30.2.5 Water Meters & Fixtures

All meters shall have an outside reader installed and charged an installation fee. The location of the outside reader must be agreeable to the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee. If a location cannot be agreed upon, the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee may terminate service.

Installation of water meters and/or readers shall be done by a City authorized plumber, approved contractor or authorized city employee. Servicing, removing and testing meters shall be performed by authorized city employees.

Water meters and outside readers for utility billing purposes shall be purchased through the Utilities Division, and shall remain at the original property. Meters and readers shall be maintained by the city unless damaged by neglect or intentional abuse. Repair or replacement costs of meters and readers damaged by neglect or intentional abuse, including freezing, shall be paid by the property owner.

Sealing and unsealing water meters for service charge exemption shall be done by authorized city employees. Property owners must complete and file with the Utilities Division an Application for Service Charge Exemption for Multiple Meter Service before a meter will be sealed.

The City of Urbana shall not be responsible for damage to water meters placed in a pit outside a building; outside a home or structure; or in a crawl space. Repair or replacement costs shall be paid by a property owner.

Maintenance and repair of any meter pits are the responsibility of the property owner.

30.2.6 Access to Water Meters & Plumbing

Property owners - resident and absentee - must provide city Water Department employees with easy access to water meters and outside readers at any reasonable time of day.

The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee can require, at the owner's expense, relocation of a water meter and/or outside reader or curb stop that cannot be easily accessible for reading, turning off/on, servicing, testing, removing, or inspection.

Property owners - resident and absentee - must allow authorized city employees to inspect any plumbing inside a building, structure, or house at any reasonable time of day.

Absentee property owners shall provide the Utilities Division with the name, address and telephone number of an agent who has access to buildings, structures and houses on the property owner's property or properties. See section regarding *Establishing Service*.

It will be the property owner's responsibility to maintain easy access to outside readers. Water Division employees can refuse to record an outside reading if, in their judgment, their personal safety is at risk due to obstructions or vicious animals. Property owners will be required to furnish a reading and make arrangements to relocate the outside reader for easy and safe access. Arrangements to relocate an outside reader can be made by contacting the Utilities Division.

Readings for cold weather months may be estimated. When an actual reading is taken, and if the usage is found to be greater than estimated, customers and/or property owners shall pay any water usage exceeding the estimated amount(s).

30.2.7 Testing Water Meters

Property owners or tenants can ask for a water meter test. A deposit shall be required before the test. The amount of the deposit shall be set by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee and is subject to change.

If the test shows the meter was reading incorrectly, the deposit shall be returned. If the meter was recording water usage correctly, which shall be a reading +/-3% of the actual usage, the deposit shall be forfeited.

The property owner or an authorized agent or a tenant may be present during the test to verify the test results.

City policy toward testing of compound meters shall be that any testing/repair/replacement of compound meters, initiated by the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee or the owner, shall be at the sole responsibility and cost of the owner and must be performed by an approved vendor.

30.2.8 Reading Water Meters & Billings

Bills for utility services shall be calculated and mailed to customers on or about the 5th of every month. Bills should arrive by mail by the second full week of each month. If an anticipated bill does not arrive in a timely manner, customers and property owners should call or visit the Utilities Office to obtain billing information. Customers and/or property owners shall be responsible for bills they do not receive by mail.

The billing schedule and fees overview:

- Bills are mailed by the 5th of each month
- Bills are due on or about the 20th of each month
- If the due date falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due on the closest "business day" and is noted on the bill.
- If payment is not received by the due date:
 1. 5% penalty is assessed and added to the delinquent amount
 2. Delinquent notices are mailed the day after the current bill was due and the Delinquent amount is due within seven (7) days.
 3. After 7 days, a \$25.00 late fee will be assessed to each unpaid account.
 4. Delinquent accounts not reconciled by the due date are subject to disconnection.

5. As a courtesy, the Water Division will normally deliver door hangers to the service locations of the overdue delinquent accounts. This is not required and water service may be terminated without further notification after the Delinquent Due Date.
 6. A \$50.00 service fee will be charged on all accounts that remain unpaid on the disconnection due date, whether utility service has been disconnected or not.
- We accept check, cash, money orders, credit and debit cards.

Your payment options include:	
In person--	Payments in person can be made at the Utility Billing office, 205 South Main Street, Urbana. Customer service is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – Noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
By drop box--	For your convenience, there is a drop box by the Market Street entrance of the Municipal Building - 24-hours a day.
By mail--	Address all payments to the City of Urbana Utility Billing Office, PO Box 747. Urbana, OH 43078.
Auto Pay--	Payments can automatically be withdrawn from a checking or savings account. There is no charge for this service. Complete the automatic deduction form and return to the Utility Office
On-line--	A link to the on-line payment option is available on the city's website: www.urbanaohio.com

- Water meters are normally read every month. For months where no meter readings are obtained, estimated readings shall be used.
- There shall be a minimum monthly charge for all active accounts.
- Payment of utility bills shall be due on or before the due date posted on each bill.
- Bills shall be considered paid by the due date if the bill arrives across the counter on or before 4:30 p.m. the day of the due date, if the payment envelope is postmarked on or before the due date, or if the bill is in the drop-off box by 8:00 a.m. the day after the due date.
- Customers and/or property owners shall be responsible for any payment made to local banking and lending institutions that arrives late or is lost. Customers and/or property owners shall be responsible for any payment left in a drop-off box or lost during delivery by the U.S. Postal Service.

30.2.9 Final Readings

Tenants or property owners may request a final reading. Water service **will** be shut off at the time of a final reading for properties in ownership transition unless a property ownership card has been signed by the new owner and filed with the Utilities Division. See: Section 1: Establishing Service. Water service to rental properties will not be terminated after a final reading unless requested by the property owner or as mandated by the Finance Director and/or authorized representative. Final bills are forwarded to tenants; unpaid notices shall be mailed directly to property owners who are responsible to pay the bill. See Section 1: Establishing Service.

30.2.10 Special Accounts

Customers and/or property owners who receive excessively high utility bills due to a water leak may ask for a special account. The Utilities Division is authorized to set up a schedule of equal payments for the bill. Minimum payments to special account billings shall be based on the outstanding balance at the time the account

is established. Down payments are required and special accounts shall not exceed a period of one year. The unpaid balance is subject to a 5% penalty per month. If a payment is not made timely, utility service will be disconnected and not restored until the special account is paid in full. All special account payments shall be in addition to monthly billing obligations for utility services used.

In a tenant/landlord relationship, landlords must authorize the establishment of a special account. Requests for special accounts must be made before the on-time payment due date.

30.2.11 Delinquent Bills

Delinquent payment notices shall be mailed to customers and/or property owners and include an assessed five percent (5%) penalty based on the amount due. The notices shall give approximately Seven (7) additional days for payment of outstanding bills and penalties before termination for non-payment.

Customers and property owners shall be responsible for all late bills and charges whether or not they receive notification of delinquency. The City of Urbana and its employees cannot guarantee receipt of properly handled delinquent notices. If payment is not received on or before the final due date, the Utilities Division is authorized to begin termination of service procedures.

All late payments must be in the Utilities Division office on or before the due date posted to the delinquent notices. Accounts paid after the delinquent due date will be charged a late fee, regardless if service is terminated. The amount of the late fee is determined by the Director of Finance, and is subject to change.

30.2.13 Returned Check Policy

A charge shall be assessed for any check or ACH returned by banking or lending institutions. The amount of the charge is determined by the Director of Finance, and is subject to change.

Customers and/or property owners shall be notified of the returned funds by a door hanger. The check must be picked up at the Utilities Division office by noon of the next business day. Payment for the outstanding balance, including fees must be submitted via cash payment, certified check or money order to avoid termination of service.

Utility accounts with two instances of insufficient funds may be converted to cash only accounts.

30.2.14 Certification of Past Due Bills

The Utilities Division shall certify to the Champaign County Auditor all past due bills and charges to be placed on the county tax duplicate as a lien upon the property affected and collected as other taxes and remitted to the city. The cost as certified shall become a lien upon the property affected as of the certification date.

Certification shall occur when a bill is past due on actual readings. The amount of assessment shall be equal to utility services used plus all penalties and charges for late payment.

Any unpaid charges will remain with and against the property by which the bill was made. The unpaid charges will remain an open account and must be paid before service will be permitted at that location.

The Utilities Division shall certify any property under foreclosure or that is pending sale by local, state or federal law enforcement agencies.

All payments to certified accounts must be made to the Champaign County Auditor.

30.2.15 Termination of Service

Except as otherwise noted, water service disconnection must be requested by the property owner.

Tenants and registered plumbing contractors can order a temporary disconnection of water service for necessary repairs to the service line.

Water service disconnection at the curb or in a pit shall only be performed by authorized city employees.

The Water Superintendent or his/her appointee can order termination of water service if severe leaks are not repaired in a timely manner. When a severe leak is discovered and there is no one at the property to inform of the problem, water service can be terminated by order of the Water Superintendent or his/her appointee. Resuming water service to property that was terminated due to a leak or at the owner's request shall be completed at no charge.

The Utility Office can order termination of water service for unpaid bills based on actual and estimated readings or for returned checks.

Termination for unpaid bills will occur approximately two (2) business days after delinquent due date. Termination for returned checks may occur as soon as one business day following notification of the returned check. Customers and/or property owners shall be charged a fee for resuming service after termination for non-payment or returned checks.

The Director of Finance is authorized to order water service termination if there has been a chronic problem obtaining readings at the property. Water service shall be restored once a reading is obtained.

Failure or refusal by a customer to make suitable arrangements for the water meter to be read at regular scheduled intervals or a specific purpose shall be sufficient cause to terminate water service.

Water service shall be terminated at properties where the owner has not completed, signed, and/or returned a property ownership card before occupancy or before final reading is made for the previous owner. Falsified billing information on a property ownership card shall be sufficient cause to terminate water service.