WELLINGTON CITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES REGARDING PAYMENT OF UTILITY ACCOUNTS, DISCONNECTION AND RECONNECTION PROCEDURES

This policy establishes the procedures to be followed by Wellington City (City) for collection of money on utility accounts including those that become delinquent.

**OBJECTIVE**:

To establish a policy, that is consistent, fair and reasonable and whereby the financial status of the City is protected and to provide a means by which the human needs of the citizenry are met by alleviating undue hardships with respect to cost of utilities.

**DEFINITIONS**:

**Assistance Programs**: Programs that exist within Wellington City and/or Carbon County to assist in the payment of the Customer’s utility bill including the following:

1. **Carbon County Food Bank**: Customer Assistance Program can assist Customer’s with up to $100.00.
2. **Department of Workforce Services**: Customer Assistance Program can assist people if funds are available.
3. **The Methodist and LDS Churches**: Customer Assistance Program can assist people in need.
4. **Vocational Rehabilitation**: Customer Assistance Program that can assist people if they have made some effort in trying to pay on their accounts and who are currently enrolled in that program.

**Arrangement Agreement:** This is a form that will be completed by the Collections Department and the Customer when payment arrangements are made. This will be a signed document stating that both parties agree to the arrangements that have been made.

**Billing Cycle**: A utility bill that is mailed from the City’s Utility Department to the Customer. There is one (1) billing cycle per month.

**City**: Wellington City, Utah

**Customer**: Any person or entity who receives water, sewer, secondary and/or garbage collection services from or through the City.

**Deferred Deposit/Customer**: Any new Customer that has made arrangements to defer payment of their deposit on a new account.

**Delinquent Account**: Any utility account that becomes delinquent the day after the due date printed on the utility bill.

**Delinquent Fee:** Fees that are applied to delinquent accounts when actions such as Final Notices and Door Hanger Notices are issued.

**Deposit:** A sum money paid in advance as a security.

**Door Hanger Notice:** A hand delivered notice to a Customer that is usually placed on the door. These notices are delivered to Customer’s having delinquent accounts and will indicate that utility services will be disconnected on or after the date specified on the notice if payment or arrangements are not made.

**Due Date**: The date that a utilities payment is due which is fifteen (15) days after the billing cycle date.

**Final Bill**: The termination billing closing statement for each Customer’s account.

**Final Reading**: The numerical reading on either the water when it’s disconnected or shut off for termination.

**Hydrant Meter**: A meter that is connected to a fire hydrant that measures the amount of water used from that hydrant.

**Hook Up Fee**: A fee charged to anyone who requires the connection of utilities service.

**Landlord**: A person or entity who leases one or more dwelling unit(s) or commercial building or place of business to another person(s) or entity.

**Landlord Agreement**: A written or verbal agreement between the City and landlord stating that if a tenant moves out of a dwelling, the utility account is to remain active or connected and the landlord shall be financially responsible for that account.

**Legal Designee**: Any person appointed by a Customer, or by a court of competent jurisdiction to serve as attorney in fact, guardian or conservator of the Customer or as a personal representative of the estate of Customer.

**Lessee**: Anyone to whom a lease is given, also known as tenant.

**Lessor**: Same as landlord. See above.

**Meter Reader**: A City employee, who works within the Utilities Department, designated to take numerical usage readings from both the electrical and water meters.

**Meter Reading**: A numeral reading from either the electrical meter or water meter or both.

**New Customer**: Anyone establishing water, sewer, secondary, and/or garbage collection services at a resident or a place of business within the City’s service area.

**Non-Pay**: Any Customer who has not paid any amount on their utilities account within the current billing cycle and has not contacted the Cities Utilities Department to make a payment arrangement.

**Notice of Termination**: A hand delivered notice to a Customer that is usually placed on the door. These notices are delivered to Customer’s having delinquent accounts and will indicate that utility services will be disconnected on or after the date specified on the notice if payment or arrangements are not made.

**Owner**: Anyone who owns or leases out to others a commercial building or other place of business.

**Payment Arrangements**: Arrangements made by Customer’s with City to pay their utility bill by a designated date.

**Payment in Full**: The Customer’s utilities service account has a zero cash balance.

**Picture Identification**: Any current legal form of identification that has a photo of the Customer for identification purposes.

**Re-Connect Fee:** A fee that is charged when an individual’s utilities are disconnected for non-pay and the utilities are thereafter connected.

**Renter**: Anyone who pays rent for the privilege of occupying a dwelling or place of business also known as a tenant.

**Service Deposit Fee**: A deposit that must be paid on all new utility accounts.

**Shut off date**: A specific date upon which the utilities service will be disconnected from a residence.

**Shut Off Notice:** A past due notice that is mailed out to each Customer who has not made a payment on their utility account as of the due date.

**Skip**: Anyone who has deliberately left an account unpaid and has not given the City a forwarding address to which the City can send a final bill.

**Theft of Services**: Deliberately tampering with or reconnecting any water or electric meter and failing to pay for utilities unlawfully received through that meter.

**Utility Bill**: A bill that is mailed to the Customer identifying their usage of electrical, water, sewer, garbage, substation services or hookup charges and/or taxes that must be paid to the City.

**Utilities Manager**: The person who oversees the City Utilities Department.

**Work Order**: Any type of written work assignment prepared by a City Utilities Department Customer Service employee.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE CITY UTILITY DEPARTMENT**

**New Customer Application**:

When an individual or legal designee requests a “residential” or “commercial” utilities connection the following policy and procedure applies:

1. The individual or legal designee is considered a new Customer.

2. The City will research the address and determine what type of utility connection is required (water, sewer, secondary and/or garbage).

3. The City will verify that no outstanding debt is owed by the new Customer (citations, returned checks etc.).

4. The new Customer shall also be given the option of paying the applicable hook up fee or having the City add the charge to the first utility bill.

5. The City will require the new Customer to complete and provide the following:

a) A “Residential Application for Utility Service” or a “Commercial Application for Utility Service”. The application must be signed and turned in without modification to the form. The application will not be accepted with any modifications.

b) Provide the Utility Department a copy of his/her current photo identification or driver’s license.

6. After the information is gathered and a service deposit and all outstanding debt is paid (if applicable), a work order is issued and the City will send a meter reader to the specified address to take a meter reading and/or to connect the specified utility service.

9. Following connection, the new Customer shall thereafter be responsible for paying for that utility service until Customer requests that it be disconnected or the account becomes delinquent and the City disconnects the service.

**New Customer Application for Hydrant Meter**

Policy and Procedure for Hydrant Meters:

1. Applicant or legal designee is considered a new Customer.

2. New Customer fills out a utility service application.

3. New Customer pays the applicable meter deposit.

4. New Customer provides the Utility Department with a copy of identification photo.

5. New Customer signs an information card.

**Service Deposit**:

Policy and Procedure regarding a new Customer service deposit:

1. After a new Customer or legal designee creates a utility account with the City:

a) The Customer is required to pay at least one-half (½ ) of the service deposit.

b) The Customer is informed that he/she has two (2) weeks to pay the remainder of the service deposit and a payment date is set.

c) If the Customer does not respond within two (2) weeks, a shut off notice with a termination date is issued.

d) If the Customer does not respond, a work order is generated and issued and the Customer’s utilities are disconnected.

e) If the Customer has failed to pay a past utility account or any other debt before collection procedures had begun the deposit shall be $400.00.

**Service Deposit Refund**:

Policy and Procedure regarding a service deposit refund:

1. The service deposit is refunded or applied to the new Customer’s account when:

a) The new Customer maintains his/her account with the City for over one (1) year without any termination or disconnection notices sent either by mail or hand delivered and the new Customer or legal designee comes into the Cities Utilities Office and states that he/she wants their utilities service disconnected. An exception to this requirement is allowed when a prior arrangement has been discussed in person with the landlord and or owner or when there is no termination of service or a shut off notice has not been issued.

2. After the new Customer requests disconnection of utilities service on a specific day, a work order is issued for the same.

3. A meter reader will take a final reading of the utility meter(s) and provide a Customer Service employee with the information for entry into the Customer’s account history.

4. The City Recorder is provided a report regarding all refunds and all refunds are issued and mailed through the City’s Accounts Payable Department.

5. The City, at the Customer’s request, can transfer a service deposit in the event that the Customer moves to another location within the City’s service area.

6. At the Customer’s request, the City can apply the Customer’s service deposit to his/her utilities account, but only after the Customer has had an active utilities account with the City for one (1) full year and provided that the Customer has not received any delinquent or shut off notices and has not had utility services disconnected for non-pay.

**Disconnections**:

Policy and Procedure regarding disconnections:

Utilities will be disconnected for the following reasons:

1. A service deposit payment arrangement has not been met.
2. A utilities account is past due.
3. Theft of services.
4. Customer requests disconnection.
5. Non-pay on a returned check

Policy and Procedure regarding a disconnection for failure to pay service deposit:

1. The City researches all of the pending service deposit records bi-monthly.
2. If a deposit payment arrangement has not been satisfied, the City will mail a disconnection notice to the applicant stating why their utilities will be disconnected.
3. The City shall allow a grace period of time of nine (9) days to give the Customer enough time to pay the required service deposit.
4. If the Customer fails to respond, a work order is issued and a meter reader is contacted and sent to the applicable address and the utilities are disconnected.
5. If the Customer comes into the Cities Utility Office to reconnect their utilities they are required to pay a service deposit if a deposit does not currently exist for the account, in addition to a reconnection and any penalty fees.
6. After the account has been paid current, a work order is issued to a meter reader and the Customer’s utilities are reconnected as soon thereafter as is reasonably possible.

**Policy and Procedures regarding past due utilities accounts**:

* 1. The City will print a delinquent account list and past due notices.
	2. The past due notices shall be mailed (10) days after the billing due date.
	3. If the amount due and additional fees are not paid within (10) days of the bill’s due date, a door hanger will be placed at the service address. The door hanger will notify the occupants that if payment is not made in full within (5) days the utilities will be disconnected.
	4. A work order is issued and a meter reader physically disconnects the utilities.
	5. A meter reader will then hang a notice of disconnection on the door of the Customer’s residence.
	6. When the Customer pays the past due balance and any additional fees, a meter reader is contacted and the utilities are reconnected in a timely manner.
	7. A past due notice will not be issued and utilities service will not be disconnected if the utility bill is under fifty dollars ($50.00).
	8. For any utilities account that becomes delinquent, disconnected for non-pay, disconnected for non-pay of service deposit, the Customer has absconded or has failed to pay any other outstanding debt resulting in the filing of a collection, the account and any outstanding debt must be paid in full including any applicable fees, prior to that Customer reconnecting or opening a new account.
	9. After the Customer’s account has been disconnected for non-pay for seven (7) days, the Customer’s utility account will be terminated. If the Customer was required to pay a security deposit, that security deposit will be applied to the Customer’s utility account.
	10. When a Customer absconds, the City has the option to immediately turn the account over to Professional Collections.

**Policy and Procedure regarding theft of services:**

* 1. The City will contact the Customer Service Supervisor and inform him/her of their discovery.
	2. The City will contact the Wellington City Police Department and file a report.
	3. The Meter Reader and/or Customer Service Supervisor will document their findings with a statement and/or photographs.
	4. A meter reader will remove or lock the meter.
	5. The City proceeds with prosecution of the offender(s).

**Policy and Procedure regarding a Customer requested disconnect:**

The only person(s) who can request disconnection of their utilities are:

1. The person whose name is identified on the account or his/her legal designee, or
2. The owner, landlord or tenant of the residence or place of business.

Process for Disconnecting Service:

* 1. It is preferred that Customer or legal designee physically come into the Cities Utilities Office and request that his/her utility account be terminated, disconnected or shut off and provide a current picture ID. If for some reason the Customer cannot visit the utility office the Customer must provide verification of the Social Security Number on the account.
	2. At that time the Customer or legal designee must designate a day and time for disconnection.
	3. The City will ask the Customer or legal designee for a forwarding address to which a final bill or a service deposit refund can be sent.
	4. A work order is issued to a meter reader and a final reading is performed on the designated day and time.
	5. If the Customer paid a service deposit when the account was opened, the final bill will be deducted from the deposit and a service deposit refund check will be issued by the Treasurer’s office.
	6. If the Customer did not pay a service deposit, the final bill will be sent to the Customer’s forwarding address.

**Assistance Programs**:

Policy and Procedure regarding **utility assistance programs**:

1. When a Customer or legal designee informs the City that he/she is having difficulty paying their utility bill, the City shall inform the Customer that utility assistance programs are available.

2. When a Customer or legal designee notifies the City that they have applied for assistance through one of the assistance programs, defined above, the City will inform the Customer or legal designee that he/she remains responsible for their utility bill until the City receives money from the program.

3. When the City receives payment from an assistance program, the payment is applied to certain portions of the Customer’s utility bill.

i. The Customer will be responsible for the water, sewer and garbage usage, if applicable on their utility bill.

**Landlord Agreement**

Policy and Procedure regarding **landlord agreements**:

1. The landlord may establish a landlord agreement with the City.

2. Per such an agreement, landlord shall have the right to disconnect any and all utilities at the designated address at his/her sole discretion.

3. The landlord agreement is for use by the City and landlords and shall not be used by anyone as an eviction notice to any tenant.

4. Upon signing and dating the City’s landlord agreement, the landlord is verifying to Wellington Municipal Corporation that he/she will provide the City an exact day and time of any proposed utilities service disconnection.

**Policy regarding connections and disconnections where certain medical conditions exist.**

1. When the Customer states that he/she/they have a medical condition which requires the use of water supplied life sustaining equipment and he/she/they cannot have the utilities service disconnected, the Customer must:

a) Provide the City a letter from their physician stating that their condition requires life supporting equipment that requires uninterrupted water and/or electrical service.

b) Provide the City a letter from their physician stating that their condition is either temporary or permanent. (If their condition is temporary, the Customer must furnish a letter to the City every six (6) months to continue disconnect agreement).

c) This portion of the City’s policy does not supersede the City’s policy regarding delinquent accounts and disconnections.

d) Payment arrangements must be made and kept between the Customer and the City.

e) The Customer’s utilities account must be paid current or disconnection will occur.

Utilities will not be disconnected until each individual situation has been discussed and evaluated with the Supervisor, Managers, Mayor and designated City Councilmembers.

**Schedule of Charges and Fees**

1. Residential Deposit Charges. The following shall constitute the utility deposit policy of Wellington City for all residential accounts:
	1. $200.00 - All new residential accounts (includes water, sewer, garbage, and secondary services).
	2. $400.00 – All residential customers with collection or bankruptcy action. Residential accounts listed in actions for bankruptcy shall be terminated through the date of the bankruptcy filing and a new account shall be opened in Customer’s name and a connection fee and deposit shall be charged. Customers that have failed to pay utilities or any other outstanding debt resulting in the filing of a collection action in the Wellington Justice Court.
2. Business / Commercial Deposit Charges:
	1. Three (3) times the estimated monthly service charge for all utilities. Estimates will be made based on previous utility charges OR charges from similar facilities OR based on estimates calculated by the Collections Department based on anticipated usage.
	2. Six (6) times the estimated monthly service charge for Business accounts listed in actions for bankruptcy shall be terminated through the date of the bankruptcy filing and a new account shall be opened in Customer’s name and a connection fee and deposit shall be charged. Customers that have failed to pay utilities or any other outstanding debt resulting in the filing of a collection action in the Wellington Justice Court.
3. Hydrant Meter Deposit:
	1. $500.00 Hydrant Meter Deposit
4. Connection Fees
	1. New Connection Fee: $25.00
	2. Reconnection Fee: $25.00
5. Late Fees:
	1. $ 15.00 – Fee assessed for door hanger late notices
6. Return Check Fees:
	1. $ 25.00 – Return check fee
	2. $ 50.00 – Return check fee for checks written on closed account
7. Call Out Fees
	1. $25.00 – During business hours
	2. $75.00 – After hours, weekends, & holidays
	3. $15.00 – Secondary Fee

**Miscellaneous**

1. Account disconnected for previous non-payment with no deposit available. Customer must pay account balance in full plus reconnect fee plus service deposit.
2. Additional accounts for an established Customer.

Customer must pay a service deposit for each additional account unless Customer’s has established good credit history with Wellington City. (No more than one (1) late payment within a one (1) year period on any utility account with City.)

1. All new Customer’s shall pay a deposit.

No new Customer shall receive utility service unless the Customer is an established Wellington City Customer with good credit history, or has paid the necessary deposit.

1. Deferred service deposit.

Customer must pay one-half of the required service deposit upon connection and the remaining one-half within two weeks of connection. Non-payment will subject account to termination and disconnection of utility services.

1. Individual using different names.

City will not connect utilities at an address where a Customer using a different name now resides and whose utilities were previously disconnected for non-payment or who currently owes money to City for previous unpaid utility or any other services.