

## WATER BILLING PROCESS

Each property located within the Town limits and receiving water and/or sewer service must have an active customer account. An application is required to establish an account as well as a meter deposit that will remain with the account until such time as the account is closed. All property owners and tenants are required to deposit a \$88.88 (one-month minimum water bill). Deposits are credited to the final bill or refunded if there is an overage in the account when a customer moves out. It is the responsibility of the customer to keep the Town aware of current contact information such as phone numbers, email addresses and mailing addresses.

Water/sewer bills are processed on the 1st of each month, or as the calendar allows, based on meter reads taken on the 15th of the prior month. The billing period covers the 16th of the month to the 15th of the following month and is calculated on the 1st of the next month. Example: July 16th to August 15th usage is calculated and billed on September 1st.

1) The first step in the billing process begins with the meter reads taken on the 15th of the month, or as the calendar allows, by the Public Works Department. Reads are taken electronically with a handheld device (interrogator) which is then downloaded into the water billing system. The billing program uses the reads to calculate the water charges for each account. Sewer charges are determined from an average of the reads for December, January and February and are set for the coming year beginning with the March 1st billing. The billing program combines the charges along with any other miscellaneous fees to produce an itemized bill. The billing period runs in arrears as there must be a read and/or usage to calculate charges.

2) Bills are sent out on the 1st of the month, or as close to the 1<sup>st</sup> as possible, and are due by the 15th of the month. There is an additional grace period of (5) days before late penalties are assessed. Payments are currently accepted in the form of cash, check, money order and debit/credit cards. The Town also offers an Online Bill Payment option for which payments may be submitted via the account holders active checking or savings accounts or with a valid credit card. Online Bill Payments may be made as a one-time payment or by enrolling in Auto Pay. One-time payments are subject to a \$3.95 Service Fee per transaction. Auto Pay payments are subject to a \$2.95 Service Fee per transaction. These payments are withdrawn from the account holders selected banking source or credit/debit card on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month so long as the account holder remains enrolled. Payments of over \$300 can be made in one transaction through EFT/ACH but will require being split into 2 or more transactions if made with a debit/credit card.

3) Late Notices are sent out to customers and copies are sent to landlords on the 21st of the month. A penalty of 5% of the balance is calculated and added to the existing balance. The notice gives at least (30) days for receipt of a delinquent payment before the next step of issuing a Shut Off Notice. If payment is not received within the 30 days of the mailing of the notice, a 1% interest charge on the unpaid balance per month will be added to your balance.

4) Shut Off Notices are sent out to customers on pink paper on the 21st of the following month if payment has not been received. A shut off notice informs the customer that if payment of the minimum balance due is not received by 9:00 AM on the shut off date (usually one week late, but not on Thursdays or Fridays), water service will be turned off. The shut off notice process also generates a 5% fee which is added to the customer's entire balance due. Example: For a July 1st bill due on July 15th and not paid, a shut off notice would be sent on August 21st for an August 28th shut off date.

5) If payment is not received per the shut off notice, a turn-off list is created for the Public Works Department., and they proceed with disconnecting service. There is a \$25 fee for disconnecting service.

6) Once service has been disconnected, payment of the delinquent balance is required to restore service. Public Works has established a time frame of up to 48 hours of receipt of this payment to restore service to fit into their schedule. There is a \$25 fee for reconnecting service. The property owner is responsible for any damage to their service line, interior plumbing or property that may occur as a result of the disconnected service (such as frozen pipes).

7) Properties with delinquent balances 60 days or more past due or abandoned and foreclosed properties with delinquent balances 60 days or more past due may be subject to a property lien filed with the Elbert County Clerk and Recorder. This lien will also be subject to a 6% penalty in addition to penalties already accrued above.

8) Returned checks are charged back to the account and an NSF fee is added. The customer is sent a letter informing them of the returned check and demanding payment in cash or certified funds within (10) business days or service will be discontinued. If a check is returned that was used to pay a red tag notice, the customer is subject to immediate turn-off without further notice. Upon receipt of a second NSF check within a six-month period, the customer will no longer be allowed to make payment in the form of a check or via debit card for a period of 12 months.

9) Lack of a curb-stop, unidentified location of a curb-stop or no access to a curb-stop can create difficult situations for the Public Works Department. In the event of an emergency, such as a line break or the enforcement of the shut off policy, there is no access to turn water off. The owner of such property can incur water damage and/or excessive fees if service cannot be turned off due to these circumstances. Each property owner is encouraged to maintain access to the curb-stop as a precautionary measure as it is ultimately his/her responsibility if an emergency occurs, and Public Works cannot remedy the problem due to inaccessibility.

10) Any payment made on an active customer's utility account in excess of their current amount due are credited to the customer's account for payment of future billings. No refunds will be issued for overpayments on any active accounts. Refunds for overpayment will only be issued for utility accounts being closed as part of the final billing process.