



WATER SHUT-OFFS EXPLAINED

Each year, there are numerous households and businesses that get behind in their water bills, which unfortunately makes them vulnerable to actions such as the shutting off of their public water supply and possible tax sale (*if customers are more than six (6) months in arrears*). **The Commission hopes that by maintaining affordable usage rates, that we can continue keeping the number of shut-offs each month to a minimum.** However, not every shutoff is due to a customer not being able to afford water. Some shutoffs occur because a property was abandoned or the owners simply forgot to pay. Others are temporary and either at the request of the property owner or required as a part of routine / emergency maintenance efforts.

In any event, if a customer is notified that their water is scheduled to be turned off, there are payment plan programs available <https://www.metcom.org/payment-options> to provide a remedy for those behind on their bills or are otherwise in financial distress. The following link provides community resources that are willing to make a pledge on behalf of our customers in need <https://www.metcom.org/financial-resources-for-utility-assist>. We have also established a water rate for low-income households that is based on their income. For those enrolled in the program monthly water bills are based a fixed percentage of their wages, in accordance with the State of Maryland.

Nonetheless, the billing department uses past-due balance and the billing cycle to determine accounts eligible for water shut-offs and issues a warning printed on their water bills. If the late-payers ignore those warnings, the department issues additional guidance to its customers. **The Commission tries to provide ample time and opportunity for customers to pay their water bills.** Once a disconnection notice is issued on an account, the past-due delinquent balance should be paid in full by the specified turn off date to avoid disconnection. Acceptable payment methods include cash, money order, Visa, Master Card or certified check at MetCom's Administrative Office prior to the disconnection date to avoid interruption of service. Unfortunately, personal checks will not be accepted.

The law, Chapter 113-13, <https://www.metcom.org/chapter-113-sanitary-districts> allows the Commission to discontinue water and sewer service for non-payment of any service, connection, inspection, benefit or any other charge if not paid within thirty (30) days of the due date. The formal **Service Disconnection / Turn-off Notice** mailed to both the Landlord/Owner(s) and Tenants, approximately 55 calendar days past date of bill. If payment is not made by that time, the department has the authority to dispatch meter technicians to close the valve that connects the main pipe to the house / business, and lock the meter box if there are any signs of tampering.

The billing department dispatches meter technicians who are able to process roughly 100 shutoffs per day. On designated days, water turnoffs are performed between 6:30 am and noon, with the afternoons being set aside to restore service to those customers that have paid. **Note:** *Not everyone will have water turned off immediately as the water department's shut-off personnel cannot shut off all past due properties at the exact moment they become eligible*



Once shut off, Chapter 113-13, requires, in addition to payment of the bill, that the Commission shall collect a Turn-off and Turn-on Charge before resuming services. Once service has been disconnected the past-due account balance, the Turn-off and Turn-on Charges/Restoration Fees (*water and/or sewer*) must be paid in full prior to restoration of service. **Since payments made online don't post to the account until the next day, we advise customers not to make payments online to restore service. Instead, payment must be made in cash, money order, Visa, Master Card or certified check at MetCom's Administrative Office.**