



**City Of Mora  
Mora Municipal Utilities  
Utility Billing Policy and Procedures**



## **SECTION 1. UTILITY BILLING POLICY**

The following policy shall govern the provision of municipal utilities of the City of Mora. The purpose of this policy is to provide consistent guidelines and rules for Mora Municipal Utilities (MMU) customers in terms of their regular utility bills. Individuals with questions concerning this policy or services provided by MMU are encouraged to contact the MMU billing department.

## **SECTION 2. UTILITY BILLING INFORMATION**

Water, sanitary sewer, storm water and electric charges, plus any fees, taxes, penalties, or previous balance, shall be billed on one (1) bill as applicable to each account. All bills shall contain the address and telephone number of the utility office. Bills shall be mailed to the customers on or before the last day of each month and specify the water and electricity consumed and all utility charges in accordance with the current fee schedule set by the Public Utilities Commission.

MMU shall maintain account records including customer's name, billing address, service address, account number, consumption history, payment history, service charges, penalties, and fees in accordance to the latest record retention schedule set by MCFOA.

### Utility Office Information

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, excluding holidays

Mailing address: 101 Lake St S, Mora, MN 55051

Office number/Emergency number: 320-679-1451

Website: [www.ci.mora.mn.us](http://www.ci.mora.mn.us)

## **SECTION 3. UTILITY SERVICE ACCOUNTS**

Water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer services shall be carried in the name of the owner who personally, or by his or her authorized agent, applied for such service. The owner shall be liable for water, sanitary sewer, and storm water services supplied to the property, whether he or she is occupying the property or not, and any unpaid charges (including taxes, fees and penalties) shall be a lien upon the property as outlined in Section 10.

Electric service may be carried in the name of the owner or tenant.

1. If carried in the name of the owner, a deposit for establishing service shall be waived. If carried in the name of the owner, the owner shall be liable for electric services supplied to the property, whether he or she is occupying the property or not, and any unpaid charges shall be a lien upon the property.
2. If carried in the name of the tenant a deposit to establish service shall be required. If carried in the name of the tenant the owner shall not be liable for any unpaid electric charges.

## **SECTION 4. RENTAL PROPERTIES**

All rental property owners will want to ensure a renter has completed the requirements to establish electric service in their own name to avoid receiving charges for a tenant's electric usage. Electric service may be carried in the name of a tenant residing at the property once the following conditions are met:

1. All tenants on the lease must come in to the utility office to complete an account application as outlined in section 5.
2. An applicant who does not own the property in which they are applying for municipal electric service must pay a deposit as determined in the utility rate schedule. The deposit is payable by cash, check, money order, or an assistance agency; debit/credit cards are not accepted.

The electric account does not transfer into the tenant's name until the application process is complete and the deposit is paid in full. The electric utility bills will continue to be sent under the owner's name as long as any part of the tenant application process is incomplete. When an owner allows a tenant to move in before these requirements are met, and a utility bill for usage by the tenant goes out to the owner, it is the responsibility of the owner to pay the bill and collect from the tenant.

Electric services will be terminated in the name of a tenant upon notification from either the tenant or owner that the tenant is/has vacated the property. The utility service will then revert to the owner of the property until a new tenant has completed the application process.

MMU will only disconnect a rental unit's municipal utility service upon a landlord's request if the unit is unoccupied at the time of disconnection and the landlord completes the appropriate process as outlined in Section 12. A ten (10) day notice must also be posted prior to the disconnection of services.

## **SECTION 5. ACCOUNT APPLICATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING MUNICIPAL SERVICE**

Any person, business, or contractor wanting to establish municipal utility services in their name must complete an account application for desired services and follow the regulations below:

1. Account holders must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
2. Applicants must provide their legal name, service address, billing address, phone number, social security number, birth date, a photo ID, and a signature for the application. Further information may be required for commercial accounts as it relates to the business's federal tax ID, etc.
3. A new application for service will be required for any change of residence or business.
4. Any outstanding accounts must be paid in full prior to establishing future accounts for an applicant.
5. In the event of a death requiring a name change on the account, a new application of service is required by the property occupant.
6. In the event of a divorce requiring a name change on the account, a MMU Change Form must be completed with proof of name change.

## **SECTION 6. UTILITY BILLING CHARGES**

All municipal utility charges and deposits shall be calculated in accordance with the specific rate established by the utility rate schedule, adopted by ordinance of the City Council. Charges for extra

services including but not limited to disconnection or reconnection fees, equipment fees, or other special charges shall be billed in accordance with the specific rate established by the utility rate schedule. Extra service charges may be included in the monthly utility bill if mutually agreed upon by customer and utility staff.

If a customer is serviced through MMU for any amount of time during a billing period, they are subject to a full month base charge for each municipal utility service.

Customer(s) shall be responsible for notifying MMU when their services need to be initiated and/or terminated. Meter reads cannot be backdated and therefore timely notification of closing/opening an account is required for accurate billing.

## **SECTION 7. BILLING CYCLE**

1. Meters are generally read on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. In the event that a reading cannot be obtained, consumption will be estimated by utility staff.
2. Bills shall be mailed to the customers on or before the last day of each month
3. Bills are due and payable on or before the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) day of each month. If the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date falls on the next business day.
4. The first (1<sup>st</sup>) business day following the due date shall be known as the delinquent date.
5. All delinquent accounts shall be assessed a late payment penalty on the full balance in an amount set forth by the City Council.
6. Failure to receive a bill will not excuse payment of bill, application of penalties, or the regulations pertaining to disconnection for nonpayment as outlined in Section 9.

## **SECTION 8. PAYMENTS**

MMU provides several payment options for utility bills:

- In Person – Cash, checks, money orders, and credit/debit cards are acceptable at the utility office.
- Drop Box – Located near the front door at the utility office for customer use.
- Mail – Payments may be mailed to the utility office at 101 Lake St S, Mora, MN 55051.
- Electronic – Customers may use the city website and pay via eCheck, credit/debit card, or bank bill pay using their online credentials. Customers may setup automatic withdrawal at their discretion.
- Auto Pay – Customers may sign up for MMU auto pay, which automatically withdraws on the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) of each month from their checking or savings account.
- ACH Payments – Electronic bank-to-bank payments are authorized via fax only.

Payments returned by any financial institution for any reason shall be charged a Returned Check Charge of \$30.00. MMU reserves the right to refuse checks and disable eChecks if two (2) consecutive payments are returned for insufficient funds.

## **SECTION 9. DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS, SHUT-OFF FOR NONPAYMENT**

### **1. Process for disconnection due to non-payment**

- a) If any bill is not paid by the due date listed on the bill, a second bill will be mailed by first class mail and shall state that if payment is not made within ten (10) business days of the mailing of the second bill, water or electric service to the premises may be shut off for nonpayment. The second bill and shut-off notice shall contain the title, address and telephone number of the official in charge of billing; the title, address and phone number shall be clearly visible and easily readable.
- b) Water or electric service shall not be shut-off until notice and an opportunity for a hearing before an employee designated by the public utility commission has been provided to the occupant and owner of the premises involved.
- c) If the balance remains unpaid or a payment agreement is not in place prior to 48 hours of the disconnect date indicated on the second bill, a door tag will be delivered to the property as a final notice.
- d) If a customer fails to pay, fails to make a payment agreement with utility staff, and fails to request a hearing under this part, service may be shut off on the date specified in the notice.
- e) Utility services will not be disconnected on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, holiday, or the day before a holiday.
- f) A written guarantee of payment from an assistance agency will be accepted as payment on the account to prevent disconnection provided the amount of the guarantee covers the past due balance as outlined in the notice.
- g) If payment for reconnection does not occur within twenty-one (21 days) calendar days of the date of disconnection, the account will be closed and a final bill will be issued. Any currently held deposit will then be applied to the outstanding balance on the final bill.

### **2. Payment Agreements**

In the event a customer is unable to pay their monthly utility bill by the due date, they are encouraged to arrange a mutually agreed upon payment agreement at the utility office, not to exceed thirty (30) days from the date of the scheduled disconnection. Utility staff has the right to reject a proposed payment plan if it is determined not to achieve the goal of bringing a customer's account current. If a customer fails to comply with their payment agreement, the utility services shall be subject to disconnect.

The following are the terms and conditions of MMU' payment agreement:

- a) All utility payment agreements for delinquent bills must be made at the utility office and signed by the customer and approved by MMU staff.
- b) Checks returned uncollectible will result in immediate shut-off.
- c) If a scheduled payment is missed, staff will issue one reminder door-tag, per payment agreement. Further payments not received by the indicated date will result in immediate disconnection with no further notice.
- d) MMU staff may send reminder emails pertaining to the agreement.

### **3. Reconnecting due to non-payment**

- a) Any outstanding balance, plus applicable fees, must be paid in full prior to reconnection.

- b) Payment must be received in the utility office before 4:00 pm for a same-day reconnection. If payment for reconnection is made after 4:00 pm, reconnection will occur on the next business day. Reconnection outside business hours is not permitted.
- c) Once reconnection is approved by MMU staff, services will be reconnected within four (4) hours.
- d) Checks returned uncollectible will result in immediate disconnect.
- e) In the event a rental unit's municipal electric service is disconnected, a landlord may assume responsibility over the account and request reconnection. The landlord must complete the utility's Reconnect Request Form and pay the applicable fee, billed in accordance with the specific rate established by the utility rate schedule.
- f) In the event the account has a final status, reestablishment of service by the disconnected customer at the same or another service address shall be treated as a new account and will be subject to application requirements as outlined in Sections 5.

MMU shall not be liable for any damage or loss sustained by customer resulting from service interruption.

## **SECTION 10. DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS, CERTIFICATION FOR COLLECTION WITH TAXES**

Each year, the Public Utilities Commission shall establish one (1) or more certification cutoff dates. All city utility accounts, unless exempt for other legal reason, which have been billed a delinquent bill that is sixty (60) days overdue and remain unpaid as of the certification cut-off date shall have the balance on the account included in a preliminary certification list.

Unpaid charges that are sixty (60) days overdue on utility accounts shall not be certified to the County Auditor until notice and an opportunity for a hearing have been provided to the owner of the premises involved. The notice shall be sent by first class mail and shall state that if payment is not made before the date for certification, the entire amount unpaid plus penalties will be certified to the County Auditor for collection as other taxes are collected. The notice shall also state that the occupant may, before such certification date, attend or schedule a hearing on the matter to object to certification of unpaid utility charges.

For each certification sustained, the property owner shall have the following options after the hearing:

1. To pay the certified delinquent amount after the hearing date, but before the certification deadline.
2. To pay the certified charges as billed to them by the county on their property tax statement with a collection term of one (1) year.

Fifteen (15) days after the hearing, the certified roll, minus any payments, shall be delivered to the County Auditor.

## **SECTION 11. DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS, COLLECTIONS**

Any final utility service billing left unpaid for over sixty (60) days shall be turned over for collection. In the event a delinquent utility service billing remains unpaid and/or has been turned over for collection, utility services may not be reinstated to the applicable user at any property in the utility service area until all delinquent charges and fees are paid in full.

## **SECTION 12. DISCONNECTING AND RECONNECTING UTILITY SERVICES, CUSTOMER'S REQUEST**

In the event a customer needs a utility service disconnected for over 24 hours, the account holder must complete and sign the utility's Reconnect/Disconnect Request Form and pay the applicable fee, billed in accordance with the specific rate established by the utility rate schedule. If the account holder is requesting municipal water service be disconnected or reconnected, there must be someone present at the home for both requests.

## **SECTION 13. BUDGET BILLING**

Budget Billing is available to residential property owners who want to pay an equal amount for their utilities over a twelve (12) month period. Customers who meet the qualifications for Budget Billing must return the completed application to MMU by May 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

The following criteria must be met to be eligible for Budget Billing:

1. Own and reside at the property address.
2. Have at least one (1) year of billing history at the property address.
3. Have their utility account paid in full.
4. Have no late payments during the prior six (6) months.

For more information, customers may request a copy of the Budget Billing Policy.

## **SECTION 14. COLD WEATHER RULE**

MMU abides by the State of Minnesota Cold Weather Rule for Municipal Utilities under State Statute 216B.097. The most current version of the Cold Weather Rule shall prevail. During the Cold Weather Rule period, the utility shall provide delinquent customers a copy of their Cold Weather Rule Rights and Responsibilities with each delinquent notice.

## **SECTION 15. MEDICALLY NECESSARY EQUIPMENT**

If the loss of utility service could lead to a medical emergency in your home, notify MMU and provide certified documentation of the medical condition. Certification can be obtained by a licensed medical doctor, a licensed physician assistant, or an advanced practice registered nurse. This certification must be renewed every six months. MMU may not disconnect a customer using medically necessary equipment to sustain life if:

1. The household income is below state median or is getting energy assistance and enters into a payment agreement where the customer pays 10% of monthly income toward the bill and remains “reasonably” current; or
2. The household income is above state median income and enters into a payment agreement establishing a reasonable payment schedule that considers the financial resources of the household and the residential customer remains reasonably current w/ payments under the payment schedule.

## **SECTION 16. MODIFICATIONS**

The Mora Public Utilities Commission may alter these policies and procedures or establish additional policies and procedures as it deems necessary.

## **SECTION 17. IMPLEMENTATION**

MMU shall proceed at once to do all things necessary to implement all provisions of this policy once adopted.

## **SECTION 18. INTERPRETATION**

The Utilities General Manager shall enforce these policies as written. In case of a dispute, the Mora Public Utilities Commission may review the point in question upon request.

This policy adopted by the Public Utilities Commission this 16<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2022.

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Greg Ardner  
Chair of Mora Public Utilities Commission

ATTEST:

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Glenn Anderson  
City Administrator/Utilities General Manager