

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

January 14, 2025

Page 1 of 3



SUBJECT: “NO WATER” INCIDENTS INVOLVING CODE COMPLIANCE AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES PARTICIPATION

Fort Worth Water’s (FWW) water shut-off and delinquency management process is designed to prevent customers from having unpaid utility bills. Customers are provided myriad opportunities to resolve outstanding balances before service disruption occurs. Outlined below are the key elements of the shut off process, actions involving Code Compliance, as well as support services offered by Neighborhood Services to assist residents in identifying resources for maintaining and restoring water service.

Water Shut Off and Delinquency Management Process

Water utility shut-off and delinquency management practices are detailed in IR 23-0742. Attachment A from that IR (and attached again here) provides an overview of the delinquency timeline. In addition to the monthly bill, customers receive an automated call and an urgent notice through the mail advising them of their unpaid balance prior to shut-off on day 52.

Code Compliance Involvement

Living without water service can lead to unsanitary living conditions and is against City code. Code Compliance receives such complaints from individuals, or discovers situations when looking into other issues. Sometimes, Water Customer Relations staff refers cases.

When Code receives a complaint, their staff investigates, notifies the occupants of the violation, and may issue notices or citations that set deadlines for service restoration. In extreme cases, staff may order that the property be vacated if conditions are deemed unsafe.

Fortunately, “no water” complaints are few, as noted in the chart below. They occur so infrequently that a “case type” in the utility billing system has not been developed for tracking purposes.

“No Water Service” Violations and Citations Issued

Fiscal Year	Total Code Violations	No Water Service Violations	% No Water Service	Citations
FY2024	35,023	176	0.50%	102
FY2023	33,217	118	0.36%	50
FY2022	39,035	184	0.47%	16

“No Water Service” Violations by Council District

Fiscal Year	CD2	CD3	CD4	CD5	CD6	CD7	CD8	CD9	CD10	CD11	Total
FY2024	30	7	3	32	11	4	28	16	4	41	176
FY2023	13	7	0	13	2	5	40	15	2	21	118
FY2022	30	14	2	48	14	9	41	15	0	11	184

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**January 14, 2025**

Page 2 of 3

**SUBJECT: "NO WATER" INCIDENTS INVOLVING CODE COMPLIANCE AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES PARTICIPATION****Water Utility Efforts to Prevent Delinquency**

The first tier of volume rates for residential customers is kept low and affordable for customers to meet basic needs of bathing, cooking and cleaning.

The utility notifies customers of possible leaks using Advanced Metering Infrastructure data and refers low-income customers to the utility's SmartRepair Plumbing Program for qualifying repairs.

Water Conservation replaces high-flow toilets and faucets with "WaterSense" water saving alternatives.

FWW provides flexible electronic billing and payment options, and leak repair bill credits under qualifying situations once leaks are fixed. Also, bill due dates can be extended or customers may be put on payment installment plans.

Neighborhood Services Department Outreach and Support

The Neighborhood Services Department works closely with FWW and plays an integral role in ensuring that residents facing water shut offs receive the support they need. The Community Action Partners (CAP) program is a division of the Neighborhood Services Department that serves as the Community Action Agency for Tarrant County and provides comprehensive services to economically disadvantaged customers. CAP receives funding from multiple sources, some of which goes toward water bill assistance.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Emergency Funds – Qualifying households can receive one-time water bill assistance per grant term. These funds can cover all fees excluding tampering fees. A household's gross income must be below 200% of the Federal Poverty Limit.

Forward Home Veteran Assistance (FHVA) Program – Qualifying veterans or veteran families can receive one-time water bill assistance per grant term. The grant may cover up to six months of arrears for all fees, including the current month, not exceeding \$3,000.00. The grant does not cover future months. The Housing and Urban Development's Area Median Income is used to determine eligibility.

City of Fort Worth's Water Donation Funds – Qualifying households can receive one-time water bill assistance per calendar year, as funding permits. The donations will cover arrears and the current month's bill, not to exceed \$300.00 per household. A household's gross income must be below 175% of the Federal Poverty Limit.

Repurposed State Agency Program Funds – Qualifying households can receive one-time water bill assistance per calendar year, as funding permits. A household's gross income must be below 175% of the Federal Poverty Limit. Assistance covers arrears and the current month's bill up to \$2,400.00. Households receiving assistance through other CAP programs are not eligible for assistance through this program.

Low-Income Housing Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) – Federal Funds Exhausted

Under this program, eligible households received up to eight months of water bill assistance, excluding garbage fees but including charges for Stormwater. Assistance covered outstanding utility bills (arrears) with up to \$85 per month paid in a lump sum to the utility. To qualify, household income had to be below

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January 14, 2025

Page 3 of 3



SUBJECT: “NO WATER” INCIDENTS INVOLVING CODE COMPLIANCE AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES PARTICIPATION

150% of the Federal Poverty Limit, though households above this limit were eligible if receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Means Tested Veteran’s assistance. Funding was available through both the CAP program and a state-run affiliate (Texas Utility Help). ***Future funding for this assistance is being considered in federal legislation, and staff encourages the City Council to support this program.***

Water Utility Assistance by Year and Funding Source

Funding Source	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
CSBG Emergency Funds	\$21,925.7	\$1,829.98	\$2,015.43	\$25,771.11
# of HH Assisted CSBG	58	6	4	68
FHVA Program	\$3,606.38	\$1,256.82	\$7,495.32	\$12,358.52
# of HH Assisted FHVA	1	8	22	31
COFW Water Donation Funds	-	-	\$4,399.46	\$4,399.46
# of HH Assisted COFW	-	-	20	20
Repurposed State Agency Funds	\$577.49	\$410.43	\$170.69	\$1,158.61
# of HH Assisted Repurposed	2	4	1	7
LIHWAP (NHS/CAP)	\$172,469.89	\$1,124,239.29	\$635,917.17	\$1,932,626.35
#HH Assisted LIHWAP	466	2538	1,908	4,912
LIHWAP (Texas Utility Help)	\$42,600.65	\$1,083,625.16	\$481.67	\$1,126,707.48
#HH Assisted Texas Utility	168	2212	2	2,382
Other Charities	\$144,331.40	\$263,595.91	\$132,324.21	\$540,251.52
#HH Assisted Other Charities	1,083	849	1,079	3,011
TOTALS BY YEAR	\$385,511.51	\$2,474,957.59	\$782,803.95	\$3,643,273.05
	1,778	5,617	3,036	10,431

Priority Repair Assistance – In addition to the financial assistance programs above, the Priority Repair Program helps Fort Worth homeowners in need of emergency or mechanical system home repairs, limited to once every 12 months based on eligibility. Types of repairs included as Priority One under the program include assistance with water service line breaks and other plumbing related concerns that often contribute to higher than normal bills which can result in customers falling into delinquency.

The City’s water shut-off and delinquency management process is effective at preventing prolonged service disruptions while balancing the needs of vulnerable residents. Code Compliance actions are rarely required, as proactive outreach and support from FWW and NSD programs ensure that most issues are resolved before they escalate. Staff’s focus remains on assisting residents with maintaining and restoring their water service to ensure healthy, safe living conditions.

Should you have any questions about “No Water” incidents, please contact Brian Daugherty, Code Compliance Director, at 817-392-6322; Kacey Bess, Neighborhood Services Director at 817-392-8187; or Chris Harder, Water Director, at 817-392-5020.

David Cooke
City Manager

Attachment A Delinquency Timeline

Day 1

Bill Date

Bill available on the portal/mailed for payment

Day 21

Due Date Current charges due within 21 days

Auto Pay Bank draft processed

Day 24

Late Fee Applied

10% fee on current charges outstanding 3 days after due date

Approx.
Day 30

Next Bill Available/Mailed

Indicating past due balance & itemizing late fee

Day 36

Delinquent

Becomes delinquent 36 days from bill date

Approx.
Day 37
1 day after delinquent

Outbound Dialer Call

Automated dialer call placed to qualifying delinquent accounts with minimum due of \$25.00 (residential) & \$500 (commercial)

Approx.
Day 39
3 days after delinquent

Urgent Notice

Letter generated and mailed to all customers; available on the portal

Approx.
Day 52
16 days after delinquent

Water Shut Off

Work order created to shut off water and location notified with door tag (delinquency must be at least \$75.00 to trigger cut-off) \$20 fee is assessed to next bill

**For information on payment options and bill assistance:
FortWorthTexas.gov/water**