

Burns Flat Utilities Authority

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Billing and Collection Policy

This policy summary is published to inform you of the required terms of sale and conditions of receiving utility services from Burns Flat Utilities Authority (BFUA). Awareness of the policy will enable you to protect your own payment history with Burns Flat Utilities Authority, and will help protect all customers for the high cost incurred when accounts go unpaid. A poor payment history with BFUA may result in additional fees or deposits being charged to you as well as interruption of services.

1. APPLYING FOR SERVICES

Residential Services - All customers must apply in person for all services. Applications will generally not be taken by phone, fax, or otherwise. Customers will be required to provide a photo ID, such as a state issued drivers license or any ID verifying U.S. Citizenship, sign work order for service, and pay all deposits and fees. All customers requesting service will also be charged a \$25.00 non-refundable service connection fee. Service is usually connected the same day if applied for by 4:00 p.m.

Commercial Services - The business applying for service should send someone authorized to sign for the business. The customer will then provide identification, sign work order for service, and pay all deposits and fees.

Each customer is required to put up a deposit when applying for utility service. The BFUA will not accept Letters of Credit. No exceptions will be made.

Schedule of Charges for Starting Service

Deposit.....	\$200.00
Connection Fee.....	\$25.00

If an outstanding bill from a previous address in the customer’s name exists, the entire amount due must be paid before the new application will be accepted.

Customers discontinuing service will do so in person or by telephone if the customer can verify identifying information. The customer is responsible for the utility bill until such notice is given, regardless of whether or not the customer continues to occupy the premises. The account deposit will be applied to the customer's final utility bill. Any remaining funds of the deposit will be mailed to the address listed on the customer’s account within 45 days of the account closure.

2. BILLING

All meters will generally be read the third or fourth week of each month. Bills will be processed and mailed on the last working day of the month. Bills may be paid Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in person at the BFUA office at 222 HWY 44, with cash, check, credit/debit card, cashier's check, or money order, or over the phone using a credit/debit card by calling 580-562-3144; phone payments will include a convenience fee charge of \$2.50. Payments may also be deposited at anytime in the secure drop box located on the south side of the BFUA office, just past the drive through window. For information on the auto-draft bill payment option contact the Utility Billing Clerk.

Since all bills are for utility services used by the customers in the month prior to the receipt of the bill, all bills are due by the 10th of the current billing month. If the 10th falls on a holiday or weekend, bills are due on the next working day. A **10%** penalty is added to the amount of the bill if it remains unpaid after the penalty date, normally the 11th day of the month in which the bill is received. All payments will be applied to the account in the following order: EMS, garbage, sewer, and water.

The customer is responsible for reviewing their bill and checking for errors. If the customer feels an error has been made on the utility bill or otherwise questions or disputes the amount of the bill, the customer should discuss the situation with the Utility Billing Clerk. If the customer does not feel satisfied after the discussion with the Billing Clerk, the customer may discuss the problem with the Town Administrator. The customer must report any issues within the billing cycle that it occurs. If it is determined that a credit is due it will be applied for that bill. Credits will not be issued for disputes raised thirty (30) days after the billing cycle.

A customer may request a water meter inspection if the customer believes the meter reading is inaccurate. As a courtesy, there will be no charge for the initial meter check. However, for subsequent checks, there will be a minimum charge of **\$25.00** for testing, plus any additional fees required. This amount will be waived if the tests are out of Burns Flat Utilities Authority's accuracy specifications (2%).

3. LATE PAYMENTS

A bill is considered to be "late" or "delinquent" if payment is not made on or before the penalty date. If payment is not made on or before the penalty date, a charge of **10%** will be added to the customer's bill. Late notices will be mailed on the 15th day of the month. If the 15th falls on Saturday or Sunday, the notices will be mailed the previous Friday. Late notices will state that payment should be made by 4:30 p.m. on a specific day, normally the 20th day of the current month.

4. EXTENSION OF TIME FOR LATE PAYMENT

In the event of an emergency a deferred payment arrangement can be made to continue receiving service. The customer must come in to the BFUA to fill out and sign the payment arrangement. There will be a **\$50.00** service charge payable on the date specified in the payment arrangement. If payment is not made on or before the arranged date, an additional deposit of **\$100.00** will be required to continue service with Burns Flat Utilities Authority. No requests for arrangements will be accepted on or after the cut-off date. Arrangements will not be granted for 12 months after a customer has been disconnected for nonpayment of the bill.

Payment in full must be received on or before the arranged extension date. Letters of guarantee from state agencies, tribal authorities, banks, or any other entities, do NOT constitute payment. Payment must be in the form of a negotiable instrument such as cash, check, or money order.

5. RETURNED CHECK POLICY

If a customer's check is returned to us by their financial institution for insufficient funds, any subsequent checks will not be accepted as payment. The payment must be in cash, credit/debit card, cashier's check, or money order in the utility billing office. A fee of **\$25.00** will be charged for processing the returned check. Any late fees that would have been incurred on the account on or after the date the check was received had the account not been classified as paid, will be applied to the account. The customer will be notified of a returned check with a door hanger placed on the service address door by a utility serviceman. Payment must be made within 48 hours of the notice or services will be discontinued.

6. DISCONNECTION FOR NONPAYMENT OF BILL

The Late Notice states full payment is required on the past due bill. However, the amount of the late penalty may be carried over to the next month's bill if the amount of the original bill has been paid. Although partial payments are accepted, partial payments leaving a balance exceeding the penalty amount will not prevent utility services from being discontinued for nonpayment. A customer may be disconnected for any amount exceeding the late penalty for any payments made after 4:30 p.m. of the business day before cut-off day.

If the bill is not paid on or before 4:30 p.m. on the 20th, or the last business day before cut-off, a **\$50.00** processing fee will be added to the account and utility service will be discontinued the next day, or as soon as practical. Customers leaving payments in the night deposit box after 4:30 p.m. the business day prior to cut-off day and making payments before the serviceman does the actual disconnects, will be assessed the **\$50.00** processing fee, even though service may have not been disconnected. Any customer leaving a payment in the night deposit box without the **\$50.00** processing fee added to the total of the bill, will be disconnected. After 4:30 p.m. the day before cut-off, full payment of the past due balance and appropriate reconnection fees must be made, even if the customer comes in to pay before the service has been disconnected.

When the serviceman arrives at the location for which the disconnect order was issued, the serviceman is required only to disconnect the utility service. He is not required to contact the customer. He is not authorized to accept payment of the bill or to discuss a partial payment.

When a customer has been disconnected for non-payment, an additional deposit of **\$100.00** may be required by the Town Clerk. All arrears and fees must be paid in full before services will be re-connected.

7. RECONNECTION OF SERVICE

Once a customer has been disconnected for nonpayment, the entire past due balance, including the \$50 processing fee, must be paid before utility services will be restored. Once payment in full has been made, reconnection will be between the hours of 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Under normal circumstances reconnections are not made after regular office hours. If for some extreme circumstance a reconnection must be made after hours, the customer must pay an additional after-hours reconnection fee of **\$75.00**, in addition to the disconnect fee. The after-hours reconnection fee must be paid before 4:00 p.m. the following workday, or service will be terminated again.

If a customer has been disconnected for nonpayment, their security deposit is less than **\$200.00**, and the delinquent amount exceeds **\$100.00**, an **additional** security deposit of **\$100.00** may be required before service will be resumed with the BFUA. The additional deposit plus the entire past due balance shall be paid before utility services are connected.

8. COLLECTION OF AMOUNT DUE BY ANOTHER PARTY

All active customers should make all utility bill payments to the BFUA. After 30 days of their final bill date, former customers who have not paid their final bill to the BFUA date shall be subject to having their account referred to a collection agency. If possible, an attempt will be made to contact the customer by letter, prior to contacting the collection agency. At the time the account is referred to a collection agency, a collection fee equal to the amount of the collection agency's charge for collecting the account will be added to the customer's account. Most collection agencies charge a fee, which is a percentage of the amount collected, generally 50%.

Payment for utility bills referred to a collection agency will be accepted at the BFUA located at 222 Highway 44, in the form of cash, credit/debit card, cashier's check, or money order.

9. TRANSFER OF SERVICE

When an existing customer moves from one residence to another within the town of Burns Flat, a request for a transfer of service must be made to the BFUA, with a date for the new service connection and a date for disconnection of the old service at the time of the request. A connection fee of \$25.00 will be charged on the customer's next monthly bill for the new connection. Service at the old residence may be left on after the service at the new residence is established for a period of no longer than two (2) weeks. At the end of two weeks, if service at the old residence is still active, service will be disconnected and a \$200.00 deposit must be made by the customer if service is to be retained at the old residence.

Service may NOT be transferred from one customer to another individual or entity. The account holder must discontinue their account and they will receive their deposit as described in Section 1 of this policy. The new customer must set up a new account in accordance with Section 1 of this policy, including the payment of a deposit and connection fee.

10. OTHER CHARGES

A charge of **\$25.00** will be added to the customer account if the meter is not accessible for reading. A charge of **\$100.00** will be added to the account for meter tampering. This could include reconnecting the customer's own water, or simply opening the meter can. Damaging the meter, any equipment in the meter can or damage to the meter can, will result in a \$300.00 fee to be paid before services are resumed. Also, any person doing any of the above activities may be charged with Tampering with Municipal Utilities, which is a felony. A minimum charge of **\$35.00** will be added to the account if solid waste is on the curb in excess of what will fit in the provided poly cart(s).