

Adopted by BOS 10/16/17
(see minutes)

TOWN OF CHESTER

MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE WATER DEPARTMENT/COMMISSIONERS

WATER SHUT OFF POLICY

1. Purpose: The Town of Chester, Water Commissioners established the following policy for the nonpayment of water service bills or for the disregard of water system rules, regulations or policies. This policy is to ensure that all water utility fees are paid in a timely manner and that all water system rules, regulations and policies are followed.
2. Criteria for Termination/Shut Off of Services: All accounts which are in delinquency of at least ninety (90) days for non-payment of water fees or are in excess of five-hundred dollars (\$500.00) in unpaid account balances and fees. All accounts which violates the rules, regulations and policies of the Water system.
3. First Notice – 90 Days: A delinquent account letter will be sent to the Owner of the property to notify them that they are past due in their water account. The Owner has fifteen (15) days from the date of the letter to contact the Water Department Accounts Receivable representative and make full payment or arrangement for payment schedule. Tenants of a rental property will also be notified so that they make take action in accordance with Massachusetts Tenants Rights.
4. Second/Final Notice – 105 Days: The final notice warns that water service will be shut off if payment is not received within 7 days of date of notice. Included in the final notice will be an orange “shut-off notice door hanger” with termination date clearly noted. Notification will be made to the Water Commissioners, Highway Superintendent and Board of Health of pending termination. Water Commissioner will be notified of any account holders who receive a second/final notice.
5. Payment to Avoid Termination: All accounts which have been notified of termination of service via 105-day final overdue notice, must be paid by bank check, money order or cash directly to the Water Department Accounts Receivable clerk. **Field utility personnel cannot accept payment for past due accounts.** Contact Water department at 413-354-7811 for hours of availability.
6. Termination of Service: If account remains delinquent upon 7-day final grace period, the Water Department shall issue a shut off work order to utility field personnel for immediate shut off.
7. Tampering of Service: Should a location turn their water service back on without Town approval, the account owner shall be subject to legal prosecution for tampering with Town property. The said water service shall be immediately re-terminated of service and account owner will be charged an additional two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00).
8. Reinstatement of Service: A one hundred and thirty-dollar (\$130.00) reinstatement fee will be charged to account holder. Upon payment, in full, of delinquent account balance plus reinstatement fee, or upon approved and accepted collection agreement by Water Department personnel, utility field service personnel will be notified to reinstate or turn service back on to location. Water service “turn-ons” will be made during normal Highway Department business hours 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Water service “turn-ons” which occur outside normal Highway Department business hours will be charged an additional two-hundred-dollar (\$200.00) service fee, paid in full, prior to water service reinstatement.
9. Customers may appeal the shut off to the Board of Selectmen. There are special provisions (MA Regulation 220 CMR) against shut-offs related to financial hardship, illness, personal safety and families with infants and elderly households.

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WATER DEPARTMENT IMPORTANT NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS

All water through a meter shall be charged whether used or wasted.

All checks must be payable to the Town of Chester.

All current water rates and fees shall be on file in the office of the Water Commissioners.

The owner of the property will be charged for all water furnished to the premises during his/her ownership. When ownership changes, the name and address of the new owner should be given to the Water office at once so that bills may be properly rendered.

Failure of the owner to receive a water bill does not relieve them from an obligation of payment, nor from the consequence of nonpayment. When a meter fails to register an actual reading or if an actual reading cannot be obtained then the quantity of water used will be estimated and the charge shall be based on its registration for a corresponding prior period or quarter.

The Board of Water Commissioners reserves the right, at all times, to shut off water temporarily without notice for repairs, extension, alteration, or other necessary work connected with the water system and for nonpayment of bills, neglect, or refusal to comply with the rules and regulations of the Board of Water Commissioners. All persons having boilers or water heaters not fitted with check valves or other safety devices or not supplied through tanks are notified that neither the Town of Chester or the Board of Water Commissioners nor their agents will be responsible for damage resulting from any water supply shut off.

A customer charge will be applied to all active accounts;

An active account is defined as property being supplied water service whether occupied or vacant.

Tampering of service will result in a charge of two hundred and fifty-dollars (\$250.00) charged to the account and may result in legal prosecution.

All water bills are due and payable within 30 days of the date of issue. If payment is not received, on the 90th day from the date bill was originally issued, a past due reminder will be mailed noting that payment is due within 15 days of the mailing of the past due notice. If payment is still not made, a second and final notice will be mailed including a "Door Hanger" notice with termination date clearly noted. If payment or payment arrangements are not made within 7 days from the mailing of final notice, water service will be terminated. A one hundred and thirty-dollar (\$130.00) reinstatement fee will be added to the account. Accounts which are 90 days or more past due or are in excess of five hundred-dollars (\$500.00) past due will be subject to termination of service.

All charges must be made in cash, check or money order to the water department accounts receivable clerk. Field service personnel cannot accept payment.

Finally, a Lien will be placed against your property if the bill is not paid in a timely manner as per Mass General Law Chapter 83 section 16A, 16B and Chapter 40 section 42 as most recently amended by Chapter 487 of the Acts of 1954.

Requests for corrections/abatement must be submitted in writing to:
Water Commissioners 15 Middlefield Road Chester MA 01011