

# Customer Policy Manual

---

## *Valparaiso Department of Water Works*

---



---

**March 2004**

---

DEPARTMENT OF WATER WORKS  
205 BILLINGS STREET  
VALPARAISO, INDIANA

**Board Of Directors**

Jack Barkley	President
Glenda Snyder	Vice President
Robert Schwartz	Secretary
Ed Spanopoulos	Ass't Secretary
Dr. Kenneth Luther	Treasurer

**General Manager**  
John Hardwick

**Attorney**  
Michael Langer

**PHONE NUMBERS**

Office: 462-6174 F.L. Plant: 462-4542  
Garage: 462-3800 Emergency: 462-4542  
FAX Number: 477-4254  
Billing Questions: 462-6174  
Service Line Locates: 1-800-382-5544  
Trash/Recycling: 462-4612

Welcome! You are now in an area that is being served by the DEPARTMENT OF WATER WORKS, CITY OF VALPARAISO.

Our management is constantly striving for methods to serve you better. As a result, we had this booklet printed, in hopes that it will help you to better understand your water utility.

Please visit our website: *<http://www.valparaisowater.org>*

## **ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION**

Water Works employees who deal with the public are required to carry identification cards with his or her photograph on it.

Our vehicles are light blue with the American Water Works Association logo on the side.

## **BILLING DATES**

The Water Works has two billing periods. If your account number begins with 10, you will receive your bill on approximately the 5th of each month. You have until the 20th of the month to pay the current net amount.

If there is any past due balance showing, this must be paid by the 10th. See "Shut Offs" for detailed information.

If your account number begins with 20, you will receive your bill on approximately the 15th of the month. The current net bill is due by the 1st of the following month. Any past due balance, however, must be paid by the 20th of the month in which you receive the billing.

## **PAYMENT AND LOCATION**

Our office hours are 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If our office is closed for a holiday, notice is posted ten days prior to the holiday. In addition to our office and our drive-up window, we have two night deposit boxes. One is located next to our drive-up window, and the other is located at City Hall. Payments can be dropped in these last two locations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We recommend, for your protection that you place your payment, along with the return stub portion of your bill in an envelope before dropping it into the night deposit. You may also pay your bill by mail by addressing it to: Department of Water Works, 205 Billings Street, Valparaiso, IN 46383-3699.

## **DEPOSITS**

As a new customer opening an account, a deposit based on the size of your meter is required before water can be turned on. For residents, it is a minimum of \$50.00. This deposit will be returned to you after 24 months of good credit or after you have paid your final bill. We will waive this deposit if you sign up for ACH (Automatic Bank Payment Service) when you open your account and sign a waiver stating that you will have ACH with no NSF checks for a period of 24 months. If you should decided to cancel or have an NSF check, you would need to put down a deposit immediately. No interest is paid on the deposit. PLEASE NOTE: This deposit is for water only and cannot be used to pay any portion of your sanitation

bill. The State Board of Accounts will not allow any portion of the deposit to be applied to your sanitation bill. In the event that a resident moves without paying his or her final bill, the deposit is applied to the water portion of the bill, including sales tax and penalty. If there is still a balance owed on the water portion, this is turned over to our attorney for collection. If the sanitation portion is not paid, a final notice will be sent to the owner of the property. If this does not result in payment, it is turned over to the Porter County Assessor's Office to become a lien against the property.

## **WATER METERS**

In April, 2000 the Department started an intensive Residential/Commercial water meter change out program. The new water meters and RadioRead System are made by Invensys Metering Systems, a leading manufacturer of water flow measurement equipment and systems. The new water meters are equipped with RadioRead electronic devices which transmit the water measurement data to a portable unit carried by the meter reader or a mobile device used in a vehicle. The new system will save time, increase efficiency and help reduce meter reading and billing errors.

If your meter is inside a building or basement, our meter readers no longer need to bother you to visually read the meter for regular reading cycles. Meters in underground reading pits can be read without crossing lawns or property lines in most cases. No more trampled lawns or shrubs.

The chance of reading or billing errors in your water bills will be greatly reduced because the reading data is electronically transferred from the meter and used to prepare bills by a computerized process.

Our meters register in cubic feet, not gallons. There are 7.48 gallons per 1 cubic foot. 100 cu. ft. = 748 gallons.

Minimum bills are based on your meter size. For any consumption under 300 cubic feet, or for a billing cycle of less than thirty days, you are still required to pay a minimum bill for each month.

## **LEAK DETECTOR**

The new meters have a low flow leak detector-the black triangle visible under the meters lens cover. The triangle rotates whenever water is passing through the meter, even at extremely low flows, such as when small leaks occur in the piping system.

To use this leak detector, turn off all your water outlets including such automatic devices as the ice maker in the refrigerator, then watch the triangle for about one minute. If it does not move, it means your plumbing system is not leaking.

If you wish to check your water usage, the new meters can be visually read

by the odometer wheels under the clear lens housing.

It is unlawful for anyone other than an employee of the Department of Water Works to repair or adjust the meter. Should our serviceperson notice that someone has tampered with a meter, he will report the incident to the office. The customer will then be billed three times his highest bill during the past year plus labor and parts required to make the needed repairs.

## **YARD METERS**

An additional meter may be installed off of your domestic service line for yard watering purposes. The plumbing configuration must be in compliance with the Department's policy. There is an additional charge to add this meter. Call the Construction Department for more details.

This meter is charged for water usage only. There is no charge for sewage or fire protection on this meter. There is a minimum charge based on meter size per month. The customer is responsible to order the water off in the winter to avoid paying a minimum bill when the line is not in use. There is a service fee to shut off the water and another service fee to turn the meter back on in the spring.

## **MAKING PAYMENT**

1. May be mailed in return envelope provided.
2. May be dropped off at 205 Billings Street in \_\_\_\_\_ person at the drive-up window or the night deposit box.
3. May be dropped off at the drop box at City Hall.
4. Through Automatic Bank Payment Service. Applications available at our office.
5. CREDIT CARD- call toll-free: 1-877-278-2205 or pay online at [www.officialpayments.com](http://www.officialpayments.com)

## **HIGH BILLS**

If your bill seems to be higher than usual, compare the actual consumption, not the dollar amount. While the rates may have changed, your consumption should not fluctuate greatly.

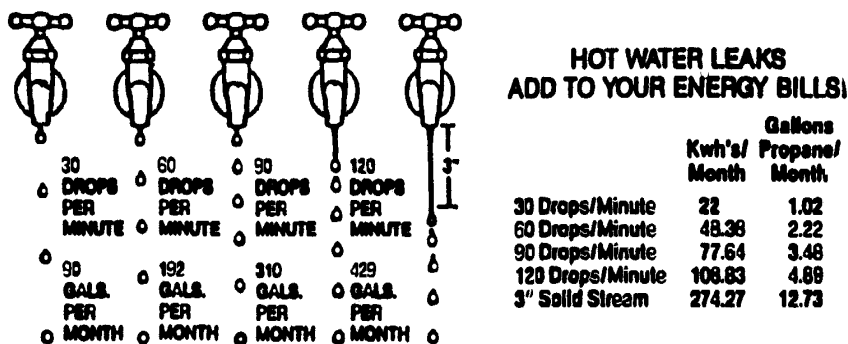
Almost all homes develop plumbing leaks over time. These leaks can add up to a significant amount of wasted water ... and a dent in your household expenses. Leaks always get larger and cost you more, in the volume of water and repair bills, the longer you wait to repair them.

Toilet tanks are often the largest source of water losses in your home. They are notorious for their hidden, silent loss of water.

Just a small, invisible toilet leak of only two tablespoons per minute, comes to

15 gallons per day, 105 gallons per week, and 5460 gallons per year! And leaks of this small nature are not uncommon. Many toilets quietly run, leaking many unnecessary gallons each day.

## FIX THE LEAKY FAUCET!



Average loss of water from leaking faucets over a period of 1 month

Toilet Leak Detection Kits are available in our office free of charge, We ask that you test all of your toilets before we send a serviceworker out.

Look particularly around these tank parts:

- the *Flush Valve* and attached *Plunger Ball*
- the *Flapper Seal* at the bottom of the tank
- and the standing *Overflow Pipe*

Toilet tank leak typically result from worn parts - they need replacing - or from misalignment of some part of the flushing mechanism.

Most repairs can be done by an experienced “do-it-yourselfer.” If you’re not sure you can handle the job, your local hardware store may be able to help.

Otherwise call a plumber. It is important to stop the leak. Make sure to check your toilet tank at least twice a year.

If you have tested your toilets and they are working properly, the next thing to look for is a leaky faucet or hose bib.

If you still cannot find the cause of your high consumption, then call our office (462-6174).

There are several reasons for shut offs.

1. **Transferring Service.** You are moving to another location. Please call for an appointment to terminate your service. This must be done during the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Be sure to give your forwarding

address so that when you pay the final bill, your deposit can be mailed to you. If you are moving to another location within our service area and wish to leave the water on at both places and you have a good paying record, we will allow you to have water at both places for no longer than forty-five days without paying another deposit.

2. **Going Away.** If you are going away for some time and do not wish to have a minimum bill every month that you are gone, you may make an appointment to have the water turned off. Notify us **in advance**, when you want it turned on. Current service fees will be charged for this service. If you wish to leave the water on while you are gone, you will be charged a minimum bill. Please notify our office of any address change.

3. **Non-payment of bill.** Those in group 10 receive their bill on the 5th of the month and have until the 20th of the month to pay the net. The bill must be paid by the 10th of the following month or service will be terminated.

Those in group 20 receive their bill on the 15th of the month, and have until the 1st of the following month to pay the net bill. The bill must be paid by the 20th or service will be terminated. In the event we must send a serviceperson to your home to collect for a past due bill or terminate your water service for non-payment, there is a service fee in addition to the total water bill. Both must be paid before service is reinstated.

Reconnection for terminated service must be scheduled between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. After 4:30 p.m., the customer will be required to pay the overtime rate in addition to the service fee. It is not our policy to turn on water between 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

## **SERVICE FEES**

There are times when you will be billed a service charge to defray costs that are attributable directly to your needs. You are required to pay a service charge when, for example:

1. Your meter is turned off for non-payment.
2. Your service is turned off for your convenience (Vacations, summer home, yard meters, etc.)
3. Your service is reinstated after it has been turned off for any of the above (item 2).

#### 4. NSF checks.

### **CHECKS**

Willfully writing a check without sufficient funds in your account to honor it is a crime in the State of Indiana. It is our practice to give you an opportunity to make the check good at our office **before** we contact the County Prosecutor for legal action. If it is possible to contact you by phone, we do so; otherwise, you will receive correspondence from our office. You will then be given the opportunity to pick up the check at our office and pay your debt in cash. An additional service fee is also billed to you at this time. We will only accept cash or a money order in payment of your bill when this has occurred.

Your service will be terminated and an additional service fee will be billed to you if the check is not satisfied within the time specified.

Also, our office does not accept third-party checks. The check must be drawn on your personal account, a cashier's check, or a money order. The only exception to this is a Social Security or Traveler's check which is honored.

We also request that you place your account number on your check prior to mailing payment to us.

### **SERVICE LINE RESPONSIBILITY**

Each customer has a separate service line. The Water Works is responsible for maintenance of this line from the water main to the curb stop. The curb stop is located between the curb and the sidewalk. The customer is responsible from the curb stop to the house. In event of freezing, call the Water Works.

Our serviceperson will locate the frozen area. If it is frozen between the water main and the curb stop, the Water Works will thaw at its expense. If the frozen area is between the curb stop and the house, it will be the customer's responsibility and expense. If your service line develops a leak between the water main and the curb stop, we will repair it at no cost to you. However, you must pay for all repairs if the leak is between the curb stop and your home.

### **RATES**

Rate schedules for water, sanitation and storm water are available at our office or on our website at <http://www.valparasiowater.org>.

### **SPRINKLING AVERAGE**

All residential customers whose account number begins with the letter R and have at least three bills prior to June, will receive the summer reduced sewage rate for five (5) months. The charge is based on the average of your December through May consumption. The discount starts on your June bill and continues through your October bill. For further information, please contact our office at 462-6174.

**Ordinance No. 9, 2001.**

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Common Council of the City of Valparaiso that Section 103.04 herein E be amended to read as follows:

In order that the single family domestic and residential users of sewage service shall not be penalized for the use of water for lawn care and others uses during spring and summer consumption months. The billing form sewage services for residences and/or domestic uses for the months of May, June, July, August and September (billing months of June, July, August, September and October) shall be based upon the average water usage for the previous billing months of December, January, February, March, April and May. The sprinkling rate allowance shall not be available to users who have occupied the billed premises for less than three (3) months and not received 3 bills prior to the sprinkling rate billing period. In the event the water usage for the consumption months of May, June, July, August and September is less than the average of the previous months, then the billing for sewage services shall be computed on the actual water used in the month for which the sewage service bill is being charged. Domestic and/or residential sewage service as applicable to the sprinkling rate shall apply to each lot, parcel of real estate or building, which is occupied and used as a single family resident. For purposes of this section condominiums shall be treated as single-family residences.

The sprinkling rate set out herein shall not apply to any premises, which are partially or wholly used for multi-family, commercial, industrial or other non-residential purposes. The owner of any multi-family, commercial, industrial or other non-residential property, which is used partially for residential purposes shall have the right to obtain separated water service for the residential portion of the premises and, if such separation of water service is obtained by the owner, then that water service used solely for residential purposes would qualify for the sprinkling allowance desires to be considered for such allowance, then such user shall petition the Board of Public Works and Safety in writing for consideration for this allowance.

**SWIMMING POOL OWNERS:** It is your responsibility to make sure that your route has been read by the Water Department and that you have signed up for the sprinkling option to cover the sewage charges on the water used to fill the pool. If you fill your pool before you are covered by the Sprinkling Average, you will be responsible to pay the sewage charges on the water.

**PAYMENT OPTIONS**

To accommodate our customers, we have several ways in which to pay your utility bill. Payment can be made at our office in person or through our drive-up window during regular business hours. Return envelopes are provided for mail payments. Automatic Bank Payment Service (ACH) is also available for your convenience.

Credit card and online payments can be made through Official Payments at 1-(877) 278-2205 or at [www.officialpayments.com](http://www.officialpayments.com). There is a service fee assessed to payments made by credit card via phone or online. **We are sorry, but Visa does not accept charges through Official Payments Corporation.** MasterCard, Discover, and American Express can be used.



Enjoy the convenience,  
flexibility, and rewards of  
credit card payments



---

## Valparaiso City Utilities

Water, Sewer, & Storm Water Payments

---

Call toll-free 1-877-278-2205  
or pay online at  
[www.officialpayments.com](http://www.officialpayments.com)

At the prompt, enter Jurisdiction Code 2413

After authorization of your payment, you will be given a  
confirmation number that you should keep for your records.

There will be a nominal fee for this service.

**This fee is paid directly to Official Payments Corporation.  
Valparaiso City Utilities does not receive  
any portion of the service fee.**

See reverse side for the convenience fee schedule.

PAYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY:

OFFICIAL PAYMENTS CORP.



[www.officialpayments.com](http://www.officialpayments.com)



# Valparaiso City Utilities

## Water, Sewer, & Storm Water Payments

### CONVENIENCE FEE SCHEDULE

#### PAYMENT AMOUNT:

From	To	\$ FEES
1	99.99	4.95
100	199.99	8.95
200	399.99	15.95
400	599.99	23.95
600	799.99	31.95
800	999.99	39.95
1,000	1,499.99	59.95
1,500	1,999.99	79.95
2,000	2,699.99	108.95
2,700	3,499.99	139.95
3,500	4,399.99	176.95
4,400	5,399.99	216.95
5,400	6,399.99	256.95
6,400	7,399.99	296.95
7,400	8,699.99	348.95
8,700	10,399.99	416.95
10,400	12,999.99	520.95
13,000	17,399.99	696.95
17,400	20,999.99	840.95
21,000	27,999.99	1,120.95
28,000	35,999.99	1,440.95

Note: Fee schedule is subject to change.

**This fee is paid directly to Official Payments Corporation.  
Valparaiso City Utilities does not receive  
any portion of the service fee.**

For payments above \$36,000, please contact the Official Payments Corp.<sup>SM</sup>  
Special Services Group at 1.877.754.4420

OFFICIAL PAYMENTS CORP.



www.officialpayments.com