

What is SB 998?

Also known as the Water Shutoff Protection Act, was signed into law in September 2018. The **purpose** is to provide additional procedural protections and safeguards to California residents whose water bill is delinquent, that California residents are treated fairly by way of contesting a bill, seeking alternative payment, or demonstrating medical need or severe financial hardship. The **goal** is to minimize the number of California residents who lose access to water due to their inability to pay, as it would threaten human health and well-being, and have a disproportionate or disparate impact on infants, children, the elderly, low-income families, communities of color, people for whom English is a second language, physically disabled persons, and persons with life threatening conditions.

What are the main points of SB 998?

- ✓ Water systems must adopt written discontinuation policies that are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean, and any other language spoken by 10% or more people within the system's service area. The policies must contain certain information, and be posted on the water system's website.
- ✓ Water systems may not discontinue residential water service due to delinquent payment until payments are delinquent at least 60 days. After that time, the water system must attempt to provide notice to customers by telephone or in writing, and provide information about appeals, extensions, and alternative repayment options.
- ✓ Water systems may not discontinue residential water service if all of the following take place:
 - 1) a primary care provider certifies that the discontinuation of water service will pose a serious or potentially fatal threat to a resident;
 - 2) the customer demonstrates inability to pay; and
 - 3) the customer is willing to enter into an alternative payment arrangement. A customer can demonstrate an inability to pay based on the receipt of certain public assistance by someone in the household, or a declaration from the customer that the household is below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- ✓ Water systems must limit certain low-income customers' reconnection fees to no more than \$50 during regular business hours, and \$150 during non-regular hours.
- ✓ Water systems must attempt to provide notice to renters and mobile home residents that their service may be discontinued due to delinquent payments by their landlords, and that the

residents have the right to become customers of the water system without paying the past-due amounts on the landlords' accounts.

- ✓ Water systems must annually post on their websites the number of times the system has discontinued service due to inability to pay.

When does SB 998 take effect?

The City must comply with SB 998 by February 1, 2020.

How does SB 998 affect the City's residential water customers?

Residential water customers must be delinquent for sixty (60) days prior to discontinuation of residential water service. However, the customer may avert this provided that all of the following are demonstrated:

- ✓ A primary care provider certifies that discontinuation of water service will be life-threatening or pose a serious threat to the health and safety of a resident on the premises where service is provided; and
- ✓ A customer demonstrates he or she is financially unable to pay; and
- ✓ A customer is willing to enter into one of the payment options provided by the City, which includes an amortization agreement, alternative payment schedule, or temporary deferral of payment.

What are the delinquency fees?

The fees assessed per the Fee Schedule include:

- 1) Delinquent/underpayment charge: \$19.00
- 2) Notice (door hanger): \$19.00
- 3) Delinquent water per turn-off: \$23.00
- 4) Delinquent water per turn-on: \$30.00
- 5) After hours restoration: \$150.00 (per turn-on)
- 6) Returned check: \$40.00

Where can I find a copy of the City's policy on SB 998?

The City's policy is available here, and also available in the following languages: Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean, and Arabic.