



City of Santa Barbara

Utility Service Discontinuation Policy

Dated
July 1, 2026

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City of Santa Barbara

Utility Service Discontinuation Policy

At the City of Santa Barbara, we are committed to providing our residents with reliable water and trash services. To ensure that our policies are clear and fair for both residential and commercial customers, we have established a policy on utility service discontinuation for nonpayment.

This policy outlines the steps taken when an account is past due and the options available to avoid service discontinuation for residential, commercial, industrial, irrigation, recycled water, and trash services. It ensures compliance with California Senate Bill 998 (Water Shutoff Protection Act) for residential customers while providing consistent, transparent, and equitable practices across all customers.

Past Due Utility Bill Timeline of Notifications and Service Discontinuation

A utility bill is considered past due if payment is not received by the due date printed on the billing statement. When the utility bill is past due, the following steps will be taken to notify the customer and provide options to resolve the overdue amount:

10 Days Past Due Date: Overdue Notice Mailed

If an account has a balance that is 10 calendar days past the original due date, the customer will be mailed an overdue notice. This notice will remind customers of the overdue amount and provide information on how to bring the account current. A late fee will be assessed if payment is received after the due date printed on the billing statement.

50 Days Past Due Date: Service Disconnect Notice Mailed

If an account has a balance that is 50 calendar days past the original due date, the account is considered delinquent, and the customer will be mailed a utility service disconnect notice. This notice will inform the customers that their water and/or trash services may be discontinued 70 calendar days after the original past due date.

60 Days Past Due Date: Door Tag Notice Placed

If an account has a balance that is 60 calendar days past the original due date, a door tag and copy of this policy will be placed at the service location. This will serve as a final reminder and provide the customer with the opportunity to take immediate action. The only way to avoid service disconnection at this point is to pay all past due balances in full or enter a payment plan.

70 Days Past Due Date: Service Discontinuation

If an account has a balance that is 70 calendar days past the original due date, a door tag was placed at the service location at least 10 calendar days prior and no payment plan was completed, the water and/or trash services will be discontinued.

Options to Avoid Service Discontinuation

We understand that financial hardships can happen to anyone, which is why we offer all customers the option to enter a payment plan for deferring payments. This option is available to all customers, prior to their water and/or trash services being discontinued. By entering the payment plan agreement and timely paying all amounts due, customers can avoid service interruption and manage their overdue balances.

Customers who enroll in a payment plan, pay their current bill, and make monthly installment payments on time will not have their water or trash service discontinued.

Customers who are low-income or have a medical condition do not need to provide proof of their status or condition. To avoid service discontinuation, the Customer must enter into a payment plan agreement with the City of Santa Barbara and remain current on all payments both under the payment plan and payments due for the regular monthly utility bill.

Payment Plan Details

When customers choose to enter a payment plan to avoid water and/or trash service discontinuation, it is imperative to understand the structure and requirements of the arrangement. Customers must sign a legally binding agreement, which stipulates the terms of the payment plan. Monthly installment payments for the amount specified in the agreement must be paid by the due date. **In addition to the agreed-upon payment-plan payments, customers must also make their current utility bill payments.** This means customers will have two amounts to pay each month: the payment plan installment and the regular monthly utility bill.

It is essential for customers to remain aware of their monthly payment obligations and ensure that the correct amounts are paid each billing cycle. The monthly bills will continue to show the total past due balance and do not list the monthly payment plan installment amount. If a customer is unsure what to pay each month, the Utility Billing office can provide up-to-date payment due amounts over the phone or by email.

Customers are eligible to maintain only one active payment plan at any given time. After the payment plan is finalized, modifications or extensions are not available. All existing payment plans will not be modified or extended. The maximum term of a payment plan is 12 months. Payment plan terms are available in four durations of either 3, 6, 9, or 12 months, depending on the amount of the current past due balance, as outlined below:

Past Due Balance Owed	Payment Plan Term Length
\$0.01 to \$500	3 months
\$500.01 to \$1,500	6 months
\$1,500.01 to \$3,000	9 months
Over \$3,000	12 months

Customers can request a payment plan from the Utility Billing office by calling (805) 564-5343 or emailing UtilityBilling@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

Default of Payment Plan

When a payment plan installment and current monthly bill are not paid on time, customers will receive a notification in the form of a door tag. Continued nonpayment may result in service being discontinued.

Door Tag Notice Placed

If an account under a payment plan is not current on installment and monthly bill payments, a door tag along with a copy of this policy will be placed at the service location. This will act as a final notice that payment is required and provides the customer the opportunity to take prompt action. To avoid discontinuation of service, customers must either remit the full outstanding balance or ensure both the previous payment plan and monthly bill charges are brought up to date within the payment plan term.

Service Discontinuation

If an account under a payment plan is not current on installment and monthly bill payments, and a door tag notice has been placed at the service location with a copy of this policy, water and/or trash services will be discontinued.

Post-Disconnection Requirements

If water service is disconnected, it is important to know that customers are required to pay all utility bill account balances in full before service can be restored. Additionally, a water service reconnection fee will be applied. Fees can be found in the City of Santa Barbara Schedule of Penalties, Fees and Service Charges, at <https://santabarbaraca.gov/finance/budget-reports>

The city recommends taking advantage of the payment plan option before service is disconnected to avoid any inconvenience and ensure continuous water service.

For information on regular and after-hours operations, customers can visit the City of Santa Barbara Utility Billing website at: <https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Utility-Billing>

Returned Payments

If a payment is returned—whether made by paper check or through an electronic method such as ACH or credit/debit card—a returned payment fee will be assessed and the payment will be considered unpaid.

There are two types of returned payments, each with different procedures:

1. Returned Payment Plan Installments

When a payment made toward an approved payment plan is returned, the customer is considered to have broken the payment arrangement. In accordance with SB 998, the account becomes eligible for service disconnection. A written notice will be mailed to the customer advising them of the returned payment and providing the required SB 998 disconnection timeline. To avoid service interruption, the customer must bring the payment plan current or pay the full past-due balance.

2. Returned Standard Billing Payments

When a returned payment applies to a regular monthly bill and the account is not past due by 60 days, the customer will be mailed a notice explaining that the payment was returned and advising them to submit a replacement payment.

For all returned payments, customers must make subsequent payments using cash, cashier's check, or money order.

Understanding the Options and Responsibilities in a Renter and Landlord Situation

Protections for Tenants

California's SB 998 legislation includes specific provisions to protect tenants in rental properties when it comes to water service discontinuation. If a tenant's landlord is responsible for the water bill, certain protections apply to ensure tenants are not unfairly impacted by a past due account.

Notification Requirements

The City will notify tenants of impending disconnection by hanging a door tag and copy of this policy at the service residence at least 10 calendar days prior to disconnection. This notification serves as a final reminder and provides tenants with the opportunity to take immediate action to avoid service interruption.

Options for Tenants

Tenants will have the option to assume responsibility for the water service account, without being required to pay any amount that may be past due or pay the past due amount directly to the city to maintain service.¹

Requirements for New Account Holders Taking Over Delinquent Accounts

There are times when an account is delinquent and a new owner or tenant wishes to open a new account for the delinquent accounts service address. In some cases the new account holder will not be responsible for paying the previous account holders past due balances. To set up a new account, the property owner or tenant shall provide a copy of a grant deed, property tax bill, or lease agreement listing all residents living at the service address to set up a new account.

¹ See California Health and Safety Code section 116916
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=116916
for more information regarding tenant's rights and obligations.

Reporting

The city reports the number of annual disconnections of residential water service on the City's website. It should be noted that this includes all customer water disconnections, regardless of whether the disconnection was due to financial inability or other reasons such as moving out.

Procedure for Appealing a Disputed Utility Bill

The review and appeal process for disputing a utility bill is included in this policy to ensure that all customers have easy access to the necessary information and are fully informed of their rights and options in case of a dispute. Additionally, while a utility bill is under review for an appeal, the water and/or trash services will not be discontinued, ensuring uninterrupted service during the review process.

1. Review by Finance Director

A customer who desires to dispute the accuracy of a bill for water, sewer, and/or refuse service shall, no later than ninety (90) days from the date of the original bill, submit a written request to the City's Finance Director, or their designee, for review of the bill. Upon such a request, the customer shall be given an opportunity for a review and investigation, hearing by the Finance Director, or their designee, concerning the accuracy of the bill. The Finance Director, or their designee, shall have the authority to correct an erroneous bill. The customer shall be given written notification of the decision regarding the dispute. All decisions of the Finance Director or their designee shall be final.

2. Discontinuance of Service for Failure to Pay

Water service will be discontinued if a bill has not been paid in full and a timely and proper appeal has not been filed or an appeal has been denied and the appeal is final.

3. Notice

Under this appeal procedure, notice by City is deemed to be given when (1) personally given to the customer, (2) enclosed in an envelope addressed to the customer with postage prepaid and deposited in the United States mail, or (3) sent to the customer via email if an email address has been provided and the original submission was made electronically.

This policy is intended to provide clarity and reassurance that the City of Santa Barbara is committed to supporting customers. The aim is to collaborate with customers to ensure that all city services, including water and trash, remain uninterrupted and that any concerns or disputes are addressed fairly and efficiently.

Up-to-date information such as office hours and ways to pay utility bills can be found on the city website at: <https://santabarbaraca.gov/utility-billing>.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the city Utility Billing department via phone at (805) 564-5343.

Resolution No. 2026-051

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA BARBARA APPROVING THE REVISED CITY OF SANTA BARBARA UTILITY SERVICE DISCONTINUATION POLICY

WHEREAS, The City provides water and solid waste collection services to residential and commercial customers and is responsible for administering utility billing and collection procedures; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill (SB) 998 (the “Water Shutoff Protection Act”) established statewide requirements governing the discontinuation of residential water service due to nonpayment, including minimum notification standards, protections for low income customers and medically vulnerable households, and a minimum 60 day delinquency threshold before disconnection may occur; and

WHEREAS, The City previously adopted a Utility Service Discontinuation Policy to comply with SB998; and

WHEREAS, After several years of implementation, staff identified opportunities to modernize the Policy to improve clarity, consistency, customer communication, and administrative efficiency; and

WHEREAS, The revised Policy establishes standardized and equitable procedures for discontinuation of water service in compliance with SB 998 and for discontinuation of trash service consistent with City objectives. ; and

WHEREAS, The revised Policy was reviewed and approved by the City Attorney’s Office; and

WHEREAS, The City Council desires to adopt the revised Utility Service Discontinuation Policy to support fair, transparent, and consistent administration of utility billing services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA BARBARA THAT:

1. The City Council hereby adopts the revised Utility Service Discontinuation Policy, attached hereto as *Exhibit A* and incorporated herein by reference.
2. The City Administrator, or designee, is authorized and directed to implement the Policy, including updating procedures, notices, customer materials, and administrative practices as necessary to ensure compliance with State law and City objectives.

3. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-051

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
)
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA) ss.
)
CITY OF SANTA BARBARA)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Council of the City of Santa Barbara at a meeting held on June 30, 2026, by the following roll call vote:

- AYES: Councilmembers Eric Friedman, Oscar Gutierrez, Meagan Harmon, Mike Jordan, Wendy Santamaria, Kristen W. Sneddon; Mayor Randy Rowse.

- NOES: None.

- ABSENT: None.

- ABSTENTIONS: None.

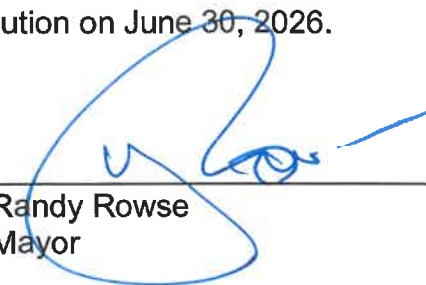
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the City of Santa Barbara on June 30, 2026.





Sarah P. Gorman, MMC
City Clerk Services Manager

I HEREBY APPROVE the foregoing resolution on June 30, 2026.



Randy Rowse
Mayor