

SECTION 2.3 CUSTOMER BILLING AND COLLECTIONS – WATER ACCOUNTS

SECTION 2.3 CUSTOMER BILLING AND COLLECTIONS – WATER ACCOUNTS**2.3-1 POLICY**

Customers shall be charged for all water furnished in accordance with the rates and rules as established by Helix Water District.

2.3-2 RELATED PROCEDURES

See Section 2.5, Turn Off for Nonpayment.

See Section 2.12, District Fees and Charges.

2.3-3 BILLING PROCEDURES**A. Normal Billing Procedure**

1. Each water account shall be billed bimonthly.
2. Accounts are delinquent 21 calendar days after the due date.
3. Delinquent accounts shall have a late payment charge added, as shown in Section 2.12, and a past due notice will be mailed. If a customer has not been late within his/her two-year payment history, the penalty will automatically be waived.
4. Any customer unable to pay for water service within the normal payment period may request an extension or amortization arrangement to avoid disruption of service by contacting customer service prior to the disconnect. The district will consider all circumstances surrounding the request and make a determination as to whether the payment arrangement is warranted.
5. If a past due notice does not result in a payment and the customer is not under a payment arrangement agreement with the district, steps outlined in Section 2.5, Turn Off for Nonpayment, shall be followed.

B. Closing Bill Procedure

1. Whenever a customer closes an account, a final reading will be taken and a closing bill rendered.
2. For amounts due on closing bills beyond 21 calendar days, a letter will be sent to the customer as a final reminder of the amount past due. At

this time the customer will also be notified that additional collection steps will be taken if Helix Water District does not receive payment.

3. Unpaid balances from a customer may be added to other accounts of the same customer. Such charges shall become part of the customer’s active account and shall be subject to Section 2.5, Turn Off for Nonpayment, if the balance remains unpaid.

C. Classes of Service

The following classes of water service apply within Helix Water District.

CLASS	CODE	DESCRIPTION
Domestic	(D)	Single-family residence, indoor or outdoor use, includes residences with second-family units, i.e. "granny flats."
Multi-Family	(M)	More than one residential unit served by the same meter (apartments, duplexes, mobile home parks, condominiums, etc.). Excludes second-family units.
Commercial	(C)	Business or mixed use (e.g. business and residential on the same meter).
Government	(G)	Government agencies (e.g. cities, state, school districts, etc.).
Irrigation	(I)	Landscape only, no dwellings, buildings or other structures, or businesses served.
Irrigation - Government	(F)	Governmental agency landscape only, no dwellings or businesses served. To be billed at irrigation class rate.
Irrigation - Agricultural Business	(A)	Single-family residence, which meets agricultural business criteria. To be billed at irrigation class rate.
Temporary	(T)	Temporary meters used for construction purposes.
Medical Necessity	(Q)	Domestic account with special water rate credit due to medical condition (requires physician’s verification).
Fire Service	(S)	Fire protection lateral (not metered).
Fire Service - Government	(U)	Fire protection lateral (not metered) government agencies.

D. Disputed Classification

Any person, corporation, partnership, public agency or other entity objecting to his/her classification established by the Helix Water District shall have the right to file an appeal with the district, provided the appeal is filed in writing at the offices of the district at 7811 University Avenue, La Mesa, California 91942. The written appeal shall include information on zoning, a description of types of water use, permits, licenses, business records and tax records for the subject meter(s) located at the identified parcel of property. Reclassification will be subject to periodic inspection and submittal of information in order to qualify for continuation at the classified rate. Any such appeal shall be reviewed by the general manager, or his/her designee, and a written response will be mailed or personally delivered within 15 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the general manager, or his/her designee, shall be final.

E. Appeals

1. Any customer desiring to contest the validity or accuracy of his/her bill shall, before the delinquent date, notify the district's customer service department. If a customer service representative, customer service supervisor or manager is unable to satisfy the customer, his/her claim may be reviewed by the review manager.
2. The review manager shall be designated by the general manager. The review will include consideration of whether the customer may receive an extension or other payment arrangement.
3. If a customer is not satisfied with the review manager's determination, the customer may, within seven calendar days, request a review by the board of directors. The customer shall be informed of the time and place for appearance before the board.
4. A decision by the board of directors shall be final.
5. Service will not be discontinued during the period the validity or accuracy of a bill is being contested. When a decision has been reached, the customer must pay all charges and penalties by the bill's due date for the bill or seven calendar days from the date of the decision, whichever date is later, to ensure continued service.

SECTION 2.5 TURN OFF FOR NONPAYMENT

2.5-1 POLICY

Helix Water District shall discontinue water service for nonpayment of water or other district charges.

2.5-2 DEFINITIONS

Nonpayment as used herein shall mean the failure of the customer to pay all past due charges and penalties by the due date of the past due notice or other notice from the district of pending shutoff.

Turn off shall mean the discontinuance of service at an address by turning off and/or locking a meter, or the removal of a meter.

2.5-3 RELATED PROCEDURES

See Section 2.3, Customer Billing and Collections - Water Accounts.

See Section 5.3, Cross-Connection Control.

2.5-4 PROCEDURE

Any customer's account which remains unpaid for 60 days beyond the delinquency date will be subject to turn off.

A. Notices

1. After a late payment charge has been added, final notices shall be prepared for all delinquent accounts indicating the total amount due, and the final date for payment to avoid shutoff.
2. For residential service, the following notices will be provided prior to turn off.
 - a. The district will provide a mailed notice to the customer at least 15 days before discontinuation of water service. The notice will include:
 - i. Customer's name and address
 - ii. Past due amount
 - iii. Date by which payment or arrangement must be made to avoid the disconnection

- iv. Process to apply for an amortization agreement
 - v. Process to dispute or appeal bill
 - vi. Helix Water District phone number and address
- b. Under the following circumstances, the district will also send a notice to the occupants of the service address at least 10 days before discontinuation of water service: (1) when water is provided through a master meter; (2) when water is provided through individually metered service to a single-family residence, multi-unit residential structure, mobile home park, or farm labor camp, and the owner, manager, or operator is the customer of record; or (3) when the customer of record's mailing address is not the same as the service address. The notice will be addressed to "Occupant," will contain the same information as the notice to the customer, and will inform the occupants that they have the right to become customers of the district without paying the amount due on the delinquent account. Terms and conditions for occupants to become customers of the district are provided in subsection (E). If the district is unable to provide mailed notice to occupants of a master-metered residential property, the district will make an alternative good faith effort to provide the notice to the occupants.
- c. The district will also make a reasonable, good faith effort to contact the customer of record or an adult person living at the service address in person or by telephone at least seven days before discontinuation of service. The district will offer to provide in writing a copy of this policy and to discuss options to avert discontinuation of water service.
- d. If the district is unable to make contact with the customer or an adult person living at the service address in person or by telephone, the district will make a good faith effort to leave a notice of imminent discontinuation of service and a copy of this policy in a conspicuous place at the service address. The notice and copy of this policy will be left at the residence at least 48 hours before discontinuation of service.
3. For all other services, including commercial, the district will attempt to notify the premises of the pending termination at least 10 days before actual shutoff.

B. Circumstances In Which Service Will Not Be Discontinued

1. Helix Water District will not discontinue residential water service for nonpayment under the following circumstances:
 - a. During the investigation of a customer dispute or complaint received by the delinquency date.
 - b. During an appeal under Section 2.3, Customer Billing and Collections – Water Accounts.
 - c. During the period of time in which a customer’s payment is subject to a district-approved extension or other payment arrangement and the customer remains in compliance with the approved payment arrangement.
2. In addition, residential customers who meet all three of these conditions will not be shut off:
 - a. Customer demonstrates that he/she is financially unable to pay within the district’s normal billing cycle, and
 - b. The customer, or tenant of the customer, submits certification from a licensed primary care provider that the discontinuation of service will be life threatening or pose a serious threat to health and safety of a resident of the premises, and
 - c. The customer is willing to agree to an extension or enter into an amortization agreement.

If a customer meets the three conditions outlined above and needs additional time to pay the unpaid balance, they must contact the customer service department before the discontinuation of service. Prior to shutoff, the customer will be required to submit a letter from a licensed primary care provider and evidence of financial inability to pay. Evidence may include: (a) documents showing that a member of the customer’s household is a current recipient of CalWORKS, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or (b) a statement signed under penalty of perjury that the household’s annual income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Once the amortization agreement or extended payment date is in effect, the customer must pay all future bills by the due date. Failure to pay all future bills by the due date terminates the amortization agreement or extended payment date and all unpaid balances become due immediately. Further, if the customer is delinquent on an amortization payment, extended payment, or his or her current water bills for 60 days or more, water service may be terminated after posting a five-day notice of intent to turn off water service. The final notice will not entitle the customer to any investigation or review by Helix Water District.

Amortization may not exceed 12 months without general manager approval and requires customers to keep all future billings current. See Section 2.3, Customer Billing and Collections - Water Accounts.

3. When a check, autopay or online payment is not honored by a customer's bank (returned payment), the account shall be considered unpaid and subject to turn off. Only payment in the form of cash, money order or cashier's check will be accepted to pay for the returned payment, returned payment fee and deposit charge, if applicable.
 - a. If it is determined that a payment was made in person, online or placed in the drop box on or before the shutoff deadline date in order to avoid service interruption and/or a deposit charge being assessed and that payment is subsequently returned by the bank unpaid, a door hanger will be delivered to the service address advising the customer that payment for the returned payment and the deposit charge, if applicable, must be made within five business days to avoid interruption of service and field service charge. Payment must be made by cash, money order or cashier's check only.
 - b. In the event a customer's check, autopay or online payment is returned by the bank unpaid three times within a year, a letter will be mailed to the customer notifying them that only cash, money order or cashier's check will be accepted as payment for three consecutive future billing periods.
4. Any accounts with a balance due equal to or less than the district's bimonthly 3/4" base charge, and are not under a payment arrangement as outlined in Section 2.5-4, shall not be turned off. The charges shall be carried forward to the next regular bill.

5. Unpaid balances for damage to Helix Water District's property or miscellaneous charges may result in the discontinuance of water service.

C. Turn Off of Water Accounts

1. When the meter is locked, all costs associated with damage to district appurtenances will be at the account holder's expense. This includes replacement cost for a broken or missing lock.
2. If a customer claims by personal or telephone contact with the administration office to have mailed a payment which was not received by the turn off date or because of other unusual circumstances, service may be continued until the scheduled follow-up shutoff.
3. Following payment of delinquent charges and/or meeting compliance criteria, customers whose water service is reinstated after 5 p.m. will be required to pay an emergency after-hours unlock fee. See Section 2.12-2(C), One-Time Service Charges. Customers whose water service is reinstated prior to 5 p.m. will pay a regular service call charge.

D. Restoration of Water Service

Customers whose water service has been discontinued may contact the district by telephone or in person regarding restoration of service. Payment of all charges, including any field service calls, as outlined in Section 2.12, will be required for restoration of service.

E. Follow-up After Turn Off

If service has been discontinued, a follow-up investigation will be made to ensure that the service is in an inoperative status. If it is found that the meter has been tampered with or turned on, Section 2.12-3(B) will apply.

F. Procedures for Occupants or Tenants to Become Customers of the District

This subsection (E) will only apply when a property owner, landlord, manager or operator of a residential service address is listed as the customer of record and has been issued a notice of intent to discontinue water service due to nonpayment.

1. District will make service available to the actual occupants if each occupant agrees to the district's terms and conditions of service and these rules and regulations. Notwithstanding, if one or more occupants

are willing and able to assume responsibility for subsequent charges to the account to the satisfaction of the Helix Water District, or if there is a lawful, physical means of selectively discontinuing service to occupants who have not met the requirements of the district's rules and regulations, the district will make service available to the occupants who have met its requirements.

2. In order for the amount due on the delinquent account to be waived, an occupant who becomes a customer must verify that the delinquent customer of record is or was the landlord, manager or agent of the dwelling. Verification may include a lease or rental agreement, rent receipts, government document indicating that the occupant is renting the property, or information disclosed pursuant to Section 1962 of the Civil Code, at the discretion of the district.
3. If prior service for a period of time is a condition for establishing credit with the district, residence and proof of prompt payment of rent for that period of time is a satisfactory equivalent.

G. Contact Information

For questions or assistance regarding your water bill, the district's customer service staff can be reached at (619) 466-0585. Customers may also visit the district's customer service desk in person, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., except on district holidays.