



## **LAKE CRYSTAL MUNICIPAL UTILITIES BILLING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

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## SECTION 1. UTILITY BILLING POLICY

The following policy shall govern the provision of municipal utilities of the City of Lake Crystal, Minnesota. The purpose of this policy is to provide consistent customer rules and guidelines. Individuals who have questions regarding the service provided by the City of Lake Crystal are encouraged to contact the City Administrator.

## SECTION 2. UTILITY BILLING INFORMATION

Municipal utility services being provided and billed for in Lake Crystal, Minnesota consist of water, sanitary sewer, solid waste removal and recycling, and electric service. All municipal utility services being billed for are included on one (1) billing for each account. Municipal utility services and this policy both include residential and commercial users.

The City of Lake Crystal shall maintain account records for each customer that includes the customer's legal name, billing address, account number, service address, current charges, and account history including consumption, past due charges, penalties, and fees.

### Utility Billing Hours

Office hours: Monday through Friday  
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### Utility Billing Contact Information

Mailing address: 100 East Robinson Street, Lake Crystal, MN 56055  
Phone number: (507) 726-2538  
Emergency Number: (507) 726-2260  
Website address: <http://www.lakecrystalmn.org/>

## SECTION 3. UTILITY SERVICE ACCOUNTS

Effective July 1, 2016, all accounts shall be carried in the name of the property owner. The property owner shall be liable for all utility services supplied to the property, whether property is owner occupied or not, and any charges unpaid shall be a lien upon the property.

## SECTION 4. RATE CALCULATION

All municipal utility charges shall be calculated in accordance with the specific rate established by ordinance, resolution, or policy as adopted by the Lake Crystal Public Utilities Commission and applicable to each municipal utility or service provided to a customer.

## SECTION 5. ADDITIONAL CHARGES

Billings for extra services, disconnection or reconnection of services, installation charges, or other special charges shall be billed in accordance with the applicable utility or service rate resolution and shall be included on the appropriate monthly billing statement or as a separate bill.

## SECTION 6. MUNICIPAL UTILITY SERVICE APPLICATION

1. Any person, firm or corporation desiring to establish any municipal utility service or combination thereof shall make application for said service(s).

2. **Effective January 1, 2016**, all new municipal utility service accounts may only be placed in the property owner's name. The owner shall be responsible for the utility service billings on the said property.
3. Applicants must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
4. The application shall be on such form(s) as may or now hereinafter be prescribed by Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities.
5. The application shall include the applicant's name, service address, mailing address, telephone number, employer, and signed agreement form.
6. Each service location shall be considered a separate account.
7. The Utility will not activate new accounts on a service location that has a delinquent account; all accounts must be paid in full prior to establishing future accounts at the same property.
8. Applicants must agree to the installation of a load management device on all eligible equipment as a condition of receiving electric utility service. For more information on load management, please refer to Section 13 of this policy.

## SECTION 7. BILLING CYCLE

### **Meter Read Date**

1. Meters are read in the final four (4) days of each month by utility staff.
2. In the event that a meter reading cannot be obtained, the consumption will be estimated by the Utility Clerk.

### **Billing Period**

1. Utility service billings are mailed to each and all utility service users monthly using the address on file.
2. Utility service billings are mailed on or before the sixteenth (16<sup>th</sup>) day of each month.
3. The date the bill is created shall be known as the billing date.
4. Utility service billings are due and payable on or before the thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) day of each month.

### **Delinquent Date**

1. After the thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) day of each month, or the twenty-eighth (28<sup>th</sup>) of February, unpaid utility service billings become delinquent, and a ten percent (10%) penalty may be added to all delinquent utility service billings.
2. Delinquent fees shall not be refunded.
3. Delinquent fees will be calculated and automatically added to accounts by the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) day of the following month.

## SECTION 8 RENTAL UNIT POLICY

1. Effective **July 1, 2016**, the Utility will no longer bill rental utility billings to the renter.
2. All utility billings will be billed to the property owner.
3. If one of the following events occurs before July 1, 2016, the utility billing for that property will be billed directly to the owner:
  - a. Current renter moves before July 1, 2016.
  - b. The utility billing has been delinquent more than six (6) times during the past twelve (12) months.
  - c. Service has been disconnected for non-payment during the past twelve (12) months.
  - d. Utility billings will continue in renters name until the renter moves or at such time one of the above occur. At that time, the utility billing will be transferred to the property owner.

## SECTION 9. DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS AND DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE

1. Notice of utility service billing delinquency will be mailed to each delinquent utility service account holder by the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day of the month following the delinquency.

- a. This notice shall serve as the final notice.
2. The notified delinquent utility service account holders will be given fourteen (14) days to pay the delinquent utility service billing, including all penalties, or to make arrangements for the payment of the same.
  - a. The past due balance must be received in the drop box at City Hall by 8 a.m. on the disconnection day listed, or any customer who has not yet paid will be disconnected. Disconnections will occur on the Wednesday following the fourteen-day (14) period.
3. If following the notice of delinquency and the fourteen (14) day payment period a delinquent utility service billing remains unpaid and no effort by the account holder has been made to pay the said bill, the Lake Crystal Utilities Superintendent shall be directed to disconnect the delinquent service account from the Lake Crystal municipal electric and water services
4. Utility service will not be disconnected on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday or the day before a legal holiday.
5. Delinquent utility service billings remaining unpaid, and over sixty (60) days delinquent, shall be turned over for collection. If a delinquent utility service billing remains unpaid and/or has been turned over for collection, utility services will not be reconnected and/or reinstated to the applicable user at any property in the utility service area until all applicable delinquent utility service billings, reconnection fees and collection costs have been paid.

## SECTION 10. RECONNECTING TO MUNICIPAL UTILITY SERVICES

1. Once a utility service account has been disconnected from municipal utility services it shall not be reconnected until the applicable delinquent utility service billing(s), including penalties and fees, has been paid.
2. A reconnect fee of \$100 must be paid, in person, via cash or check *only*. Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities does not accept personal or business checks for reconnection payment. All payments must be made either at the front desk of City Hall or dropped off in the drop box outside of the building.
3. A \$100.00 reconnect fee, paid during the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday – Friday, is required prior to being reconnected.
4. Following payment of the applicable delinquent utility service billing(s) and the reconnection fee, the Lake Crystal Utilities Superintendent will be directed to reconnect the delinquent utility service account to municipal utility services.
  - a. For payments received before 3pm, reconnect will occur same day, or at the availability of the electric personnel.
  - b. Reconnections for payments after 3pm will occur the next business day, at the availability of the electric personnel.
5. The emergency access number will not approve calls for reconnection after hours.

## SECTION 11. PAYMENTS

Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities provides several options to make payment on their utility bill:

1. In person – Payment can be made at City Hall, 100 East Robinson Street, Lake Crystal, MN 56055.
2. Drop box - A drop box is located on the north side of City Hall for customer use.
3. Debit or credit card payments are accepted over the phone; there is a 3% service fee for each invoice paid using a debit or credit card.
4. Electronic Payments – Through the Utility's website, customers can set up an account which will allow them to pay their utility bill wherever there is an internet connection. Payments can be made electronically using a credit or debit card, a checking account, or a savings account.
  - a. Accounts that routinely have failed payments through this online service are subject to a review by the utility billing clerk and the City Administrator.
    - i. The results of this review may include the city not accepting payments via check, ACH, debit, or credit cards methods due to five or more failed payments on a customer's account.
    - ii. Any time a payment method will no longer be accepted by the city, the customer will be notified by the Utility Billing Clerk as to the reason and will be notified of the alternative methods to pay their utility bills.

## PAYMENT PLANS

1. Customers that are unable to pay their utility bill by the due date are encouraged to contact the Utility Billing Clerk to arrange a mutually agreed upon payment plan, with the goal of the payment plan being to bring the customer's account current.
  - a. Outreach to the Utility Clerk regarding a payment arrangement must occur *prior* to the disconnection.
2. Utility staff has the right to reject a proposed payment plan if it is determined not to achieve the goal of bringing a customer's account current.
3. If a customer fails to comply with any term and/or condition contained within the signed payment plan, the customer shall be subject to disconnection of service and applicable penalties applied to the account.

## SECTION 12. LOAD MANAGEMENT POLICY

As a condition of receiving electric service, the owner of every residential property for which connection of electric utility service is scheduled shall, prior to setting up electric utility service, agree to install a load management device for said building. The load management device shall be furnished and installed free of charge by the utility. After initial installation, the utility is responsible for repair or replacement of the device, and reasonable access shall be granted for said repair.

A load management device is equipment, and remote relays provided by the utility for controlling the operation of central air conditioning, heat strips, electric water heaters, and electric heat pumps and allows the utility to temporarily disconnect such systems in anticipation of peak demand periods.

Exemptions from this policy may be made by the Electric Utility Superintendent for systems that are technically not feasible for control by load management devices.

No person shall prevent, alter or impede the operation of a load management device. Such action is a violation of the electric service agreement between the customer and the utility and subjects the offender in the case of an intentional violation to a penalty of \$100.00, and in the case of an unintentional violation, a penalty of \$25.00. Payment is due within ten days after written notice thereof. Payment of such a penalty shall be a condition of the continued provision of electric service.

The utility shall grant a credit against the electric bill for the use of load management devices, whether installed voluntarily or involuntarily, in such amount as the Public Utilities Commission shall determine.

## SECTION 13. COLD WEATHER RULE COMPLIANCE

From October 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>, Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities acknowledges and complies with the State of Minnesota Cold Weather Rule for Municipal Utilities under State Statute 216B.097. The most current version of the Cold Weather Rule shall prevail.

## SECTION 14. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this stated utility billing policy and procedures does not amend City Ordinances which may be more restrictive and/or authorize other utility bill collection procedures, such as Chapters 50 and 54 of the Lake Crystal Code of Ordinances.

The implementation of this utility billing policy and procedures rescinds and/or repeals all other utility bill collection policies previously established by the Lake Crystal Public Utilities Commission.

Passed and adopted this 7<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2025.

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Dennis McCoy, Chairman

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Angela Grafstrom, Secretary