

Policy: Utility 100	Utility Service Disconnection
Date Approved: 7/26/2011	Approving Entity: City Council
Date Revised: 3/11/2025	Approving Entity: City Council

100.0 Definitions.

Ashland Municipal Utilities or *Utility* shall mean the utilities operated by the City of Ashland.

100.1 Intent. The intent of this protocol is to establish a disconnection policy for the utilities operated by the City of Ashland in compliance with the rules established by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) as found in PSC 185, Wisconsin Administrative Code. To this end, this policy recognizes:

- a) All utility customers are responsible for paying for the utility services used;
- b) Customers with the same circumstances should be treated equally; and,
- c) Alternatives to disconnection should be investigated for those occasions that arise when a utility customer may not be able to pay his/her bill on time.

100.2 Expectations. The citizens of Ashland have the expectation that those individuals who utilize a community service assume the burden for payment of the services that are consumed. Therefore, pursuant to the intent found in the rules of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, a customer’s utility service will be disconnected:

- a) For failure to pay a delinquent account, deposit request, amounts contained within a deferred payment agreement, or court-awarded costs or fees incurred by the utility for collection;
- b) For the failure to pay an outstanding, undisputed account balance owed at a previous address or at an address where the customer still resides if a payment agreement is not in place;
- c) “Name switching” where a customer claims to have moved out of a residence to avoid disconnection but continues to reside at the address;
- d) For the failure to provide utility personnel access to meters or other utility equipment;
- e) For interfering with proper metering;
- f) For unauthorized reconnection of utility service; or,

- g) When an unsafe or dangerous condition or situation exists.
- h) Non-compliance with Chapter 705.201 Lead & Galvanized Water Service Line Replacement.

100.3 Notice of Disconnection of Service. The following steps shall be utilized after the remedies prescribed by the PSCW for gaining the customer's cooperation in paying for the services provided by the Ashland Municipal Utilities have not been successful:

- a) Any utility bill not paid within 20 days of issuance will be declared delinquent by the Utility. The Ashland Municipal Utilities will mail or personally deliver a notice to all delinquent utility customers indicating the intent of the utility to disconnect service;
- b) The Utility will issue a disconnection notice no earlier than 20 calendar days and not more than 30 days after the issuance of a utility bill. The disconnection notice will provide a disconnection date no sooner than 10 calendar days nor later than 20 calendar days after the date of issuance of the disconnection notice;
- c) The Utility will issue a disconnection notice for all other causes for disconnection unrelated to nonpayment 10 days prior to the scheduled disconnection;
- d) The disconnection notice will contain the information required of Chapter PSC 185 Wisconsin Administrative Code. The text of the required notice is found in Schedule X-1 of the Utility's Tariff. At a minimum, the notice will contain:
 - The date of notice and date of proposed disconnection
 - Name and address of the customer, and if different, the service address of the location to be disconnected.
 - The reason for the disconnection;
 - Instructions to contact the utility for payment of the bill, entering into a deferred payment arrangement, and/or disputing the bill;
 - Contact information for the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to permit the customer to contact the PSCW should the customer be unable to enter into a deferred payment arrangement or resolve any dispute with the utility.
 - Information that water service will be continued for 21 days with documentation provided to the utility of a medical or protective services emergency.
- e) A Utility staff member will make a reasonable effort to contact the customer via phone or in person prior to disconnection of service. The utility will document all contacts and attempts to contact customers. If the disconnection is not made within 20 days of issuance of the first notice, a second notice will be issued no less than 24 hours and no more than 48 hours of the intended disconnection date.

100.4 Exceptions to Notice Requirements of Section 100.3. Utility service may be disconnected without following the protocol of Section 100.3 in the following circumstances:

- a) The Utility may disconnect service without notice when a dangerous condition exists or when utility service has been reconnected without the utility's authorization.
- b) The Utility may disconnect service with a written 24 hour notice for nonpayment of a bill covering the theft of service.

100.5 Procedures for Disconnection. Utility service will be disconnected in accordance with the notice issued in Section 100.3, however the Utility:

- a) Will not disconnect utility service on a Friday or a work day prior to a scheduled holiday or furlough day;
- b) Will not disconnect utility service after 1 PM;
- c) Shall not disconnect utility service during the investigation of a disputed bill;
- d) Will delay disconnection of residential service for 21 days if the occupant provided documentation is provided to the utility of a medical or protective services emergency. During this period, the occupant will enter into a deferred payment agreement with the utility to continue service.

100.6 Exceptions to Disconnection. The following exceptions to disconnection of utility service shall apply:

- a) Utility service shall not be disconnected until any dispute involving utility charges is investigated by the utility and the customer is notified of the result of the investigation.
- b) Utility service shall not be disconnected if the utility customer has entered into a deferred payment agreement with the Utility and the customer is making payments in accordance with the agreement.
- c) No utility service will be disconnected between November 1st and April 15th annually or during a period of time in which a heat emergency has been declared. Any utility service disconnected for non payment prior to November 1st that has not been resolved by the customer will be reconnected on November 1st.

100.7 Tax Lien. Any delinquent bill remaining after November 1 will be attached to the property tax bill of the property served pursuant to Chapter 66.0809(3), Wisconsin Statutes.

100.8 Reconnection. Any disconnected utility service will be reconnected upon:

- a) Payment of the connection fee provided for in Schedule R-1 of the Utility's PSCW tariff;
- b) Payment of all delinquent amounts owed the utility or execution of a deferred payment agreement; and
- c) Payment, at the discretion of the Utility, of a deposit to assure bills for future service are paid.
- d) Services will be reconnected the same day for customers who make payment prior to 3:00pm on the date of disconnection. Customers who make payment after 3:00pm will have services reconnected the following business day unless customer agrees to pay after hours connection fee.

100.9 Deferred Payment Agreements. The Ashland Municipal Utility will offer a deferred payment agreement with residential utility customers who are unable to pay their bill in full prior to considering disconnection of service.

- a) The utilities acceptance of a deferred payment agreement is contingent upon:
 - 1. A willingness of the customer to reduce his/her consumption of the utility service to a level that can be afforded by the budget of the customer.
 - 2. The customer does not have a cancelled Deferred Payment Agreement in the last two (2) years.
 - 1. Customers with a cancelled Deferred Payment Agreement within the last two (2) years will be required to supply a higher down payment and/or repayment term may be no more than 6 months.
 - 3. The customer agreeing to remain up to date in the payment for current utility services.
 - 4. Tenants wishing to enter into a Deferred Payment Agreement must have landlord approval before the payment plan can be executed.
 - 1. If the landlord refuses to allow the tenant to enter a payment plan, the Utility shall not set up any type of payment arrangement and the Tenant must pay the delinquent balance in full to avoid disconnection or to have services reconnected.
 - 5. The repayment schedule can be no longer than 12 months.
 - 6. Payment terms can be set up with a Monthly or Bimonthly due date, but will still require the customer to pay the bimonthly balance in full.
- b) A customer who misses a deferred payment agreement payment will be considered for disconnection of service pursuant to Section 100.3.

100.10 Deposit Required. A utility service deposit may be considered for every utility customer whose service is disconnected for non-payment of service prior to the reconnection of service as permitted by Section PSC 185.36, Wisconsin Administrative Code for residential customers and Section PSC 185.361, Wisconsin Administrative Code for non-residential customers. Those reconnections made in accordance with Section 100.6 will not require a deposit.

100.11 Conflicts. Nothing in this policy is intended to conflict or contradict with the administrative rules established by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for the operation of municipal utilities or the Ashland Water Utility Tariff. In the event such conflict is found to exist between this policy and the PSC Administrative Code or Utility tariff, the rules of the Wisconsin Administrative Code or the Ashland Water Utility Tariff will be followed.