

# **City of Toccoa, Georgia**

## **Utility Account Policies**

**EFFECTIVE: January 1, 2007**

**APPROVED BY TOCCOA CITY COMMISSION: December 18, 2006**

The purpose of this Policy document is to provide a comprehensive approach to utility account management.

1. Authority:

The Finance Director, or his designee, will be responsible for enforcing this policy with guidance from the City Manager. The Toccoa City Commission has approved these policies. The staff is expected to use prudent judgment in applying these policies and making exceptions as circumstances vary. However, the customer is ultimately responsible for payment of all services rendered.

2. Application for Service:

An Application for Service must be completed for all new utility accounts, including natural gas, water, wastewater and solid waste. Application must be made at Toccoa City Hall, or one of the Toccoa Natural Gas Service Centers, and personal and property identification information will be required. For commercial and industrial customers, the registered owner shall furnish the Federal Taxpayer Identification Number or responsible person's Social Security Number on the service application. No application will be approved until all past due accounts are paid in full, and an account establishment fee is paid as set by the Toccoa City Commission.

3. Account Establishment Deposit:

Deposit amounts will be established by the Toccoa City Commission, and will be applied as follows:

- A. A deposit will be required of all first-time customers, or any customer that has been in a delinquent status over the past twelve (12) months.
- B. A customer transferring utility service from one location to another will not be required to pay a deposit, as long as the customer does not have a history of non-payment. Any existing deposit will be transferred to the new account once the old account balance has been paid.

- C. A customer that has a history of non-payment will be required to pay double the required deposit amount. A history of non-payment includes any three (3) months of delinquent status during the preceding twelve (12) month period, or any five (5) months of delinquent status during the preceding over the past three (3) years.

4. Deposit Refunding:

Deposits will be applied as credit to the customer's account after utility service has become delinquent. If the deposit amount is insufficient to cover the total amount due, service shall be disconnected. A full refund of the deposit on-hand will be made by check to any customer that maintains a good payment record over a twelve (12) month period or upon final billing after payment has been made to close the account.

5. Establishment of Services:

Once the Application for Service has been approved and deposit payment made, then service can be established. Before any service is connected, any outstanding balance must be paid in full. Generally service will be turned on the same day that application is made.

6. Utility Billing Due Dates, Penalties and Delinquent Accounts:

- A. Each customer has twenty (20) days from the billing date to pay without penalty. If paid after twenty (20) days, then a 10% late penalty will be charged for water, wastewater and solid waste, and a 1% late penalty for natural gas.
- B. Accounts are considered delinquent if not paid by the thirty-fifth (35<sup>th</sup>) day past the billing date. A delinquent penalty charge, as established by the Toccoa City Commission, will be assessed. At this point, the service may be disconnected and deposit applied to the balance. Before service is restored, all past due charges, penalties and service charges must be paid in full; additional deposit payments will also be required.

7. Service Disconnection:

All accounts over thirty-five (35) days past due are considered delinquent and subject to disconnection. No additional warning notification will be given before service disconnection; however the customer will receive the next months utility bill showing a past due status before disconnection. No service will be disconnected on account balances less than \$30.

- A. All residential customers with a good payment status (no delinquency in a twelve (12) month period) will automatically be given an additional two (2) weeks to pay their past due account balance without disconnection.
- B. All commercial/industrial customers will receive a phone call before service is disconnected. If service is disconnected, then the registered owner or authorized responsible party shall sign a Personal Guarantee before service is reconnected.

8. Payment Arrangements:

- A. Payment arrangements may be permitted for customers if the City is contacted prior to the account becoming delinquent. Generally the length of time allowed for payment arrangements will be two (2) weeks, and arrangements are available only once a year. In cases of verifiable extreme hardship, exceptions may be made at the discretion of the staff. Such discretion shall support the circumstances of the hardship in question and justify the action taken.
- B. During the arrangement term, the customer's current utility bill must be paid on-time. Failure to meet all deadlines will result in service disconnection.
- C. No payment arrangements will be allowed once the account becomes delinquent.

9. Insufficient Funds:

All customer checks shall be covered by sufficient funds. A charge, as established by the Toccoa City Commission, will be assessed for all returned checks. If the check is for a deposit, or arrangement payment, then service will be disconnected immediately. If the check is for a regular payment, then the customer will be notified in writing and the account must be paid in cash, or cash equivalent, within ten (10) days; however a second returned check in a twelve (12) month period will result in immediate disconnection, and the customer will be required to use an alternate method of payment for a period of six (6) months.

This does not preclude the City from any remedy it might have under the law of Georgia with regard to checks returned for insufficient funds, to include criminal sanctions and a claim for damage pursuant to O.C.G.A. §13-6-15

10. Past Due Collections:

An account that shows no usage and no payment for a period of sixty (60) days will be closed. The City will aggressively pursue collection of all delinquent funds. The City Staff, City Attorney, or collection agency will be utilized to collect all accounts sixty (60) days past due. Accounts may be written off the financial books after one-year in delinquency status, but the collection process will continue.

**CHARGES EFFECTIVE: JANUARY 1, 2007**

Charge

Residential Water Deposit	\$50
Residential Gas Deposit	\$100
Commercial Water Deposit	\$100
Commercial Gas Deposit	\$300
Industrial Water Deposit	\$300
Industrial Gas Deposit	\$500
Delinquent Penalty / One Utility Only (after 35 days)	\$25
Delinquent Penalty / Both Water & Gas (after 35 days)	\$50
Convenience Fee / One Utility Only (after hours connection)	\$50
Convenience Fee / Both Water & Gas (after hours connection)	\$100
Account Establishment Fee	\$20
Returned Check Charged	\$30