

City of Big Sandy Utility Services Policies

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1. Application for Service

The term “account holder” in this document refers to all owners of the account. The Service Application and Agreement must be filled out completely, the main account holder’s photo ID must be on file and the utility deposit must be paid in full prior to connection of service. Additionally, any outstanding balance(s) for applicant(s) on previous accounts must be paid in full before service can be connected on a new account.

2. Deposits

- Only one deposit is required for each utility connection.
- The name of the applicant and/or co-applicant cannot be changed unless both the current applicant and co-applicant (if applicable) agree to the change in writing.
- Deposits are not transferable unless written proof of marriage, death or divorce can be presented and kept on record. If the amount of the transferred deposit is less than the current deposit, the new account holder must pay the difference to meet the current deposit requirement set by the City Council and listed below.
- Additional Deposit: If an account holder is on the disconnect list more than (3) three consecutive times, the account holder may be required to pay an additional deposit equal to or greater than the original deposit amount to continue service.
- Rental property owners must have a Service Application and Agreement completed to turn service on for their rental property. Deposits may be waived for rental property owners who request temporary service for up to (3) three days for cleaning, repairs, or real estate inspections.
- Deposits may be transferred when an account holder relocates from one address to another after a transfer fee of \$25 has been paid.
- Refund: Upon disconnection of service, the deposit will be applied to the final utility bill and the balance of the deposit (if any) will be mailed to the account holder's forwarding address within 15 business days.
- Deposit fees are:
 - Residential: \$150
 - Commercial: TBD based on business

3. Connection

After an applicant has completed all requirements for service, connection can occur as soon as the applicant and the Public Works Department can schedule a time (during normal business hours) to meet at the property to make sure the connection can be made successfully.

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4. Bills

- Meters will be read around the 15th day of each month.
- Utility bills will be mailed near the end of the month, usually the 2nd business day before the end of the month.
- **The account holder is responsible for notifying the city of any phone number or address changes.** If the account holder does not receive a utility bill by the 3rd day of the month, it is the account holder's responsibility to come by or call City Hall at 903.636.4343 to get the balance on their account.
- All utility bills are to be paid in full by 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of the month. If the 20th falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal holiday, payment must be made by 4:30 p.m. on the next business day or service will be subject to disconnection.
- Adjustments to utility bills can only be made after the Utility Bill Adjustment Request form is completed by the account holder AND approval is granted by the City Council.

5. Payments

Utility bill payments can be made through the BIG SANDY TEXAS app, through our website (bigsandytx.gov), by mail, and at City Hall. Public Works Maintenance employees are not allowed to accept utility bill payments.

- Cash
- Check: Checks can be accepted, with the following guidelines:
 - No temporary or two-party checks will be accepted.
 - Checks will only be presented for payment one time. Insufficient funds check(s) will not be presented for payment a 2nd time.
 - If a check presented for payment of utility services is returned for insufficient funds, a \$35 fee will be added to the account holder's account and the account holder is subject to immediate disconnection of service.
 - Once an account holder presents an insufficient funds check, the City will no longer accept checks from that account holder.
- Credit Card
 - Account holders can pay their monthly utility bill(s) through the BIG SANDY TEXAS phone app or have it paid by credit/debit card once the Direct Pay Authorization Agreement has been completed and accepted by a city representative.

6. Penalties

- From the 1st through the 10th of the month: NO PENALTY
- From the 10th through the 20th of the month: 10% penalty will be assessed.
- After 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of each month, a \$40.00 delinquent fee will be assessed and utility service will be subject to disconnection for non-payment.

7. Extensions

Extensions on payment for utility bills may be granted once a month. An Application for Extension must be completed before the 21st of the month, which is the date disconnection can occur for non-payment. If the 20th falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal holiday, the Application for Extension must be signed by 4:30 p.m. on the next business day or service will be subject to disconnection. No extensions will be granted after that date.

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7. Extensions continued

If an extension is granted, a \$25 extension fee will be applied to the account holder's utility bill **and the payment deadline will be last business day of the month.** If the account holder fails to uphold the extension agreement, utility service can be disconnected and will not be reconnected until the account holder pays the past due balance plus the \$40 reconnect fee.

8. Disconnection

- **For non-payment**

Disconnection can occur if payment for a utility bill is not received by 4:30 p.m. on the 20th of each month. If the 20th falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal holiday, payment must be made by 4:30 p.m. on the next business day or service will be subject to disconnection.

- **For discontinuation of service**

Service can be disconnected after a Disconnection of Service Request form has been completed and accepted by a city representative.

9. Reconnection

Utility services can be reconnected during normal business hours once any delinquent balance on the account holder's account (including all incurred fees) has been paid in full.

Reconnection can be requested in the case of emergencies or errors when City Hall is closed (Monday through Friday after 4:30 p.m. or on Saturday, Sunday or federal holidays). There will be an additional \$40 after-hours fee charged. Account holders can call 903.636.4200 to arrange emergency reconnections when City Hall is closed.

10. Water Meter(s)

Water Meters are the property of the City of Big Sandy and are at all times subject to the City's control and inspections.

1. The City of Big Sandy considers all meters to be operating in an accurate manner until proven otherwise, and reserves the right to change out a water meter at any time for any reason.
2. Account holders may request (1) one confirmation of their meter reading at no charge per month.
3. Account holders may request the testing of their water meter. If the meter test results show that the meter is accurate according to the standard set by the American Water Works Association, the account holder will be charged the current rate paid by the City of Big Sandy for the meter test. If the test shows a failing meter, the City reserves the right to bill the account holder for utility services based on the previous (3) three months consumption before the failure occurred.
4. **Any unauthorized connection or reconnection of utility services constitutes tampering** and is punishable by law. Account holders guilty of tampering are subject to:
 - **Immediate disconnection of utility services**
 - **Tampering Fees:**
 - **1st Offense: \$100 Tampering Fee plus court costs**
 - **2nd Offense: \$200 Tampering Fee plus court costs**
5. Service can be reconnected when the delinquent balance on an account holder's account (including all incurred fees) has been paid in full.

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11. Utility Bill Adjustments (including water leaks)

1. **Account holder's Responsibility:** It is the account holder's responsibility to maintain all water and sewer lines on their property from the point where it connects to the City meter.
2. **Request for Utility Bill Adjustment:** Leaks and other failures may cause excessive water usage for an account holder. In this case, the account holder may request an adjustment to their utility bill by completing the Utility Bill Adjustment Request Form. Adjustments to utility bill(s) can only be made after the account holder submits a completed Utility Bill Adjustment Request form by noon the Thursday before the next City Council meeting AND approval is granted by the City Council. Each request will be reviewed and processed by the City Council at their next regular scheduled meeting.
3. **Time for Application:** Application for a utility bill adjustment must be made within thirty (30) days from the billing date.
4. **Frequency of Utility Bill Adjustment:** No more than one (1) application for adjustment may be considered by the city per water meter in any twelve (12) month period, unless consolidating applications for two (2) consecutive billing periods. In the event a leak goes undetected or initial repairs are not successful and the leak extends into multiple billing periods, an adjustment can be made on up to two (2) consecutive billing periods that are impacted by the leak.
5. **Basis of Adjustment:** Adjustments will be made based on the account holder's average usage which is calculated as the average number of gallons used during the previous twelve (12) billing periods. If the account holder does not have at least twelve (12) previous bills, then the adjustment will be based on available data. The city council may provide for a billing adjustment to adjust that portion of the bill in excess of three hundred percent (300%) of the average charge calculated as a result of the leak.

Adjustment requests will not be granted for changes in water usage patterns such as watering of a lawn or garden, the filling of pools or hot tubs, or increased usage due to visitors and/or guests of the account holder.

Failure to Respond to Evidence of a Leak: If, at any time, the city notifies the account holder of a possible leak, or if the account holder knows of a leak and they fail to repair the leak within fifteen (15) days or some other reasonable time as determined solely by the city council, the city council can determine that some part or all of the leak adjustment may be disallowed.

Approved by the City Council: April 15th, 2025