

## **STEVENS PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT'S COVID-19 CUSTOMER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

On April 17, 2020, Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 20-23.4 “Rate Payer Assistance and Preservation of Essential Services” prohibiting water systems from disconnecting water services due to non-payment, refusing reconnection, and charging late fees for late payment and reconnection. On July 2, 2020, Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 20-23.6, extending, and amending Proclamation 20-23 through August 1, 2020. In addition to prohibitions on disconnection, refusing reconnection, and late fees, Proclamation 20-23.6 requires adoption of a Customer Assistance Program. Proclamation 20-23.7 extended the prohibitions on disconnections, refusing reconnection, and late fees through October 15, 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and in accordance with the Washington State Governor’s Proclamations, Stevens Public Utility District (“Stevens PUD”) has adjusted its policies concerning disconnection of service, reconnection of service, payment arrangements, and suspension of other fees or charges as follows:

1. **Suspension of Disconnection of Services:** No residential service (water or sewer) shall be disconnected for reason of nonpayment while the prohibition contained in Governor’s Proclamation No. 20-23, and the amendments thereto, prohibiting such disconnection is in effect. Currently, the Proclamation’s prohibition on disconnections is set to expire on October 15, 2020.
  
2. **Reconnection of Service:** Any residential service (water or sewer) which was disconnected for nonpayment, shall be reconnected at the request of the customer at no charge, for so long as the Governor’s Proclamation No. 20-23, and the amendments thereto, requiring such reconnection are in effect. Currently, the Proclamation’s requirements regarding reconnections is set to expire on October 15, 2020.
  
3. **Suspension of Late Fees & Interest:** There shall be no late fees or interest charges added to residential services (water or sewer) for so long as the prohibition on such charges imposed by the Governor’s Proclamation No. 20-23, and the amendments thereto, is in effect. Currently, the Proclamation’s requirements regarding late fees is set to expire on October 15, 2020.
  
4. **Availability of Payment Plans for Accounts in Arrears:** Stevens PUD is offering Customers with arrearage balances (for water and/or sewer services) the opportunity to enter into repayment plans, in accordance with this COVID-19 Customer Support Program. Any repayment plan shall adhere to the following parameters:
  - a. Stevens PUD will make its best, reasonable efforts, to tailor each payment plan to the needs of the individual customer. However, no customer is entitled to a specific term or monthly payment.

- b. Since such payment plans are to be individually tailored, Stevens PUD's General Manager or his designee, is authorized to approve the terms of such payment plans with no further approval from the Board, provided such payment plan is consistent with this COVID-19 Customer Support Program.
- c. When individually tailoring payment plans, Stevens PUD may consider whether or not the Customer's account was already in arrears prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- d. Such payment plans shall require the customer to make regular monthly payments toward the arrearage balance until paid in full. We anticipate most accounts will be paid in full within six months.
- e. Such monthly payments shall be in addition to regular monthly billing and shall be due at the same time as the Customer's normal monthly billing.
- f. As acknowledged in the several of the Governor's proclamations, customers are not relieved from their obligation to pay for their utilities. Customers shall remain responsible to make all payments under the payment plan, even if they move out of Stevens PUD's service area. If Customer is a renter, full payment is due upon moving out of rental.
- g. After the prohibition on late fees and prohibition on disconnections imposed under Governor's Proclamation 20-23 and its related amendments are lifted; a Customer's failure to make a payment in accordance with a payment plan will result in late fees, interest, and disconnection of services in accordance with the Stevens PUD's normal practices and procedures.
- h. Entering into any such payment plan shall be done without prejudice to Stevens PUD's lien rights against the property to which the service is provided.
- i. If a customer is not the legal owner of the property to which the services are provided, Stevens PUD may disclose the terms of the repayment plan (included a copy of such executed repayment plan) to the legal owner of the property.
- j. Customers must sign a contract with Stevens PUD to memorialize the terms of such payment plan.
- k. Until a contract is signed, a customer has no rights to any specific payment plan terms.
- l. In order to be eligible for a repayment plan, a Customer must timely submit a request to enter into a payment plan and the Customer's account must be in arrears on or before the expiration of the Governor's Proclamation No. 20-23, or any amendments thereto. Currently the Proclamation is set to expire on October 15, 2020.

**5. Deadline for Customers to Submit Request for Payment Plan & Contact Person:** Any customer that wishes to enter into a payment plan in accordance with this COVID-19 Customer Support Program must submit the completed Repayment Contract by Friday, October 30, 2020, to the following address:

Stevens P.U.D.  
Payment Plans  
PO Box 592  
Loon Lake, WA 99148  
support@stevenspud.org  
509-233-2534

All Repayment Contracts must be received by Stevens PUD, by October 30, 2020, which is fifteen (15) days after of the expiration of the Governor's Proclamation No. 20-23, or any amendments thereto. Currently the Proclamation is set to expire on October 15, 2020. All Repayment Contracts must be received in writing with the exception of reasonable accommodations being made for those that are disabled.

**6. Possibility of Bill Assistance Funds:** If bill assistance funds become available and come into possession of Stevens PUD, then in accordance with Governor Inslee's Proclamation No. 20-23.4 and related COVID-19 Utility Customer Support Program Guidance, Stevens PUD will notify all customers with arrearage balances of the availability of such funds.

Until such time, Stevens PUD encourages all customers with arrearage balances to contact one or more of the following for possible bill assistance:

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) at (509) 456-SNAP  
Rural Resources at (509) 684-6421  
Catholic Charities at (509) 358-4250  
Salvation Army at (509) 325-6810  
Washington 211: referrals to social services – [www.wa211.org](http://www.wa211.org)  
Disaster Cash Assistance Program & other resources – [washingtonconnection.org](http://washingtonconnection.org)

**7. Other COVID-19 and Related Resources:**

- a. Stevens County COVID-19 page – [www.co.stevens.wa.us/covid19.html](http://www.co.stevens.wa.us/covid19.html)
- b. Tri County Health District – [www.netchd.org](http://www.netchd.org)
- c. Spokane County COVID-19 page – [www.spokanecounty.org/4572/covid-19](http://www.spokanecounty.org/4572/covid-19)
- d. Spokane Regional Health District – [www.srhd.org](http://www.srhd.org)
- e. Washington State COVID-19 Resource page – [www.coronavirus.wa.gov](http://www.coronavirus.wa.gov)

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Document was presented for review to the Stevens County Public Utility District Commissioners on August 4, 2020 and was approved on the same date. The dates were modified thereafter to reflect the relevant expiration dates noted in Proclamation 20-23.7. Approved for distribution by Darrel Hawes, General Manager, on August 4, 2020.