

Old Town Water District
PO Box 525, 109 Center Street
Old Town, Maine 04468
Phone (207) 827-2145 Fax (207) 827-2191

Serving Old Town, Milford, and Bradley

<http://www.oldtownwater.org>

officemanager@oldtownwater.org

CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

KEEP THIS INFORMATION FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

This information sheet was prepared according to standards set by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. (MPUC) It describes our billing procedures, the minimum standards we must follow for service, and how to complain if you are not satisfied.

Throughout this information, the terms "we" or "us" refer to the Old Town Water District; the term "you" refers to the customer. The "MPUC" refers to the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

Our office hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday (excluding holidays).

Our service truck is available 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday (excluding holidays).

Limited emergency service is provided for nights, weekends, and holidays at the discretion of the district and at customer's expense. Work performed for a customer outside of regular business hours will be billed to the customer at \$60.00 per hour, with a minimum charge of 2 hours.

“We are an equal opportunity employer and service provider”.

APPLICATION FOR SERVICE

Signing for Service: You must sign an application for service before we accept you as a customer. You must sign as soon as you are responsible for the service, and provide all necessary information. We charge \$26.00, payable at time of application, each time you sign for service, if it is not necessary for the District to visit the premises. If it is necessary for the District to visit the premises to connect the service during normal business hours, the fee is \$55.00. During Holidays and other than normal business hours, the charge is \$120.00. Your service may be disconnected if you fail to sign.

In signing for the service, you agree to abide by the District's terms and conditions. You are also responsible for notifying us to terminate water service and for providing complete information for a final bill. In multi-unit buildings, tenants are allowed to sign for service only if there is a separate outside shut-off for each unit.

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Scheduling: We require at least 48-hour notice to turn on a service or set a water meter, unless the service has been disconnected for non-payment. We require a minimum five-day notice to disconnect service; termination of service may involve removal of the meter. We can bill you for service until you give the required notice or until we disconnect, whichever is first. These services are available during our business hours, and someone must be on the premises when we turn the water on or remove the meter.

Old Unpaid Bills: When you apply for service, we will check to see if you have had service with us before. If you have an unpaid bill, we will ask you to pay it or to sign a payment agreement. We can require you to pay bills that are up to six (6) years old. We cannot ask you to pay anyone else's bill -- only those bills in your name or bills which the court has said you are responsible for. If you dispute the old bill or you are unable to agree with us about a reasonable payment plan, see the "Complaints" section of this handout.

No Discrimination: No matter what country you are from, what sex or race you are, whether you are married or single, young or old, we will either agree to provide the service you ask for or deny it within one (1) business day after you ask for the service. If we deny service, we will send you the reasons in writing and tell you what you can do about it.

BILLING

Billing: The District bills on a quarterly basis, in advance, and water used in excess of the minimum is billed quarterly in arrears. Your first bill may be for one or two months, after the first bill, you will receive a bill every three months.

Water Consumption: Water bills are based on water consumption, measured by a water meter, typically located in your basement, beneath a sink, or utility closet. Most locations are equipped with a remote-style meter which can be read from the outside of the building.

Water Charges: Most residential locations are equipped with a 5/8-inch meter. Currently, the minimum quarterly charge for this size meter is \$52.08. Under the minimum charge, you are allowed up to 12 hundred cubic feet, and the water charge is \$2.98 per hundred cubic feet for consumption over 12 HCF. One hundred cubic feet of water is approximately 748 gallons.

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Meter Tests: We test your meter periodically to make sure it is operating correctly. The MPUC establishes the schedule of meter tests and the accuracy standards. The schedule for 5/8-inch Rockwell meters is every eight years or 100,000 cubic feet. The schedule for Sensus Iperl meters sized 5/8" through one inch be replaced and/or tested at least once during a twenty year service period (reference – Request of Waiver of Chapter 62 granted on May 18, 2017 Docket No. 2017-00054, and approved 10-11-17 Docket # 2017-00248). If you want your meter tested for accuracy, we will do so at no cost to you, and you may witness the test when it is scheduled if you tell us when we remove the meter. If you ask more often than once every 18 months, we will charge you a deposit of \$55.00 per hour during normal business hours, and \$60.00 per hour outside of regular business hours, with a minimum charge of 2 hours, as approved by the MPUC. The deposit will be refunded if the meter is inaccurate.

You can check the accuracy of your bill and monitor your own usage by reading the meter yourself. Please call or come into the office and we will explain how to do so.

Estimated Bills: We will try to send you a bill based on your actual usage, but we can send you estimated bills for service. We will not send two (2) estimated bills in a row, except during extreme weather conditions, emergencies, work stoppages, or similar circumstances, which prevent our employees from reading your meter. If we cannot obtain a reading because your meter is not accessible, we will leave a postcard. If you call in your reading or send us this postcard promptly, we will issue a bill based on actual use.

Make-up Bills: If we have to issue a make-up bill for past service that you were not billed for, we will notify you in writing, and offer you a payment plan. If the reason for the make-up bill is our fault (equipment failure or billing error, for example) you will be billed for only one (1) year of the past service even if the billing mistake was for a longer time. If the reason for the make-up bill is the customer's fault (unauthorized use or fraud, for example) the utility may bill for services that occurred up to 6 years before the issuance of the make-up bill.

Past Usage: If you ask for it, we will provide a record of your usage going back a maximum of 13 months.

Third Party Notice: Let us know if you want another person to get a copy of any bill or disconnection notice we send you. We will send a copy to the person you designate, but you are still responsible for payment. This service may be especially important for our elderly or disabled customers. Complete information on this service as provided by the MPUC is available from the District.

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Water Questions: If you have any questions about the cost of water service or other services, you can call us at 827-2145. Our rates must be approved by the MPUC and we cannot change these rates without approval of the MPUC. You have the right to review and comment on the proposed rates before the MPUC rules.

Sewer Questions: Sewer billing is a function of the Old Town Waste Treatment Department. Sewer questions must be directed to the Superintendent at 827-3970. The Old Town Water District is a separate municipal corporation, not a part of the city of Old Town.

PAYMENT

You should pay your bill as soon as possible. Water bills are considered past due 25 days from the billing date or the postmark, whichever is later. You can pay your bill by cash, check, money order, debit or credit card. When a check is not honored by the bank, we will charge you the greater of \$15.00 or the bank charge, not to exceed \$15.00 for each returned check. If you have more than one returned check, we may require you to pay by cash or certified check/money order only. You should include your bill stubs with payment or note the account number on your check.

Bills are available for payment:

By Mail: Old Town Water District, PO Box 525, Old Town ME 04468-0525

In Person: Old Town Water District, 109 Center St. Old Town ME 04468

Drop Box: Located to the right side of the office door for check or money orders only; **No Cash** please.

By Phone: Credit or Debit card payments may be processed over the phone by calling our office. We do not offer an on line version of payment.

This information is also on your bill. If you mail your payment to us, your bill is considered paid on the day we receive it. If you pay in person, the bill is considered paid on the day you make the payment. If you make a partial payment, we will apply it to your oldest balance. Overdue bills should be paid at the District office to avoid possible delays in processing.

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Requests for mailed payment receipts must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Low-income customers may qualify for help in paying a utility bill. The best source of information is your local town public assistance department, the local Community Action Program, or the Department of Health and Human Services. Information on financial assistance is available at <http://www.211maine.org/> or by calling 2-1-1

Payment Agreements: We will continue service even if you can't pay your account in full, as long as you pay a reasonable portion of your bill and you agree to pay the rest in affordable payments. You must also agree to pay all future bills for service on or before the due date of the bill until the overdue amount is paid in full. We will consider the following in establishing a payment agreement: a) your ability to pay; b) the size of the past due amount; c) your previous payment history; d) the reason why the bill can't be paid; e) how long the bill has remained unpaid; and f) whether disconnection would pose a danger to your household.

We will send you a written copy of the payment arrangement. If you do not make payments according to that agreement, we can send you a disconnection notice that gives you three (3) business days to pay the full overdue amount. We are not required to make a second agreement, but we will try to respond to your particular situation. You do not have to agree to a payment plan or any other proposed settlement of a dispute, if doing so means giving up other rights listed in this pamphlet.

Deposits: We can ask for a deposit from residential customers only if there is some proof that you will be a credit risk; that is, that you may not pay your future bills. In most cases, risk is shown if you have an unpaid bill when you apply for service, or you have been disconnected for non-payment, unauthorized use, or theft of services. These are not all the situations in which we can require a deposit. You have the right to show us evidence that you can and will pay your future bills and avoid a deposit request. We may request a deposit from non-residential customers as a pre-condition of service.

When we require a deposit, we must inform you in writing within 3 business days, explain what you can do to begin or continue service, and what to do if you disagree with the deposit request or amount. You may ask for proof that you are a credit risk, and we will give you a choice between a cash deposit or allowing another person to "guarantee"

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your bills up to the deposit amount. The guarantor must be a customer in good standing with us. We will pay interest on deposits as determined by the MPUC.

We can require a deposit that is equal to your single largest quarterly bill within the previous 12 month period at that location. You can usually have a choice to pay the deposit in full or in three payments, with half due immediately, 25 percent in thirty (30) days and 25 percent in sixty (60) days. However, we may require a full payment of deposit if you are already using a payment plan to pay off an unpaid bill. We will return your deposit with interest if you pay your bills on time for 12 consecutive months.

Non-Transferable Bills: If you have an unpaid bill and are no longer a customer of the District, or if you fail to pay a bill for other services such as merchandise or job work, we may seek payment through the court system. If we file in court and you pay the bill prior to the court date, you will be charged the cost of filing. If you do not pay before the court date and we prevail in court, we will ask the court to have you pay all court costs including fees for filing and sheriff services.

DISCONNECTION

We don't want to disconnect your service. We will work with you to resolve any problem. However, if a customer refuses to cooperate, we have the right to start disconnection proceedings if you:

- Fail to pay or make a payment agreement for an overdue bill
 - Does not keep a written payment agreement
 - Fail to pay a deposit, to arrange for payment of deposit, or to provide someone willing to guarantee payment
 - Use the service without signing for it
 - Refuse to let us on the property to install a meter or to repair/replace District property
 - Tamper with the meter or manage to obtain service without payment
 - Misrepresent who you are to get service
 - Service poses a safety threat to a person or to the integrity of the system
 - Fail to comply with a decision of the MPUC or its Consumer Assistance Division
- We are not allowed to disconnect for a) unpaid non-basic service charges such as merchandise; b) an old bill that was not properly transferred to your account; c) in a medical emergency (see "Medical Emergency" section, or d) estimated use. We can

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disconnect for unpaid estimated bills if you have refused to allow us to read a meter or have not provided an actual reading to us.

Notice: In most cases, we will notify you at least fourteen (14) days before the disconnection date in the notice. But we will give you only three (3) working days notice if a) you have broken a payment agreement, b) failed to pay a deposit, c) paid with a bad check, d) failed to apply for service; or e) did not comply with a decision of CAD. We can disconnect without notice only if there is unauthorized use (meter tampering) or a dangerous condition. A disconnection notice is good for ten (10) business days after the disconnection date stated on it. The ten (10) days may be extended if you refuse to give us access to the meter or other device to turn off the service. We will not disconnect service on a Friday, a weekend, a legal holiday, the day before a holiday, or any day our office is not open for business.

Tenant: If you are a tenant and the landlord asks us to disconnect, or if your landlord does not pay the bill, we will issue you a tenant notice and give you the opportunity to put the service in your own name. You do not have to pay the landlord's unpaid bill.

Reconnection/Non-Payment: We must reconnect service again promptly provided you have paid your overdue bill or have agreed to a payment plan. We must reconnect during the same business day you settle your account, or the next business day at the latest. If our serviceman calls at your residence and attempts to collect an overdue payment, we will charge you a \$30.00 collection fee. If your water service is disconnected for non-payment, we will charge you a \$55.00 reconnection fee during normal business hours, or \$120.00 outside of normal business hours. We can also require a deposit equal to one quarter's service if you are disconnected for non-payment, unauthorized use, or theft of service. When both a deposit and the unpaid bill are required, you may pay the smaller amount in full and enter a payment agreement on the larger amount.

Medical Emergency: We will not disconnect or refuse to reconnect service when you or someone in your house is seriously ill, or has a medical condition, which will be seriously aggravated by lack of water service, provided a registered physician confirms that an emergency exists. If you cannot get a doctor to call right away, you may let us know yourself. We will wait three (3) business days for the doctor to call or write. We can require written certification from the doctor including specific reasons why the service is necessary and how long the emergency will last. Disconnection can be postponed due to a medical emergency for up to 30 days and can be renewed up to two times in any 12 month period. A medical emergency does

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not cancel a bill. We will refer you to financial assistance agencies and ask you to negotiate a reasonable payment plan.

Reconnection/Customer Request: If you request that your water service be temporarily terminated, we will charge you a \$55.00 reconnection fee during normal business hours when you wish to have the service reconnected. Outside of normal business hours, the reconnection fee is \$120.00.

After Hours Call-Out Fee for Emergency Disconnection/Customer Request: If you request that your water service be disconnected for emergency purposes outside of our normal business hours or on a holiday, we will charge you a \$120.00 call-out fee.

INTERRUPTION OF SERVICE

We may need to interrupt service on occasion to repair or maintain our equipment. When possible in non-emergency situations, we will let you know why and how long you can expect to be without service. If we must interrupt service to more than 10 customers or for more than five hours in non-emergency situations, we must give you at least 24 hours notice. We will give you more notice whenever possible. If your service must be interrupted without notice due to an emergency, we will try to let you know as soon as possible, how long you are likely to be without service. We maintain a list of customers with special water needs. If being without service would pose a danger or serious damage to you, notify us. If a customer so requests, we will make a pro-rata reduction in the customer's rates if service is interrupted for longer than 48 hours, if the interruption is not the customer's fault. The reduction will be applied only to the minimum bill, and the adjustment will be made on the customer's next bill.

LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES

The District will only be liable for any damages arising from claims to the extent liability is expressly provided in the Maine Tort Claims Act. We have no scheduled policy on liability for damages but investigate each claim to determine whether the facts support a claim. If, after investigation, we find the claim is unfounded, we will notify you, and you may pursue the matter through the legal system or the Consumer Assistance Division of the MPUC. If we determine the claim is reasonable and we appear to be at fault, we will attempt a negotiated resolution. If a negotiated

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resolution cannot be arrived at, you may submit a written claim (if not already done) which we will forward to our insurance company.

COMPLAINTS

If you have questions or complaints, call us. We have employees available during business hours to answer your questions, set up payment agreements, and resolve disputes. We will investigate your complaint and try to resolve it.

If you disagree with our answer, you have a right to appeal to the Consumer Assistance Division of the Maine Public Utilities Commission, 101 Second St, Hallowell, ME 04347, State House Station #18, Augusta Maine 04333-0018, Telephone 287-3831 or 1-800-452-4699, or by email at http://www.maine.gov/mpuc/consumer/file_complaint.shtml

Before you write or call the commission, you must give us a chance to respond to your complaint. We cannot disconnect you for a disputed amount, but you do have to pay that portion of the bill that is not disputed. If you contact us before the disconnection date, and we cannot agree on a payment plan or other requirements to stop disconnection, you can appeal to the MPUC as described above.