



# News Release

For Immediate Release: September 2, 2020

## **Durham Water to Resume Cutoffs for Nonpayment on September 16**

DURHAM, N.C. – In early March, the City of Durham Department of Water Management stopped disconnecting customers regardless of ability to pay. On March 31, Governor Roy Cooper issued an Executive Order suspending utility disconnects statewide. When the Order expired on July 29, we began a phased return to regular billing practices. We are notifying all customers with delinquent accounts that cutoffs for nonpayment are scheduled to resume on September 16. Other regional water utilities are following a similar timeline.

Our return to regular billing practices is necessary. To remain operational, we must receive payment for the water used by customers. We're also prohibited by State statute from giving special treatment to any single group. This means it is not a legal option for our municipal utility to forgive these debts.

Customers who fell behind on their water bills while the Order was in effect:

- Will not face penalties
- Will not pay interest
- Will not be assessed late fees.

The Order gives residential customers up to six months from July 29 to pay outstanding bills. They can avoid disconnection by making a payment or contacting us to arrange a payment plan before the disconnect date.

We are reaching out to those customers through direct mail and by phone, providing detailed instructions on how to apply for financial assistance through our Water Hardship Fund, where to find other community support organizations, and how to arrange a payment plan. In keeping with the Order, we're giving customers at least six months to pay their overdue accounts. Those who require more time will be evaluated on an individual basis.

### **Request a Payment Plan**

The Department of Water Management wants to help customers with overdue bills manage their delinquent accounts before cutoffs resume. Staff are available to help arrange a monthly payment plan and, to streamline the process, the department recently launched an online form at <https://durhamnc.gov/FormCenter/Water-Management-16/Payment-Plan-Agreement-237>. For more information, please contact Customer Billing Services at 919-560-1200 (select Option 2).

### **City of Durham Water Hardship Fund**

This fund provides up to \$240 in assistance for customers in danger of losing water service due to documented hardship. It helped 610 account holders in the 2020 fiscal year and more than 600 have applied for assistance since the outbreak of the pandemic. Residents can contact Durham One Call at 919-560-1200 (select Option 2) or apply online at <https://durhamnc.gov/FormCenter/Water-Management-16/Water-Hardship-Fund-227>.

### **Cash Payments at Western Union**

Additionally, the City has just entered a partnership with Western Union to give customers who prefer to use cash an easier payment option. Instead of traveling to City Hall, they can now pay their water bills at any one of Durham's 40 Western Union locations. These are open seven days a week and in the evenings. It's hoped this will make paying easier, streamline the process for account holders, and help residents avoid unintentional late payments and fees. More details are midway down our department landing page at [www.durhamnc.gov/944](http://www.durhamnc.gov/944).

### **North Carolina COVID-19 Information Hub**

Find assistance through this online resource for those in need. To reach out for help with food, shelter, or community needs call 2-1-1- or 888-892-1162. If you're searching for mental health support the number is 855-587-3463 and the line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit online at <https://www.nc.gov/covid19>.

### **Central Piedmont Community Action, Inc.**

As mobilizers of resources for those in need, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are for people who are earning below the poverty line and not receiving welfare benefits. Our state's CAAs have begun to receive flexible funds that can be used to help low-income families and individuals meet a variety of needs. To contact your area CAA, visit the agency online at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/csbg-contacts>.