



The Sewerage & Water Board

OF NEW ORLEANS

625 ST. JOSEPH STREET

504.529.2837 OR 52.WATER

www.swbno.org

Media Inquiries Only:

D'Seante Parks

Press Secretary

504-913-4170

dparks@swbno.org

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The S&WB Prepares to Reinstitute Normal Revenue Collections

To protect the health and safety of New Orleans and continue to improve its operations, the Sewerage & Water Board will be returning to its normal collections procedure on Wednesday, Aug. 1.

This effort will bolster the agency's much-needed revenue stream, but it may involve shutting off water service to customers who have not paid their balances and have not disputed their bills.

The first step of the process will target about 17,000 delinquent accounts that are not in dispute and have owed more than \$50 for over 60 days – only about 12 percent of total customers – with the goal of recouping more than \$21.8 million in lost revenue. The S&WB is also addressing the roughly 9,000 customers who haven't received a bill since opening new accounts. The agency will institute a plan next month to resolve that issue.

To delay the reinstatement of collections any longer would put this agency at great financial risk, jeopardizing its mission to drain storm water, treat and remove wastewater and provide safe drinking water for the City. The S&WB has invested \$82 million in emergency repairs to its drainage system since the flood last year, which has strained the budget. In order for the agency to stay in good standing with our bond covenants, it must replenish those depleted funds.

The S&WB also has a fiduciary responsibility under the law to collect payment. It is illegal not to charge for water service.

To continue to suspend the collections process will also threaten ongoing projects and services, spark potential furloughs for key personnel and derail maintenance of the drainage, water and sewerage systems.

Shutoffs are a last resort. The owners of delinquent accounts will receive a letter giving them 14 days to pay in full or arrange a payment plan. A payment plan requires 25 percent down immediately. The remaining balance is then scheduled across future bills for six to nine months.

Customers with questions or wishing to pay can contact the S&WB the following ways:

- Call 52-WATER (504.529.2837)
- Pay in person at 625 St. Joseph St. on the East Bank, or 4021 Behrman Place, Suite M-2 on the West Bank.
- Pay online here: <https://account.swbno.org/app/login.jsp>
- Or send checks or money orders to:

Cashiers Department
625 Saint Joseph Street
New Orleans, LA 70165

The S&WB has an assistance program for the elderly, disabled and economically disadvantaged. Information on the Water Help program can be found by contacting the agency at 504.585.2298.

Should your water service be disconnected, teams are standing by to reinstate service once you make a payment or enter a payment plan.

The reinstatement of the collections process coincides with the S&WB's plan to address billing irregularities. A strike team of billing experts is reviewing the backlog of disputed bills. By resolving those disputes, the team already has reduced the backlog to about 4,500 accounts – down from 7,800 in May. The process will continue until all past disputes are resolved.

Customers who disagree with the strike team's findings can request an administrative hearing. Hearing officers will review accounts on a case-by-case basis and deliver a final ruling. The hearings will be held at S&WB facilities downtown and in Algiers, and at community centers in each of the five City Council districts on certain dates.

The Revenue Department will be undergoing enhanced training to minimize future misreads of meters and to heighten its vigilance to catch and correct errant bills before they are sent to customers.

Paying a water bill is more than covering the cost to shower, cook and drink. It's an investment in the City's infrastructure and safety.

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