

# CITY OF BLACKFOOT UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

May 2017



## **PURPOSE**

The City of Blackfoot provides municipal utilities for its citizens in the form of Water (WA), Wastewater Treatment/Sewer (SW) and Sanitation/Garbage (GB). This Utility Billing Policies & Procedures manual covers these services and applies to any applicant or customer applying for or supplied with the above referenced utility services. Customers are subject to, and are required to comply with, these Policies & Procedures for each service received from the City of Blackfoot.

It is the policy of the City of Blackfoot to provide utility services without discrimination and in accordance with sound business principles, that rates will be reasonably uniform to all customers within classifications and that utility services pricing will be based on providing competitive rates to all customers without special rate categories for selected social or economic classes of customers.

The City of Blackfoot makes every effort to ensure that accounts are set up correctly, as well as conducting audits of accounts and assigned equipment to identify any errors. However, ensuring that the billing is correct is a shared responsibility with the utility customers. If you do not receive a bill or delinquent bill in the mail, it is your responsibility to contact City Hall at 208-785-8600, x-1821 or Dial 2 to inquire on the status of your account. The City of Blackfoot is not responsible for delays caused by the US Postal Service.

These Policies & Procedures are intended to provide guidance to City of Blackfoot customers and staff, to achieve the common goal of efficient and safe utility service.

## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

### **CUSTOMER ACCOUNT INFORMATION**

Disclosure of specific account information is made in accordance with customer consent. In the absence of customer consent, disclosure may occur pursuant to a court order, or if the disclosure is otherwise in accordance with Federal or State law. The City of Blackfoot may make customer records available to third party credit agencies on a regular basis, in connection with the establishment and management of delinquent accounts.

### **RECORDS REQUEST**

Upon receipt and approval of a Records Request Form, the City Clerk or designated employee, will furnish proper and reasonable opportunities for any person desiring to inspect, examine and copy the public records in the offices of the City of Blackfoot, during normal business hours.

## **NEW ACCOUNTS**

All renters, residential property owners and business owners must come to City Hall to initiate utility services as follows:

### **RENTERS**

All property renters/tenants who are listed on the lease must complete and sign the Customer Information Form and provide the following documentation:

- Current lease agreement
- Photo identification for all property renters/tenants on the lease agreement
- Deposit in the amount of \$150.00 (will be applied to your final bill after the account is closed)

If a renter/tenant moves from one rental property to a different rental property within the City, the deposit may be transferred; however, all other steps for opening a new (rental) account must be completed.

## **PROPERTY OWNERS**

All property owners who are listed on the Deed must complete and sign the Customer Information Form and provide the following documentation:

- Warranty Deed or Deed of Trust\*
- Photo identification for all property owners listed on the Deed
- Deposit in the amount of \$150.00 (will be applied to your account balance when your account has remained current for 12 months)
- Additional responsible persons may be added to the account by the owner of the property

If the new property owner(s) is(are) not physically located in Blackfoot, they must:

Log onto [www.cityofblackfoot.org](http://www.cityofblackfoot.org) and complete the Customer Information Form

Instruct their title company to fax a copy of their deed to City of Blackfoot offices, 208-785-8602, attention Utility Billing.

They will then need to fax (208-785-8602) or email (call 208-785-8600, x-1821 or dial 0 to obtain the email address) the completed Customer Information Form and a copy of their photo identification.

## **BUSINESS OWNERS IF LEASING PROPERTY**

**To qualify for business services, business owners must first complete the steps in Addendum A – BUSINESS REGISTRATION**

All property renters/tenants who are listed on the lease must complete and sign the Customer Information Form and provide the following documentation:

- Current lease agreement
- Photo identification for all property renters/tenants on the lease agreement
- Deposit in the amount of \$150.00 (will be applied to your final bill after the account is closed)
- If the business is an LLC, a Personal Guarantee Form must be signed by the authorized individual, who would be responsible for the outstanding balance should the account be sent to collections for non-payment

## **BUSINESS OWNER IF PROPERTY IS OWNED**

**To qualify for business services, business owners must first complete the steps in Addendum A – BUSINESS REGISTRATION**

A property owner or Registered Agent who is/are listed on the Deed must complete and sign the Customer Information Form and provide the following documentation:

- Warranty Deed (WD) or Deed of Trust\* (DOT)
- If WD or DOT is in the name of a business, the account will be opened under the business name
- Photo identification for property owner or Registered Agent who is opening the account
- Additional responsible persons may be added to the account by the owner of the property
- Deposit in the amount of \$150.00 (will be applied to your account balance when your account has remained current for 12 months)
- If the business is an LLC, a Personal Guarantee Form must be signed by the Registered Agent, who would be responsible for the outstanding balance should the business close or the account be sent to collections for non-payment

If the new property owner(s) is(are) not physically located in Blackfoot, they must:

Log onto [www.cityofblackfoot.org](http://www.cityofblackfoot.org) and complete the Customer Information Form

Instruct their title company to fax a copy of their deed to City of Blackfoot offices, 208-785-8602, attention Utility Billing.

They will then need to fax (208-785-8602) or email (call 208-785-8600, x-1821 or dial 0 to obtain the email address) the completed Customer Information Form and a copy of their photo identification.

\*Provided by title company as part of real estate settlement documents

## ACCOUNT TRANSFERS (ONLY APPLY TO RENTED PROPERTIES)

To complete a transfer from renter/tenant to owner/landlord over the phone, there must be a Landlord Agreement for the property on file with the City of Blackfoot. If a Landlord Agreement is in the file, the owner/landlord may contact the City of Blackfoot by telephone to confirm the contact and billing information. Once that is completed, billing will transfer to the owner/landlord.

## UTILITY BILL

Utility bills are sent via US Postal Service, or Express Bill Pay if you have requested paperless statements, to the account address on record on the first business day of the month. Bills include charges for Water, Sewer and Garbage and reflect costs for the prior month's usage. Opening and closing bills will reflect pro-rated charges.

## UTILITY RATES

### Single Family Residential Home

MINIMUM MONTHLY BILL \$			
STANDARD RESIDENTIAL			
WATER ALLOCATION	15,000 GALLONS		
WATER METER LINE SIZE	¾"	1"	1½"
WATER	21.90	22.47	24.27
SEWER	31.39	31.39	31.39
GARBAGE	15.00	15.00	15.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68.29</b>	<b>68.86</b>	<b>70.66</b>
CIRCUIT BREAKER RESIDENTIAL			
WATER ALLOCATION	5,000 GALLONS		
WATER METER LINE SIZE	¾"	1"	1½"
WATER	7.30	7.49	8.09
SEWER	21.98	21.98	21.98
GARBAGE	10.50	10.50	10.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39.78</b>	<b>39.97</b>	<b>40.57</b>

## GARBAGE

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Sanitation trucks are extremely large, difficult to maneuver and have specialized equipment for lifting and dumping garbage cans. Due to this fact, garbage cans that are located too closely to parked vehicles will not be picked up. Likewise, the garbage can lid must be fully closed. Cans that have debris protruding out of the lid will not be picked up as this may cause damage to City equipment. The sanitation drivers ARE NOT PERMITTED to leave their vehicles.

If your garbage is missed due to our error, please contact the Utility Billing Clerk at City Hall to arrange for pick-up at no extra charge. If your garbage is missed because you did not have the can present at the time of pick-up, contact City Hall at 208-785-8600, x-1821 or dial 0 to request that we return to pick up your garbage can. Residential customers will be charged \$5.00 for this service; commercial customers will be charged \$5.00 + the standard weekly 'tipping' fee. You may request an additional pick up in-between weekly pick-ups for a fee of \$8.75. There is a fee for replacement of a missing, stolen or damaged can (other than normal wear and tear.)

## **RESIDENTIAL**

Residential garbage cans are picked up once/week on a regularly scheduled day, dependent upon your address. If you require an additional pick-up during the week, please contact City Hall at 208-785-8600, x-1821 or dial 0. There is a charge of \$8.75 for this service for residential customers.

Residential customers must have their garbage can(s) on the curb of their property no later than 6:30 AM on their assigned pick-up day, unless your pick-up is alley-access.

## **COMMERCIAL**

Commercial and/or metal can garbage pick-up frequency varies depending upon need. Arrangements for this will be made with the Utility Billing Clerk upon establishment of service, and on an as-needed basis after that time. Commercial customers must have their garbage can(s) accessible and/or curbside, dependent up on the location, no later than 5:00 AM on their scheduled pick-up day(s).

Commercial metal cans are available in several sizes:

<b>Metal Can Size</b>	<b>Price/Month*</b>
300 Gallon	\$33.47
400 Gallon	\$44.63
600 Gallon	\$66.95

\*Price reflects a once weekly pick-up. Should you require more frequent pick-up, pricing will be adjusted accordingly. Please contact the Utility Billing Clerk at 208-785-8600, x-1821, for details regarding pricing.

Temporary commercial cans are available and will be delivered for a \$10.00 fee.

## **WATER**

All City of Blackfoot water usage is metered by gallons, and billed in thousand-gallon increments. Each residential and business customer is allocated 15,000 gallons of water/month, and charged \$1.54 per thousand gallons thereafter; customers on the circuit breaker program are allocated 5,000 gallons/month and charged \$1.08 per thousand gallons thereafter.

Meters will not be read during winter months, unless the account regularly uses over 20,000 gallons/month and billed accordingly. Meter reading will resume in the spring, at which time any water use over 15,000 gallons/month will be charged at a rate of \$1.54/thousand gallons and will be included with the spring utility bill.

## **ALLOCATION CALCULATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH WATER SHARES USING CULINARY (CITY) WATER FOR IRRIGATION**

Based on Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) calculations for one acre of land, watering once weekly on a domestic right is allocated 13,800 gallons of water for irrigation; therefore, accounting for four (4) turns during the month equals 55,200 gallons. The 55,200 gallons, in addition to the household base of 15,000 gallons, results in a total base allocation of 70,200 gallons a month. Any monthly water utilization above 70,200 gallons during the irrigation months will be charged to the account at the current rate charged to other customers. During non-irrigation months, each account will have the normal base allocation of 15,000 gallons of water/month and billed for overages per standard procedure. For purposes of this policy, irrigation season will be determined by the ditch company annually.

## TAMPERING WITH WATER SYSTEM

Tampering with the water system in any way, including maliciously, willfully or negligently breaking, damaging or tampering with any part of the water system may result in criminal charges of malicious injury to property.

## SEWER

The fixed monthly charge for an Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) at the standard residential rate is \$31.39. Equivalent Dwelling Units are used as the baseline for determining fees for commercial services, as may be found in [CITY CODE 9-3-21](#).

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR UTILITY BILL

Below is a sample utility bill, with a key to the abbreviations used. Important monthly messages will be placed on the utility bill, and should be read carefully.

CITY OF BLACKFOOT					
Phone (208) 785-9500 • 157 N. Broadway • Blackfoot, ID 83221 cityofblackfoot.org					
CUSTOMER NAME					DUE DATE
					00/00/0000
METER READING		USED	CODE	AMOUNT	
PREVIOUS	PRESENT				
PB	PREVIOUS BALANCE		PB	00.00	
WA	WATER		WA	00.00	
SW	SEWER	0000	SW	00.00	
GA	GARBAGE		GB	00.00	
RF	RETURN FEE		RF	00.00	
LF	LATE FEE		LF	00.00	
"MONTHLY MESSAGE"					
SERVICE TO: 00/00/0000					
SERVICE ADDRESS: 1234 No Name St					
ACCOUNT NUMBER	PAY THIS	AMOUNT			
00.0000.00	AMOUNT	\$00.00			

**RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT**

Check here if rounding up payment for park improvements

DUE DATE	
00/00/0000	
ACCOUNT NO.	AMOUNT DUE
00.0000.0	\$00.00

NAME  
ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE, ZIP

PRESCRIBED FIRST CLASS MAIL U.S. POSTAGE, P.O. BLACKFOOT, ID 83221 PERMIT NO. 103

## UTILITY BILL PAYMENT

Bills are payable upon receipt and past due after the due date stated on the bill; payment must be made in the form of United States currency. Customers have several options to pay their bill as follows:

- In person at City Hall
- By telephone
- City Hall drop box
- US Postal Service mail
- Automatic monthly payments
- On-line payments

A late fee of \$5.00 will be applied in accordance with the City's rate schedule, if a balance remains on the account after the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## BILLING ERRORS/ADJUSTMENT OF UTILITY BILL

The City of Blackfoot makes every effort to ensure that accounts are set up correctly, as well as conducting audits of accounts and assigned equipment to identify any errors. However, ensuring that the billing is correct is a shared responsibility with the utility customers.

The City of Blackfoot recommends that you review your bill monthly and discuss any questions or billing discrepancies with the City Utility Billing Clerk for research and resolution. When an under-billing or over-billing occurs, the City of Blackfoot shall provide the customer with notice of the circumstances, time period and amount of adjustment. The City of Blackfoot shall refund or re-bill for 90 days of usage. In no event, shall an under-billing or over-billing be adjusted for a period of more than 90 days.

The City of Blackfoot may choose to waive re-billing for under-billings or outstanding balances when it is not cost effective for the City.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The City of Blackfoot does not extend credit or assist individuals who are having difficulty paying for their utilities; however, there are several organizations that may have programs to offer assistance. Should you find that you are unable to pay for your utilities, you may contact the following:

- SouthEastern Idaho Community Action Agency (SEICAA) <http://seicaa.org/>
- Bingham County Indigent Assistance [http://www.co.bingham.id.us/indigent/indigent\\_assistance.html](http://www.co.bingham.id.us/indigent/indigent_assistance.html)
- Idaho 2-1-1 <https://211.idaho.gov/>
- Faith based organizations in the community

## DELINQUENT POLICY

All City of Blackfoot utility customers whose accounts are two (2) months delinquent will receive a delinquent notice. It is the responsibility of the customer to carefully read the notice, as water services will be terminated **seven (7) days after the delinquent notice has been printed**, unless the account is brought current or Payment Arrangements\* have been made.

Customers will be assessed a \$50.00 DELINQUENT FEE if the account is not brought current or Payment Arrangements\* for the full balance have not been made by the service termination date, regardless of whether water service is turned off. There will be an additional \$25.00 fee to reestablish water service after 5:00 PM and before 7:30 AM.

### \*PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Payment arrangements will only be accepted in person at City Hall. Customers must complete a Payment Arrangement card with a commitment to make the payment in full by 5:00 PM on the last business day of the month. It is important to note that Payment Arrangements MUST be submitted on the Payment Arrangements form, are binding and may not be changed or extended. If arrangements are missed, the water will be disconnected on the scheduled shut-off day. This will result in a \$50.00 LATE FEE being assessed (with an additional \$25.00 fee after business hours.)

## LEVEL PAY PROGRAM

The City of Blackfoot offers a voluntary Level Pay Program as a convenience for qualifying residential customers.

The customer must have 12 months of utility billing history with the City, with no delinquent notices or service shut off's, and the utility account must be paid in full before being eligible for the Level Pay Program. Once eligible, the customer must contact the Utility Billing Clerk, who will compute the monthly charges and set up the program for the customer. Level pay arrangements are set up one time/year in December.

## CIRCUIT BREAKER PROGRAM

The circuit breaker program applies to homeowners on a limited income who are also over the age of 65, widowed or disabled. This is a State of Idaho funded program that is administered locally by the Assessor's Office.

Once you receive your paperwork from the Assessor's Office, **you must bring the Application for Property Tax Reduction Form to the Utility Billing Clerk at Blackfoot City Hall**, who will copy this for our records. This program offers customers a 30% reduction on all utilities provided by the City of Blackfoot.

**NOTE: The Property Tax Reduction Form must be brought to the Utility Billing Clerk at Blackfoot City Hall on an annual basis, so that we may continue to apply this discount to your utility services. Deadline for receipt of the Property Tax Reduction Form is April 30<sup>th</sup>. Any Property Tax Reduction Forms received after the deadline will receive the Circuit Breaker Discount with the next billing cycle.**

## **COLLECTIONS**

Final bills are subject to being sent to collections if not paid in full by the due date. In addition, I understand that any cost for collection of past due monies, including attorney fees, collection fees or court costs can and will be charged directly to the customer or added to the customer's account balance.

## **LOCATING UNDERGROUND UTILITIES**

The City of Blackfoot strongly recommends that you contact 811 to assist excavators and contractors in identifying the existing location of the City of Blackfoot's underground utilities. Should you not do so, you will be held responsible for actual costs and consequential damages resulting from damage to the City of Blackfoot's services.

## **RATE ADJUSTMENTS**

The City of Blackfoot reserves the right to change any or all rate schedules, as it deems necessary. Where applicable, the revised rate schedules cancel and supersede all previous rate schedules issued by the City of Blackfoot.

## **REVISION OF UTILITY BILLING POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

The City of Blackfoot reserves the right to change any or all Policies & Procedures, as it deems necessary. Where applicable, the revised Policies & Procedures cancel and supersede all previous Policies & Procedures issued by the City of Blackfoot, governing its Utility Billing Services.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **DURING BUSINESS HOURS**

Blackfoot City Hall  
157 N Broadway  
Blackfoot, ID 83221  
Monday to Thursday 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM  
Friday 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM  
Utility Billing: 208-785-8600, x-1821

### **AFTER BUSINESS HOURS**

Bingham County Dispatch  
208-785-1234



## **BUSINESS LICENSING**

When applying for utility service, business customers must designate as such, and properties must go through the inspection process to ensure that businesses within the City are operating safely, and comply with fire and land use regulations. As such, these steps must be completed prior to City initiating utility services (Sanitation, Sewer, Water.)

***These services are usually completed within 48 hours of application receipt; as such, please allow sufficient time for these inspections to be completed when initiating new business utility services.***

For purposes of this policy, a business refers to any activities, trades or pursuits that are conducted for profit.