

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CUSTOMER OF NORRIDGEWOCK WATER DISTRICT

The Norridgewock Water District is a municipal utility - not a part of the Town of Norridgewock.

We welcome you as a valued customer of the Norridgewock Water District. This document is provided for our existing and new customers. It contains a summary of your rights and responsibilities as required under Chapter 660 of the Maine Public Utilities Commission (MPUC).

The purposes of this Chapter are: to assure safe and adequate provision of utility service; to assure that service is not disconnected or refused unreasonably; and to assure the utility's right to collect proper bills for utility service. Every privilege that is granted and every duty that is required by this Chapter imposes an obligation on utilities, applicants and customers to accept these privileges and perform these duties with good faith, honesty and fairness.

Throughout this information, the terms "we" or "us" refer to the Norridgewock Water District; the term "you" refers to the customer. The "MPUC" refers to the Maine Public Utilities Commission. Our office hours are 9:00a.m. - 1:00p.m. Wednesday & Thursday (excluding holidays). Our superintendent and/or operator are available from 7:30a.m. – 5:00p.m. Monday - Friday (excluding holidays). Limited emergency service is provided for nights, weekends, and holidays at the discretion of the District and at customer expense.

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APPLICATION FOR SERVICE

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.

Applying for Service: You must complete an application for service before we accept you as a customer. You must apply as soon as you are responsible for the service, and provide all required information. We charge a service establishment fee of \$20.00, payable at time of application, each time you sign for service. Service may be disconnected if you fail to complete the application process. In signing for the service, you agree to abide by the District's approved 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 permanently accessible shut-off for each unit.

Cost of Service: When you apply for service, we will tell you about the basic minimum service costs and one-time costs such as installation fees and how much they are, if applicable. If you have any questions about the cost of your service, call us at (207) 634-2660. Our rates must be approved by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. We cannot change these rates without the approval of the MPUC. You have the right to review and comment on our proposed rates before the MPUC approves or disapproves any changes.

Scheduling: We require a two business-day notice to begin the process of providing service, unless the service has been disconnected for non-payment by you. We require a minimum three business-day notice to discontinue 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.

DEPOSITS: We can ask for a deposit from residential applicants 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 at any utility, or if you were disconnected for 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 condition of service. When we require a residential deposit, we must tell you in writing, explain what you can do to begin or continue service, and what to do if you disagree with the deposit request. You can 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" your bills up to the deposit amount. The guarantor must be a residential customer in good standing with us. We will pay interest on deposits as set by the MPUC. We can require a deposit that is equal to your highest actual bill or equal to the highest bill at a comparable property. 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 residential deposits with interest if you pay your bills on time for 12 consecutive months. Non-residential deposits are refunded at termination of service.

BILLING

Billing: In general, the District bills on a quarterly basis, with the exact billing date depending on where your property is located. Your first bill may be for one or two months; after the first bill, you will receive a bill every three months. Domestic water use is billed in arrears and is billed after it is used.

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

Meter Tests: We test your meter periodically to make sure it is operating correctly. The MPUC approves the schedule of meter tests and the accuracy standards. If you want your meter tested for accuracy, we will do so at no cost to you. If you ask more often than once every 18 months, we will charge you a fee based on meter size. The fee 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. Ask us how to do so.

Estimated Bills: We prepare bills based on actual meter readings unless hampered by weather conditions, emergencies, or equipment failure - OR if you have failed to provide access for us to obtain the reading.

Make-up Bills: If we have to issue a make-up bill for past service that you were not billed for, we will 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.

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.

Water Questions?: If you have any questions about the cost of water service or other services, you can call us at 634-2660 during business hours. 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 MPUC approval.

PAYMENT OF BILLS: Your water bill is due 28 days from mailing, and may accrue interest beginning on the 29th day. You can pay your bill by cash, check, or money order; you may also pay by credit card as detailed below. When a check is not honored by the bank, we will charge you the greater of \$10.00 or the bank charge. 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. You can pay your water bill:

BY MAIL: Norridgewock Water District, PO Box 96, Norridgewock, ME 04957

IN PERSON: Norridgewock Water District office, 90 Mercer Rd, Norridgewock OR at Dave's Service on Wade St, Norridgewock (across from the Post Office)

BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD/ONLINE CHECK: On-line only thru our website or at PaymentServiceNetwork.com (\$2.95 convenience fee; \$1 for online checks)

PAYMENT PLANS

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 weekly payments. You must also agree to pay all future bills by the due date until the payment agreement is complete. We will consider the following in establishing a payment agreement: a) your ability to pay; b) the amount of the bill; 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) extenuating circumstances. We will send you a written copy of an oral payment arrangement if more than one payment is required. If you do not make payments according to a payment agreement, we can send you a disconnection notice that gives you three (3) business days to bring the agreement up to date. 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.

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 prevail, you will be responsible for all court costs.

DISCONNECTION/RECONNECTION: 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. Some reasons for disconnection are:

- Failure to pay or make a payment agreement for an overdue bill
- Failure to keep a payment agreement
- Failure to pay a deposit, to arrange for payment of deposit, or to provide someone willing to guarantee payment
- Use of the service without completing the application process
- Failure to provide access for us to read/install a meter or to repair/replace District property
- Tampering with the meter or take service without payment
- Misrepresenting who you are to get service
- Failure to comply with a decision of the MPUC or its Consumer Assistance Division

We are not allowed to disconnect for:

- a) unpaid non-basic charges;
- b) an old bill that was not properly transferred to your account; or
- c) in a medical emergency (see "Medical Emergency" section).

We can 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) calendar days before the disconnection date in the notice. But we will give you only three (3) business days notice if you:

- a) have broken a payment agreement,
- b) failed to pay a deposit,
- c) had your payment dishonored (bad check); or
- d) failed to apply for service.

We can disconnect without notice only if there is unauthorized use (meter tampering) or a dangerous condition including danger to our water system. 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 on 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 future water bills in your own name. You do not have to pay the landlord's unpaid bill.

Collection and Reconnection: If our serviceman comes to your premises to collect an overdue payment, we will charge you a \$15.00 collection fee. If your water service is disconnected for non-payment, we will charge you a \$50.00 reconnection fee during business hours. We must reconnect your water service no later than the next business day once you have paid your overdue bill and fees, or have agreed to a payment plan. In addition, we can require a deposit if you are disconnected for non-payment.

SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION: We will not disconnect or refuse to reconnect residential service when you or someone in your house has a serious medical condition, as long as a registered physician provides specific written certification. 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 contact us. Disconnection can be postponed due to a medical emergency for up to 30 days, and can be renewed twice in any 12-month period. A medical emergency does not cancel a bill.

DISCONNECTION/RECONNECTION CUSTOMER REQUEST: If you request that your water service be temporarily terminated, we will charge you a \$50.00 reconnection fee during business hours when you wish to have the service reconnected.

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 ten (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.

LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES: The District is liable for damages only to the extent expressly provided in the Maine Tort Claims Act (Title 14, Chapter 741). We are not responsible for damage caused by discolored water or unsatisfactory water service resulting from the cleaning of pipes or storage facilities; or from the opening or closing of any valves or hydrants; unless the damage was caused by our lack of reasonable care. We are also not responsible for meeting unusually high water quality standards for specializing or industrial customers.

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 MPUC, State House Station 18, Augusta ME 04333-0018 (1-800-452-4699). 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.