



Fact Sheet: Meter Charges (Water)

How does a utility bill for meter charges upon disconnection? What if the water meter is still in place?

The presence of a water meter does not automatically mean that the customer should be billed for water service. What matters is whether the customer is receiving water service and whether the customer has requested disconnection of service. Charges for water service would be applicable as long as the customer is receiving the service. When disconnection is requested by the customer or is imposed on the customer for nonpayment, then the question is what, if any, charges are applicable. The following is the Public Service Commission (Commission) Division of Water, Compliance and Consumer Affairs' policy on charging for water service upon disconnection.

When a customer requests disconnection, the utility should inquire as to the nature of the disconnection to determine whether it is intended to be a temporary disconnection or a permanent disconnection. A temporary disconnection is when a customer will be reconnecting at the same address within a year of disconnection (such as a "snowbird" who goes to Arizona each winter). A permanent disconnection is when no reconnection is anticipated, at least not within a year, by the same customer at the same address, such as a customer who closes, abandons, or moves out of a dwelling with no intention of returning.

If the customer requests a temporary disconnection and intends to reconnect within a year, Schedule Mgt-1 of the utility's authorized water rates provides that this "seasonal customer" would be responsible for the service or meter charge under Schedule Mgt-1 during the period of disconnection, whether or not the meter is removed. Generally, this customer would be backbilled for the service charges upon reconnection within a year. However, if the both the utility and the customer agree, the utility may continue billing the customer for the service charge while temporarily disconnected. In addition, the Schedule R-1 reconnection charge would be applicable to this customer upon reconnection.

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If the customer requests permanent disconnection, this person is no longer a customer of the water utility and would no longer be subject to any charges for general water service under Schedule Mgt-1, etc. The one exception is if the water utility has a standby charge under Schedule Sws-1 on file as part of its authorized rates. However, if after requesting permanent disconnection, the customer reconnects service at the same address within a year of disconnection, then this was not a permanent disconnection. Schedule Mgt-1 provides that the water utility should backbill this customer for the Schedule Mgt-1 service or meter charge for the period this customer was "temporarily" disconnected. In addition, the Schedule R-1 reconnection charge would be applicable to this customer upon reconnection.

In either type of disconnection, temporary or permanent, the customer and the water utility should discuss the situation to best determine whether to just turn the valve off at the curb stop or to also pull the water meter. The customer is responsible for the repair of any damage that results from allowing a water meter to become frozen.

When a customer is disconnected for nonpayment, or any other involuntary disconnection, billing for water service stops and there is no backbilling upon reconnection. When the customer does reconnect, the Schedule R-1 reconnection charge applies and normal water billing resumes.

For more information, please visit the PSC website at psc.wi.gov.