

# LOWCOUNTRY REGIONAL WATER SYSTEM

## CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES

### **Service Application**

Any person, business or other entity requiring the use of the LRWS's utility system shall make application for service and establish an account with the LRWS. When application for utility service is made, the charges and rates therefore, shall begin on the date service is established by the LRWS. At the time of application, the applicant shall submit a processing fee to the LRWS as set forth in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges. Applicants for service will be required to supply two forms of identification (including one picture ID) upon application and proof of residency (lease/rental agreement if a renter).

Only the account holder of record can make changes to service or make inquiries regarding the account or the account holder can authorize others to make changes to the service. Whenever the customer changes at any premise connected to the utility system, the LRWS shall be immediately notified of such change, giving such notice the name and address of the new customer, whereupon the LRWS will require the new customer to make application for utility service in the same manner as is provided for new service connections. In the absence of such application by such new customer, the use of the LRWS's service shall be taken and construed to be an acceptance by such new customer of all the contract obligations of the preceding customer. In the event any customer fails to notify the LRWS of a change in ownership of any premises for utility service, such customer shall continue to be liable to the LRWS for all rates and charges, accrued and accruing for such service. If the new customer does not formally apply for service within 3 business days of notification, such service will be terminated. Any person leaving the system will be considered a new customer upon returning and will be required to pay a new customer application fee in addition to any unpaid balance from previous service. New commercial and industrial customers' application fees will be determined by the staff on a case by case basis.

### **Tap Fees**

Tap fees are charged and paid for any new connection to the LRWS utility system where there was not a previous connection to the system. The tap fees are provided in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges and are in addition to the service application fee and deposit.

### **Impact Fees**

A system impact fee must be paid for each new residential or commercial customer connecting to the water and/or sewer utility system. This fee is to recover the capital costs associated with constructing system capacity available to meet the needs of new customers. As a new customer receives service, they will pay a capacity fee equal to the prorata residential equivalent equity in applicable treatment, transmissions, and collection facilities. The revenue from the impact fees are

allocated to capital improvements for the expansion of system capacity related to the above described system components. Commercial entities should contact the LRWS Engineering Department to calculate the applicable impact fees for their level of service requirement. Such level of service requirement varies by size of structure, number of employees, number of seats, number of fixtures, etc. The impact fees will be as adopted and revised from time to time by the LRWS Board.

## **Department of Health and Environmental Control Fees**

Department of Health and Environmental Control fees will be charged to each customer monthly in the amount of \$1.00. These fees are used to offset DHEC charges to the water system for compliance testing and review.

## **Fire Protection**

Water used for fighting fires will not be billed to the fire departments or the towns. Fire departments will be required to provide a fire flow report after each fire incident in order to calculate water used in the incident. This information is necessary for reporting lost water volumes to DHEC.

LRWS will flush fire hydrants at least every three years and fire departments are welcome to observe. Fire departments may flush fire hydrants more frequently. Fire departments and towns will not be billed for the water used if they provide flow reports to LRWS.

LRWS will report fire hydrant pressures to the applicable fire departments when pressures do not meet DHEC requirements.

## **Payment For Utility Services**

Water and Sewer customers are billed monthly in arrears and current charges are past due 15 days after the billing date. All meters shall be read once a month and bills shall become due and payable in their entirety by the due date indicated on the bill without penalty. If a meter is found to be nonfunctioning, the bill will be based on previous usage or if LRWS determines that previous usage is not an accurate indication of current use, then as estimated by LRWS. The total bill amount includes charges billed for the municipalities such as garbage, police and fire as applicable. If the total bill amount is not paid in full by the due date indicated on the bill, an initial late penalty shall be added as set forth in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges. Partial payments will not be accepted. If any bill shall remain unpaid after the fifteenth day following the due date (or the first working day after the fifteenth day following the due date), an additional late charge will be added to each outstanding bill, as set forth in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges. All bills that remain outstanding after this deadline will be subject to discontinuance of service. In the event service is terminated, a reconnection fee as set forth in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges will be charged in addition to the delinquent fee. Delinquent accounts may also be charged an additional account deposit. Service to such user shall be forthwith discontinued until all remaining balances, including fees and charges, are paid.

Any person benefitting from water and/or sewer service, even if they are not the authorized account holder, will be responsible for any outstanding balances on the water and/or sewer bill, including but not limited to, roommates and spouses.

Setoff Debt Program: The LRWS participates in the South Carolina Setoff Debt Program. This program allows LRWS to turn the debt over to the South Carolina Department of Revenue, via the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC). The Setoff Debt Collection Act (Section 12-56-10) allows the South Carolina Department of Revenue to deduct this debt, along with associated fees, from any state income tax refund owed to the customer and forward the balance to LRWS.

In the event of a disputed meter reading, bill, bill amount, payment or other matter, the customer may request a review in writing within 45 days of receipt of the bill. The General Manager will select a panel of three LRWS staff persons or other individuals who have not been directly involved in the matter to conduct an investigation. The panel will hear from the customer in person or in writing and will make such further investigation into the matter as its members deem necessary. The panel will provide the customer and the General Manager with a detailed written response communicating their conclusions. If the customer disagrees with the conclusions of the panel, the customer may request in writing that the General Manager review those conclusions. The General Manager will review the letter from the panel and communicate his decision in writing to the customer. The General Manager's decision at the end of that review will be the final decision in the matter by LRWS. The customer must pay disputed bills subject to refund by LRWS pending review.

## **Method of Payment**

Customers may pay for utility services by cash, check, money order, pay-by-phone, credit card or other means as deemed appropriate by the LRWS. Any entity is allowed to make payment on an active utility account. However, account information will only be provided to the account holder of record.

## **Returned Check Charges**

If a check or automatic bank draft is returned for a closed account or insufficient funds, the LRWS will add a charge to the customer's account as set forth in Exhibit 1-Schedule of Fees and Charges. At the discretion of LRWS management, the customer may not be allowed to pay by check again for a period of one year from the date of the returned check. If a check is returned on an account for which the balance is already late or otherwise delinquent, service will be discontinued immediately without notice.

## **Utility Extensions**

Parties interested in having water or sewer lines extended to areas not currently serviced by the LRWS shall be provided with a cost estimate that is compiled by the utility engineering staff. The line extension must be approved by the LRWS Board. The cost of the line extension shall be the financial responsibility of the individual(s) requesting the extension, unless otherwise directed by the LRWS Board. Service may be extended upon determination that the extension is in the best financial interest of the LRWS. In addition to paying the cost of the extension, the individual(s) requesting the extension shall be required to pay all applicable service application fees, tap fees, capacity fees and deposits in advance of service being provided.

### **Connection Required – Water**

1. Every building which is located within 250 feet of any water main operated and maintained by the LRWS shall be connected thereto and shall utilize the same for water service. Such connection shall be made prior to occupancy of any new building.
2. Existing buildings which are provided with access as described in the previous statement shall connect to the water main within a period of 2 years from the date of completion of the water main, or at such time as directed by the County Department of Health upon notice that the existing means of water supply is a health hazard and/or a violation of federal, state or county law.
3. Where no public water exists within the limitations of the previous statements, or where connection is technically impractical, the owner of such property may apply for a permit to construct and operate a well system approved by the County Department of Health.
4. All water connections shall be made in accordance with specifications and standards adopted from time to time by the LRWS.

### **Connection Required – Sewer**

1. Every building which is located within 250 feet of any sewer main operated and maintained by the LRWS shall be connected thereto and shall utilize the same for wastewater disposal. Such connection shall be made prior to occupancy of any new building.
2. Existing buildings which are provided with access as described in the previous statement shall connect to the sewer main within a period of 2 years from the date of completion of the sewer main, or at such time as directed by the County Department of Health upon notice that the existing means of waste disposal is a community health hazard and/or a violation of federal, state or county law.
3. Where no public sewer exists within the limitations of the previous statements, or where connection is technically impractical, the owner of such property may apply for a permit to construct and operate a septic tank system approved by the County Department of Health, and further provided that the septic tank system is properly maintained so as to eliminate any hazard to public health.

4. All sewer connections shall be made in accordance with specifications and standards adopted from time to time by the LRWS.

## **Illegal Connection & Tampering**

South Carolina law prohibits tampering with water meters in order to benefit from the appearance of reduced usage. The law provides for fines of up to \$500 and 30 days in jail for a first offense of tampering. LRWS prosecutes customers who break locks or otherwise tamper with meters when service has been interrupted. Customers may obtain a copy of the law by calling LRWS offices. It is also a violation for any unauthorized person to tamper with or change any connection to the system, without written permission, or to reconnect service when it has been discontinued for nonpayment of a bill for service, until such bill has been paid in full, including administrative fee. A meter found in a condition which would cause water to be diverted from the recording apparatus of the meter or to cause the meter to inaccurately measure the use of water, or the attachment to a water line or meter of any device or mechanism which would permit the use of unmetered water or would cause a meter to inaccurately measure the use, is prima facie evidence that the person or entity in whose name the meter was installed or the person or entity for whose benefit water was diverted caused the water to be diverted from going through the meter or the meter to inaccurately measure the use of the water.

## **Right of Entry for Inspection**

1. As a condition precedent to connecting to the LRWS utility systems, representatives of LRWS shall be permitted to enter the premises of any utility user at reasonable times to inspect or examine meters, utility pipes and their connections and the use of water on the premises.
2. It shall be unlawful for any person to refuse entrance for such purposes as herein authorized.

# Lowcountry Regional Water System

## Exhibit 1 Schedule of Fees and Charges

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As of February 28, 2024

<b>Application Fee:</b>	\$100.00 for residential application owner occupied. \$150.00 for residential application renter occupied. New commercial and industrial customer's application fee determined by staff on a case by case basis.
<b>Tap Fees - Water:</b>	\$1,000.00 for a standard residential meter size. (Generally ¾") Larger connections are billed at actual cost.
<b>Tap Fees - Sewer:</b>	\$1,000.00 for a standard residential gravity connection size (Typically 4" Gravity) Larger connections or other connection types are billed at actual cost.
<b>Returned Check Fee:</b>	\$30.00
<b>Late Payment:</b>	10% of balance due if not paid by the due date. 10% balance on all outstanding balances until the balance is paid in full.
<b>Service Fee:</b>	\$30.00
<b>Illegal Connections:</b>	As permitted by law.
<b>Tampering Penalty:</b>	As permitted by law.
<b>Impact Fee - Water:</b>	\$1,200.00 for each residential equivalent unit (REU) connection. Each Water REU is based on 150 Gallons Per Day
<b>Impact Fee - Sewer</b>	\$1,200.00 for each residential equivalent unit (REU) connection. Each Sewer REU is based on 300 Gallons Per Day
<b>DHEC Fee:</b>	\$1.00 per month.
<b>Fire Hydrant Use Permit:</b>	\$50.00 Permit Application Fee (Permit Valid for 30 Days) \$250.00 Fire Hydrant Meter Deposit Fee (If Applicable) \$5.00 Volumetric Charge per 1,000 Gallons