



Borough of Tarentum

Utility Customer Service & Operations Policy Manual *(Adopted 2025 – Replaces 1996 Manual)*

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I. Introduction

The Borough of Tarentum owns and operates municipal electric and water systems to provide safe, reliable, and affordable service to residents and businesses within Borough boundaries. Utility service is not automatic — every new user is required to complete an **Application for Utility Service**.

By accepting utility service, each customer enters into a binding agreement with the Borough. The use of Borough water or electric service constitutes both a **request and a contract**, in which the customer, property owner, and all users of the service agree to abide by:

- The **rules, regulations, and rate schedules** adopted by Borough Council.
- The **terms and conditions** of this manual.
- The **provisions of Ordinance 25-02A** (the Borough's Electric Service Ordinance).

Failure to comply is deemed a breach of contract and may result in discontinuation of service.

This manual provides:

1. A **procedural framework** for the day-to-day operation of Borough utilities.
2. A **training tool** for Borough staff.
3. A **reference guide** for interpreting and applying the Borough's utility policies.

This is a **living document**. Procedures and policies will be updated as technology advances (e.g., AMI smart meters, Sensus Analytics), as new laws or ordinances are adopted, and as best practices evolve.

II. Definitions & Glossary

This glossary ensures consistency in language across Borough policies, ordinances, and daily operations. It integrates terms from the **1996 manual**, updates them for current practice, and adds new terminology for **smart meters (AMI), Sensus Analytics, and modern billing systems**.

- **Account** – The financial record maintained by the Borough that tracks all charges, payments, deposits, adjustments, and balances for utility service at a specific property.
- **Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)** – The Borough's system of smart meters, network equipment, and data analytics that enables remote reading, hourly usage monitoring, outage detection, leak detection, and tamper alerts.
- **Applicant** – Any person, household, business, or entity that applies for Borough utility service.
- **Application for Service** – The Borough form that must be completed by an applicant to establish new water and/or electric service.
- **Billing Cycle** – The recurring monthly period during which meter data is pulled, charges are calculated, and customer bills are issued.
- **Utility Administrator** – The Borough employee responsible for producing bills, entering payments, updating account records, and maintaining the utility billing system.

- **Borough Facilities** – All infrastructure, equipment, and property owned by the Borough, including poles, lines, mains, transformers, meters, and substations.
- **Certificate of Approval** – A document issued by the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) certifying that a property has been inspected and approved for occupancy and utility connection.
- **Council** – The elected governing body of the Borough of Tarentum, which adopts ordinances and resolutions establishing rates, charges, and utility policy.
- **Customer** – The individual or entity legally responsible for payment of utility bills at a given service address.
- **Customer-Owned Equipment** – Wiring, plumbing, devices, or fixtures on the customer's side of the point of connection. The Borough is not responsible for failures or damages caused by customer-owned equipment.
- **Deposit** – A payment held by the Borough as security for future utility charges. Deposits may be required for new customers, delinquent accounts, or temporary service.
- **Disconnection (Termination)** – The intentional cessation of utility service, either at the request of the customer or by action of the Borough due to nonpayment, tampering, unsafe conditions, or ordinance violations.
- **Distribution Line** – A Borough-owned water main or electric line that runs through public rights-of-way and delivers utility service to customer properties.
- **Final Bill** – The last bill issued to a customer upon termination of service, based on a final meter reading.
- **Gross Bill** – The full amount due when payment is late, including penalties and fees.
- **Load Emergency** – A condition in which the Borough's electric demand exceeds, or threatens to exceed, available system capacity or creates instability.
- **Meter** – A Borough-owned device that measures electric or water consumption. Smart meters automatically transmit usage data through AMI.
- **Meter Accuracy Test** – A procedure conducted by the Borough upon customer request to verify meter performance against a $\pm 2\%$ tolerance standard.
- **Net Bill** – The discounted amount owed if payment is made by the due date.
- **Non-Reporting Meter** – A smart meter that fails to transmit consumption data as expected.
- **On-Call Personnel** – Utility staff designated to respond to emergencies after regular business hours, including nights, weekends, and holidays.
- **Rate Schedule** – The schedule of charges for water and electric service as adopted by Borough Council by ordinance or resolution.
- **Service Call** – A customer-requested inspection or repair performed by Borough personnel. Charges may apply depending on the source of the problem.
- **Service Line** – The physical connection from Borough distribution infrastructure to the customer's premises.
- **Standby Service** – Backup or secondary service requested by a customer, often involving generator integration or redundant connections.
- **Public Works Director** – The Borough official responsible for overseeing field utility staff and coordinating service work.
- **Tampering** – Any unauthorized interference with Borough-owned meters, lines, or facilities, including diversion, bypassing, or damage to equipment.
- **Termination Notice** – A written notice delivered to a customer advising that service will be shut off if payment is not received or violations are not corrected.
- **Utility Account Information Policy** – The Borough policy governing confidentiality, release, and waiver procedures for customer account data.

III. Meter Reading & Data Collection

Accurate meter reading is the foundation of utility billing and customer trust. The Borough of Tarentum has transitioned from manual meter reading to **Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)**, which provides hourly data, automated collection, and real-time alerts. While procedures have evolved, the principles of accuracy, accountability, and transparency remain constant.

A. Schedule

- **Continuous Reads:** All water and electric meters in the Borough are now smart meters capable of transmitting usage data hourly.
- **Billing Reads:** For billing purposes, official reads are pulled once per month at the close of the billing cycle.
- **Monitoring:** Staff may review hourly or daily usage data through Sensus Analytics for purposes such as outage management, leak detection, tamper detection, or customer inquiries.
- **Final Reads:** When service is terminated, a final read is pulled electronically on the requested date to ensure precise closing bills.

This system eliminates the need for bi-monthly manual readings, while preserving the historical cycle structure for record continuity.

B. Methodology

- Meter data is collected via the **Sensus AMI network** and transmitted to the Borough's data center.
- Information flows directly into **Sensus Analytics**, which provides reporting, dashboards, and anomaly detection.
- At the end of each billing cycle, data is automatically imported into the **Borough's billing software (Tyler Incode)**.
- Borough staff can access the following:
 - Meter identification details (location, size, serial number).
 - Hourly and daily consumption histories.
 - Outage indicators.
 - Tamper or non-reporting flags.

This automation reduces manual errors, improves efficiency, and allows the Borough to proactively manage system health.

C. Reporting

Sensus Analytics and the billing software provide reports that serve both operational and control purposes:

- **Usage by Account** – Hourly, daily, and monthly consumption trends.
- **Exception Reports** – Identifies usage above or below expected ranges.
- **Non-Reporting Meters** – Highlights meters that failed to transmit data.
- **Tamper Alerts** – Flags meters where tampering or bypassing is suspected.

- **District Summaries** – Aggregates consumption by service area or customer type.

Reports are reviewed by the Utility Administrator weekly and by the Borough Manager monthly.

D. Controls

- Exception reports are programmed to identify abnormal consumption patterns.
- Staff review these exceptions weekly to prevent misbilling.
- Manual adjustments require approval from the Borough Manager or Finance Officer.
- Meter data is archived under Borough record retention standards and available for regulatory audits.

These controls ensure that all consumption billed is accurate and defensible.

E. Meter Accuracy and Testing

- Customers may request that their meter be tested for accuracy.
- If the test can be performed in place, no charge will be assessed.
- If the meter must be removed, the customer shall pay a test fee as set by Council resolution.
- If the meter is found inaccurate by more than $\pm 2\%$, the Borough will:
 - Replace the meter at no cost.
 - Apply the test fee toward the new meter.
 - Adjust billing for up to three months prior to the test.
- If the meter is accurate, the test fee is retained and the meter reinstalled.

F. Utility Meters

- The customer bears the cost of new or replacement meters.
- Placement is determined by the Borough to ensure safe access and accuracy.
- Meters are permanent fixtures of the property and remain Borough-owned.
- Payment for new meters may be made in lump sum or installments (minimum \$10/month).
- Failure to pay may result in immediate service termination.

G. Miscellaneous

- Customers must maintain safe, clear access to meters at all times.
- Pets must be restrained and obstructions removed.
- Customers are prohibited from tampering with or removing Borough meters.
- Borough staff will present identification when entering a property for meter-related work.
- Failure to provide access will result in suspension of service until corrected.

Cross-Reference

All provisions regarding meters must be interpreted in conjunction with **Ordinance 25-02A, Article VII (Meters and Meter Reading)**. Where this manual and the ordinance conflict, the ordinance prevails.

IV. Billing

Billing is one of the most important functions of the Borough's utility operations. Clear, accurate, and timely bills ensure stable Borough revenues while also maintaining fairness and transparency for customers. Billing procedures must balance efficiency, customer service, and strict internal controls.

A. Billing Period and Frequency

- **Cycle:** The Borough bills all customers for electric, water, and refuse services on a **monthly cycle**, typically on or around the last day of the month.
- **Reads:** Official billing reads are pulled electronically from the Sensus AMI system at the end of each cycle.
- **Estimated Bills:** Because meters transmit automatically, estimated bills are rare. However, if a meter fails to report, an estimate based on historical usage may be issued. When actual data is received, the account will be corrected.
- **Final Bills:** When a customer requests termination, a final read is pulled electronically and a bill generated immediately. Customers remain responsible for service up to the exact time of disconnection.
- **Deposits:** For customers who have provided a deposit, unpaid balances are deducted before refunding any remaining funds, with interest.

Explanation: Moving to monthly billing gives customers more predictable payments and allows the Borough to manage cash flow more effectively. Electronic reads eliminate the delays and uncertainty of manual schedules.

Cross-Reference: Ordinance 25-02A, Article V.

B. Methodology

- **Software:** The Borough uses Tyler Incode billing software, which integrates with Sensus Analytics.
- **Rate Setup:** Water, electric, and refuse rates are entered into the billing system annually in accordance with Borough ordinances and resolutions.
- **Bill Generation:** Once usage is imported from AMI, the system calculates charges automatically and generates bills.
- **Mailing & Delivery:** Bills are mailed to customers unless the customer has opted for **eBilling**, in which case bills are delivered electronically.
- **Manual Entries:** The Utility Administrator may need to enter charges for non-routine items such as:
 - Meter testing fees
 - Charges for delivery of delinquent notices
 - New meter charges
 - Administrative fees
- **Audit Controls:** All manual entries are logged and reviewed by the Borough Manager.

Explanation: Automation reduces errors and speeds processing, but staff involvement is still needed for exceptional situations. Proper logging ensures accountability.

C. Customer Information

The Borough maintains a complete account record for every customer, including:

- Customer name and mailing address
- Service location and account number
- Meter identification details (serial, size, type)
- Billing and payment history
- Deposits held, if any
- Service type (residential, commercial, industrial)
- Tax status (sales tax exempt, partially exempt, or taxable)

Customer Responsibilities:

- Notify the Borough promptly of changes in ownership, tenancy, mailing address, or tax status.
- Provide valid documentation for sales tax exemptions.
- Review bills upon receipt and promptly report discrepancies.

Customer Access:

- Customers may request copies of usage or payment history.
- A service charge may apply for printed records.

Explanation: Maintaining accurate customer records ensures fairness in billing and protects both the Borough and customers in cases of disputes.

D. Property Owner Liability for Utility Accounts

Under **Ordinance 25-02A**, the Borough of Tarentum establishes that **property owners are ultimately responsible for all utility charges associated with their property**, regardless of whether the account is held in the name of a tenant, lessee, or other occupant.

- **Liability:**
 - If a tenant or other account holder fails to pay, the property owner remains legally liable for all outstanding balances.
 - The Borough may collect unpaid balances directly from the property owner.
- **Municipal Liens:**
 - The Borough reserves the right to file a **municipal lien** against the property for unpaid utility charges.
 - Such liens may include the outstanding balance, penalties, interest, and associated costs.
- **Operational Practice:**
 - Bills may be mailed to tenants at the service address, but property owners will also receive delinquency notices when accounts become past due.
 - Before reconnection of service, **all outstanding balances must be settled**, regardless of who accrued them.
- **Owner Notification:**
 - Owners are encouraged to monitor utility accounts for their properties.

- The Borough may, upon request, provide account status updates to property owners in compliance with the **Utility Account Information Policy**.

E. Reporting

The billing system generates reports used by staff for management, reconciliation, and oversight:

Report	Purpose	Frequency
Itemized Billing by District/Customer	Details of charges by service area and customer	Monthly
Consumption Reports (Water & Electric)	Aggregates usage for Borough analysis	Monthly/Annual
Exception/Override Report	Captures manual changes or overrides	Monthly
Delinquency Reports	Identifies overdue accounts	Monthly

Reports are reviewed by the Utility Administrator and Borough Manager, ensuring accuracy and accountability.

Explanation: Reporting provides both operational insight and financial safeguards. By cross-checking billing data with meter data, the Borough ensures all consumption is billed properly.

F. Rates and Invoicing

- **Rate Basis:**
 - Water charges are based on consumption and meter size.
 - Electric charges are based on kilowatt-hours (kWh), demand (where applicable), customer charges, and sales tax.
 - Refuse charges are flat monthly fees.
- **Invoices:** Bills clearly show:
 - Previous and current reads
 - Usage for the billing period
 - Current charges (water, electric, refuse)
 - Prior balances due
 - Net amount due (if paid by due date)
 - Gross amount due (if late)
- **Disputes:** Customers disputing bills must submit written documentation before the due date. While disputes are under review, payment must still be made in full. If the dispute is upheld, the Borough will issue a credit or refund.
- **False Disputes:** The Borough reserves the right to assess an administrative fee for baseless or fraudulent disputes.

Explanation: Transparent invoicing reduces confusion and provides a clear record for both customers and the Borough.

G. Controls

- **Access Restrictions:** Only authorized personnel may access the billing system.

- **Overrides:** Manual overrides are logged automatically and reviewed monthly.
- **Audit Trail:** All billing, receipt, and deposit entries are linked to the general ledger, ensuring proper financial reporting.
- **Adjustments:** Adjusting entries must be prepared by the Treasurer or Utility Administrator, approved by the Borough Manager, and documented.
- **Reconciliation:** The Borough Manager reviews consumption reports, edit reports, and billing reconciliations monthly.

Explanation: Segregation of duties and review processes reduce the risk of fraud or error. By requiring approvals and documentation, the Borough ensures compliance with accounting standards.

V. Payment Policies

Payment procedures are critical to ensuring Borough revenues are collected securely, accurately, and fairly. These policies define how payments are accepted, processed, and controlled, while also providing clear guidance to customers.

A. Procedures

- **Accepted Methods of Payment:**
 - By mail (check or money order)
 - In person at the Borough Office (cash, check, or money order)
 - Online through the Borough's secure payment portal (credit card, debit card, or ACH)
 - Bank draft/auto-pay enrollment (encouraged for customers who prefer automatic payments)
- **Processing:**
 - All payments are entered into the billing system by the Utility Administrator daily.
 - The system automatically updates both the customer account and the Borough's general ledger.
 - Payments received by mail are entered and processed the same day they are received.
- **Cash Handling:**
 - Two cash drawers are maintained:
 - One assigned to the Admin Clerk
 - One assigned to the Utility Administrator
 - Each drawer is under the sole responsibility of the assigned staff member.
 - A backup key for each drawer is secured with the Borough Manager.
- **End-of-Day Balancing:**
 - Each drawer must be balanced at the end of every workday.
 - The Utility Administrator prepares the daily deposit.
 - The Treasurer is responsible for making the physical deposit at the bank.
- **Insufficient Funds:**
 - A \$15.00 fee is charged for any returned checks.
 - Accounts with returned checks are considered unpaid until full payment is received.

Explanation: Clear lines of responsibility for handling money ensure accountability. Multiple payment options improve convenience for customers while reducing the risk of delinquency.

B. Due Dates

- **Standard Due Date:**
 - Bills are due approximately **15 days after mailing**.
 - A **net amount** is due if payment is received on or before the due date.
- **Delinquency Timeline:**
 1. **Day 16–25:** Customer must pay the **gross amount** (net amount plus late charge).
 2. **Day 25:** Accounts unpaid are assessed a **1% late charge**.
 3. **Day 20 delinquent status:** A Delinquent Customer List is generated and reviewed by the Borough Manager.

4. **5 days later:** A Delinquent Notice is delivered/posted on the property, with a service charge for delivery.
 5. **Failure to pay** within the posted timeline will result in **termination procedures** (see Section VII).
- **Payment Application:**
 - Payments are applied to the **oldest outstanding bill first** and then progressively to newer balances.
 - Customers with arrears must continue paying the gross amount until balances are fully current.
 - **Liability:**
 - The property owner remains liable for all charges, even if the account is in a tenant's name.
 - The Borough may place a **municipal lien** on the property for unpaid balances.
 - **Minimum Bill:**
 - Every property connected to Borough utilities must pay at least the minimum monthly bill until service is formally discontinued.

Explanation: This structured timeline provides customers with ample opportunity to pay before shut-off, while protecting Borough revenue through late charges and lien authority.

C. Reporting

The billing software generates the following reports:

Report	Purpose	Frequency
Daily Cash Receipts	Tracks all payments by customer and district	Daily
Summary Cash Receipts	Consolidated overview of all payments	Weekly
Delinquent Customer List (Mailing)	Identifies customers to be mailed delinquent notices	Monthly
Delinquent Customer List (Delivery)	Identifies accounts requiring in-person posting	Monthly

Explanation: Reports provide transparency and support management review. They also help ensure delinquency procedures are carried out consistently.

D. Controls

- **System Access:** Only the Utility Administrator may input payments into the customer record.
- **Segregation of Duties:**
 - Utility Administrator: enters payments, balances one drawer, prepares deposits
 - Treasurer: maintains separate drawer, deposits funds, reconciles bank statements
 - Borough Manager: verifies daily cash receipts against deposits, reviews reports
- **Oversight:**
 - Borough Manager must approve delinquent notices before mailing or posting.
 - Monthly reconciliation ensures all payments are properly credited and deposited.
- **Audit Trail:**

- All transactions are logged with authorization codes and passwords.
- Reports are archived for audit and compliance purposes.

Explanation: Internal controls prevent fraud and errors by ensuring no single employee has full control over the payment process.

VI. Deposit Provisions

Deposits exist to protect the Borough from financial loss when serving customers who present higher risk of nonpayment. These provisions outline when deposits are required, how they are handled, and under what conditions they are refunded.

A. Deposit Requirements

- **New Service Applicants**
 - All new applicants must complete an **Application for Utility Service**.
 - At that time, Borough personnel determine whether a deposit is required.
 - Deposits are generally required for:
 - Renters or non-property owners.
 - Customers with poor payment history.
 - Customers requesting temporary service (e.g., contractors).
- **Delinquent or Terminated Accounts**
 - Any customer who has been delinquent for **two consecutive months** or **three times within a twelve-month period** may be required to post a deposit, regardless of property ownership.
 - Customers who have had service terminated for nonpayment must pay the full deposit before service is restored.
- **Security Deposit Structure**
 - **Water Service:** A fixed deposit as determined by Borough Council resolution.
 - **Electric Service:** A deposit equal to the estimated bill for the highest usage month plus one additional month.
- **Manager's Discretion**
 - The Borough Manager may require a deposit in any other circumstance where the customer poses a credit or collection risk.

Explanation: Deposits help balance fairness to reliable customers with financial safeguards for the Borough. They are used only in circumstances of higher risk.

B. Refunds

- **Timing of Refunds**
 - Deposits are refunded when service is discontinued and the final bill is paid in full.
 - In some cases, deposits may be refunded earlier at the discretion of the Borough Manager if the customer establishes a record of timely payments (generally 12 consecutive months of good standing).
- **Refund Process**
 - The Treasurer prepares the refund check.
 - The Utility Administrator reviews the customer record to ensure no outstanding balance remains.
 - If an unpaid balance exists, the deposit will be applied to that balance, with only the remaining portion refunded.
- **Interest on Deposits**
 - Deposits accrue interest at the rate set annually in accordance with Pennsylvania law.

- Customers will receive both principal and accrued interest at the time of refund, less any outstanding liabilities.

Explanation: Refund provisions encourage timely payment, while ensuring customers are treated fairly and legally.

C. Reporting

- The billing system maintains records of all deposits.
- Staff can generate itemized reports listing customers who currently have deposits on file.
- Reports are reviewed periodically to ensure deposits are returned promptly when conditions are met.

Explanation: Maintaining a clear record of deposits helps the Borough meet legal obligations and prevents disputes with customers.

VII. Terminations & Restorations

Termination and restoration of service are among the most sensitive functions of the utility system. Clear rules ensure consistency, fairness, and compliance with state and Borough requirements. These procedures protect the Borough's financial health while safeguarding the rights and well-being of customers.

A. Procedures

- **For Nonpayment**
 - **Delinquent notices mailed:** 20 days after the account becomes delinquent, notices are mailed to both the customer and property owner (if different).
 - **Property posting:** If still unpaid after 5 additional days, a delinquent notice is delivered and posted at the premises, with a service charge applied.
 - **Shut-off:** If payment is not received within 5 days of posting, termination procedures begin.
- **For Customer Request**
 - When a customer requests disconnection, the Borough will:
 1. Pull a final meter read (via AMI).
 2. Generate a final bill through the billing system.
 3. Disconnect service as close to the requested time/date as possible.
- **For Immediate Hazards**
 - The Borough may terminate service immediately and without notice if:
 - Conditions present a danger to life, property, or Borough systems.
 - Tampering or diversion of utility service is discovered.
 - Equipment is deemed unsafe or illegally connected.
- **Restoration Process**
 - Service will be restored only after:
 - Payment of all outstanding balances.
 - Payment of reconnection and service fees.
 - Payment of any required deposit (see Section VI).
 - The Borough Manager authorizes restoration, and the Service Department documents all reconnections.

B. Reporting

- **Termination/Restoration Log** – Maintained by the Service Department for all field actions.
- **Termination/Restoration Report** – Generated by the billing system monthly.
- **Review** – Both sets of records are reviewed monthly by the Borough Manager to ensure consistency.

Explanation: Dual reporting provides both operational tracking and financial oversight.

C. Controls

- **Authorization:** The Borough Manager must approve all terminations and restorations.
- **Recordkeeping:** The Utility Administrator updates customer records after authorization.
- **Segregation of Duties:** Field staff carry out shut-offs and restorations, while clerical staff handle records and financial entries.

This separation ensures accuracy and prevents abuse of authority.

D. Termination Causes

Service may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

1. Written request by the customer.
2. Failure to pay within prescribed timelines.
3. Dangerous or defective customer installations.
4. Tampering, diversion, or alteration of meters or wiring.
5. Violation of Borough ordinances, policies, or procedures.

E. Termination Exceptions

- **Timing Restrictions:**
 - No shut-offs on Fridays, weekends, or Borough-observed holidays.
- **Payment Agreements:**
 - Customers may avoid termination if they:
 1. Pay a reasonable portion of the bill.
 2. Agree to pay future bills on time.
 3. Commit to an installment plan for arrears with 7% annual interest.
- **Medical Certification**
 - If a customer provides written certification from a licensed Pennsylvania physician that a seriously ill or disabled person resides at the service address, termination will be suspended.
 - Certification must include:
 - Customer name and address.
 - Name of the seriously ill or disabled individual.
 - Nature of the condition and why service is essential.
 - Physician's name, license number, and contact information.
 - The exemption lasts for **30 days** and may only be used **once every six (6) months**.
- **Disconnection Prohibition During Freezing Temperatures**
 - **Prohibition:**
 - The Borough will not disconnect electric service if the **projected temperature for the service area is expected to be at or below 32°F** (freezing) within the next **24 hours**.
 - **Resumption After Freezing Period:**
 - If service has already been disconnected for **at least seven (7) days** due to nonpayment or other valid reasons, the Borough is **not obligated to restore service** solely because of a temporary freeze warning.

Failure to comply with such an agreement results in immediate termination.

- **Utility Service Tenant Rights Act:**

- If the service is subject to Act 299 of 1978 (Tenant Rights), the Borough will strictly follow the provisions of that Act before termination.

Further explanation on Act 299 of 1978 (Tenant Rights)

A. Applicability

- Applies when a **tenant occupies a residential property** and the **utility account is in the property owner's (landlord's) name**.
- Ensures tenants receive adequate notice and protection before service is shut off due to the landlord's nonpayment.

B. Staff Procedures

1. Identify Accounts Covered

- If an account is in the landlord's name but the property is tenant-occupied, Act 299 applies.

2. Notice to Tenants

- Before disconnection, the Borough must post and/or mail a **Tenant Rights Notice** to each dwelling unit at least **30 days before shutoff**.
- Notice must include:
 - Reason for termination (landlord nonpayment).
 - Date of proposed shutoff.
 - Tenant rights under Act 299.
 - Borough contact information.

3. Tenant Rights

- Tenants may **continue service in their own name**.
- Tenants are only responsible for charges **from the date of their application forward**.
- Borough cannot require tenants to pay the landlord's delinquent balance.

4. Deposits

- Tenants may be required to pay a deposit consistent with Borough policy.

5. Service Continuation

- Once tenants apply and meet requirements, service must remain active.
- Service **cannot be disconnected** if tenants exercise their rights before the scheduled termination date.

6. Anti-Retaliation Rule

- The Borough will **not terminate utility service at the request of a landlord if the purpose is retaliatory** (for example, to punish a tenant for a lease dispute, code complaint, or non-rent issue).
- Service may only be terminated for valid utility reasons (nonpayment, tampering, hazard), never as a tool of landlord-tenant conflict.

VIII. Dispute Provisions

Dispute resolution ensures fairness and transparency in Borough utility operations. While customers are expected to pay bills when due, they are guaranteed the right to question or appeal charges under a structured process. This section aligns with the Borough's **Utility Appeals Ordinance** and must be followed by all staff handling customer disputes.

A. Customer Responsibility

- Customers must promptly notify the Borough if they believe a bill is incorrect.
- Notification must be in writing (letter, email, or Borough appeal form) and include documentation explaining the basis of the dispute.
- Disputing a bill **does not relieve the obligation to pay** by the due date. Customers must remain current on all charges while a dispute is pending.

B. Initial Review – Administrative Level

- **Step 1: Staff Review**
 - Upon receipt of a written dispute, the Utility Administrator reviews the account for clerical or system errors.
 - If necessary, the Utility Administrator consults with the Finance Officer or Borough Manager.
- **Step 2: Written Response**
 - The Borough issues a written determination within **10 business days**.
 - If the error is confirmed, the account is corrected immediately.
 - If no error is found, the determination explains the reasons and references applicable ordinances, policies, or rate schedules.

C. Formal Appeal – Borough Hearing

- Customers unsatisfied with the initial review may submit a **formal appeal** under the Utility Appeals Ordinance.
- The customer may:
 - Appear in person.
 - Be represented by legal counsel.
 - Present witnesses or supporting documents.
- **Hearing Timeline**
 - A hearing is scheduled within **7 business days** of the Borough receiving the appeal request.
 - Hearings are conducted before **Council or its designee** (such as a hearing officer or designated committee).
- **Hearing Authority**
 - Council or its designee has authority to uphold, modify, or reverse staff determinations.
 - Council may also suspend termination proceedings while an appeal is pending.

D. Service Continuity During Disputes

- Termination of service will not occur while a dispute is under **active review** at the staff level.
- Termination may proceed while an appeal to Council is pending **unless** Council or its designee issues a stay.
- Customers must continue paying undisputed portions of their bills during the dispute process.

E. Finality of Decisions

- The decision of Council (or its designee) is final within the Borough's administrative process.
- Customers may seek judicial review through the courts if they believe their rights under state or federal law have been violated.

F. Controls and Recordkeeping

- All disputes and appeals must be logged in the Borough's **Utility Appeals Register**, maintained by the Utility Administrator.
- Records must include:
 - Date of dispute.
 - Customer name and account.
 - Summary of issue.
 - Staff determinations and appeal outcomes.
- Reports of disputes and resolutions are reviewed quarterly by the Borough Manager to ensure consistency and compliance.

Explanation

This two-tier system protects both customers and the Borough. It ensures minor errors are resolved quickly at the staff level, while providing a fair and transparent appeal mechanism for more complex disputes. Customers are held accountable for paying their bills, but they are also guaranteed the right to due process under Borough law.

IX. System Service Requests

The Borough provides electric and water service that occasionally requires inspection, extension, relocation, or adjustment to meet customer or system needs. This section outlines how service requests are initiated, approved, and carried out to ensure fairness, safety, and consistency.

A. Service Requests

- **Emergency Service**
 - Available **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**.
 - Emergencies include power outages, downed lines, water main breaks, leaks, or conditions creating a risk to life or property.
 - Calls are routed through the Borough Office during business hours and the on-call Public Works/Utility staff after hours.
- **Non-Emergency Service**
 - Performed during normal business hours.
 - Customers should call the Borough Office at **724-224-1616**.
 - The request is logged and routed to the Public Works Director (or designee) who determines the nature of the call.
- **Documentation**
 - A **Service Request Form** must be completed for each request.
 - The form documents the issue, assigned staff, corrective actions, and requires sign-off upon completion.
 - Service records are maintained for compliance and future reference.
- **Billing for Service Calls**
 - If the problem is due to Borough-owned equipment or error, there is no charge.
 - If no Borough issue is found, the customer may be billed a service charge based on the adopted rate schedule.

Explanation: This ensures customers receive rapid emergency service, while clarifying financial responsibility for non-Borough issues.

B. Distribution Line Extensions

- The Borough will construct, own, and maintain **overhead or underground distribution line extensions** along public streets as follows:
 - **Up to 300 feet:** Constructed at the Borough's sole expense.
 - **300–1,000 feet:** Constructed at Borough expense if expected revenue justifies cost recovery.
 - **Beyond 1,000 feet:** The customer may be required to contribute to construction costs or provide a cost-recovery guarantee.

Explanation: These rules balance the Borough's duty to serve with financial prudence when extending infrastructure into new areas.

C. Service Line Extensions (Private Property)

- The Borough will extend service lines (water or electric) onto private property at no cost up to **100 feet**.
- For extensions **beyond 100 feet**, the customer must pre-pay the estimated cost for the additional distance.
- All such lines remain Borough property once installed, unless otherwise documented.

Explanation: This ensures equitable service access while protecting Borough resources from being overextended.

D. Undergrounding of Facilities

- Customers may request underground service rather than standard overhead service.
- The Borough will evaluate cost and practicality.
- If approved, the customer must pay the **difference in cost** between underground and standard overhead installation prior to work beginning.
- Customers are responsible for providing a suitable trench and conduit as required by Borough specifications.

Explanation: Undergrounding improves aesthetics and resilience but carries higher costs, which must be borne by the requesting customer.

E. Pole Removal or Relocation

- Customers requesting the removal or relocation of a Borough-owned pole must pay all associated costs.
- Payment must be made **in advance** of the work.
- Exceptions may be considered if the relocation benefits Borough operations or broader community infrastructure.

Explanation: This policy prevents general ratepayers from subsidizing individual requests while allowing flexibility when the Borough benefits.

X. Miscellaneous

This section covers various provisions and conditions related to the administration of Borough utilities. These policies clarify expectations for both customers and staff, provide safeguards for Borough operations, and ensure consistency with applicable ordinances, codes, and internal policies.

A. Change of Occupancy

- Whenever a property changes occupancy, the Borough's **Code Enforcement Officer (CEO)** will inspect the premises to ensure compliance with Borough codes.
- A **Certificate of Approval** must be issued by the CEO before any utility service is connected in the new occupant's name.
- All applicable inspection fees must be paid prior to service activation.

Explanation: This ensures that utility service is only provided to safe, code-compliant premises.

B. Special Facilities / Special Requirements

- Applicants for electrical service involving **special facilities or equipment** must complete an agreement detailing:
 - Special requirements of the installation.
 - Conditions of service specific to the request.
 - Any additional Borough requirements necessary for safe and reliable service.

Explanation: This allows the Borough to protect system integrity when serving complex or unusual customer installations.

C. Service Supply Disclaimer

- The Borough does not guarantee an **uninterrupted supply of service**.
- Best efforts will be made to supply water and electricity reliably and in a reasonable manner.
- The Borough is **not liable for damages** (direct or indirect) caused by outages, interruptions, or variations in supply.
- In the event of an electric **load emergency** (system demand exceeding capacity or threatening system stability), the Borough may:
 - Reduce service to certain customers.
 - Interrupt or shed load as necessary to stabilize the system.

Explanation: This disclaimer protects the Borough from liability and clarifies operational authority in emergencies.

D. Use of Electric Service

- Customers may not resell Borough electricity or install unauthorized sub-metering systems.
- All service is for the exclusive use of the premises and account for which it is provided.

Explanation: Prevents diversion or reselling of service that could compromise Borough billing integrity and system reliability.

E. Standby Service

- Customers requiring **standby or backup service** must notify the Borough in writing.
- Such service is subject to review and approval by Borough Council and may require additional agreements or charges.

Explanation: This protects Borough resources when customers need special backup arrangements beyond standard service.

F. Customer Installations

- The Borough is not responsible for damage or injury caused by defective customer wiring or devices.
- Customer wiring must comply with the **National Electric Code (NEC)** and Borough ordinances.
- Borough staff will not connect service if wiring is unsafe or noncompliant.

Explanation: Customers retain responsibility for the safety of their own wiring, ensuring Borough connections are safe.

G. Customer Account Information

- All handling of customer account information is governed by the **Utility Account Information Policy** adopted by Borough Council.
- This policy requires:
 - Protection of personally identifiable information.
 - Secure handling of account records.
 - Controlled release of information only in compliance with law and Borough procedures.
- Staff must review and follow the Utility Account Information Policy in all interactions involving customer data.

Explanation: Explicit reference to the policy ensures staff are aware of and comply with confidentiality and data protection requirements.

Cross-Reference

- **Electric Ordinance 25-02A:** Governs all electric service rules.
- **Utility Account Information Policy:** Controls how account data is stored, accessed, and released.
- **Borough Codes & Ordinances:** Apply to inspections, safety, and compliance for all customer premises.

XI. Unauthorized Connections, Tampering, and Theft of Service

A. Definition

Tampering or theft of service includes, but is not limited to:

- Unauthorized connection or reconnection to the Borough's water or electric system.
- Bypassing, altering, or damaging meters, seals, or related equipment.
- Diverting water or electricity from the registered meter.
- Interfering with the Borough's ability to accurately measure and bill consumption.

B. Procedures for Staff

1. Identification

- Service personnel or meter readers who observe suspected tampering must immediately notify the Public Works Director.
- Photographic or written evidence must be collected to document the condition.

2. Immediate Action

- The Borough reserves the right to immediately disconnect service without notice when tampering or theft is confirmed.
- All Borough-owned equipment will be secured or removed as necessary.

3. Notification

- A written **Tampering Notice** will be posted on the property and mailed to the account holder and property owner.

4. Investigation & Reporting

- The Borough Manager must review all suspected cases.
- If theft of service is evident, the matter will be referred to law enforcement for criminal prosecution.

C. Charges & Penalties

- A tampering fee, as adopted by Council resolution, will be applied.
- Customers are liable for all unmetered usage, estimated by the Borough based on historical data.
- Restoration of service requires:
 - Full repayment of estimated usage.
 - Payment of all fees, charges, and penalties.
 - Installation of secure metering equipment at customer expense if necessary.

XII. Credit, Collections, and Liens

A. Collections Process

1. Accounts not paid by the delinquency timeline will progress to termination procedures (see Section VIII).
2. If payment is not received within 60 days after termination, the Borough may initiate collection actions.

B. Municipal Liens

- Under Pennsylvania law, the Borough may file a municipal lien against the property for unpaid balances.
- Liens may include:
 - Principal utility charges.
 - Interest.
 - Late fees.
 - Administrative costs.
- The lien remains attached to the property until paid in full.

C. Bankruptcy or Sheriff Sale

- In the event of bankruptcy or sheriff sale, the Borough will:
 - Finalize the account immediately.
 - File proof of claim as appropriate.
 - Issue a final bill to the customer or property owner.

XIII. Refunds & Adjustments

A. Billing Adjustments

- Adjustments may occur when:
 - A meter is proven to be inaccurate.
 - A billing error is discovered.
 - A dispute is resolved in the customer's favor.
- All adjustments must be approved by the Borough Manager.

B. Overpayments & Refunds

- Overpayments will be applied as credits to the customer's account.
- If service is terminated, overpayments will be refunded by check within 30 days after final account reconciliation.

XIV. Outage & Emergency Communication Procedures

A. Approved Channels

The Borough uses the following official communication platforms for utility outages and emergencies:

- **Savvy Citizen App** (primary mass notification).
- **Borough website** (homepage banners, news updates).
- **Official Borough social media** (Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram).
- **Press releases** to local media outlets.
- **Direct mail or door posting** when required by law (e.g., boil water notices).

B. Procedure

1. Staff identifies an outage or emergency and notifies the Borough Manager.
2. Borough Manager or designee approves message content.
3. Notifications are released through approved channels in this order:
 - Savvy Citizen → Website → Social Media → Press/Other.
4. All notifications must follow the **Utility, Emergency, and Other Important Communications Policy**.

C. Staff Training

- All employees must complete annual training in outage and emergency communication procedures.

XV. Permitting & Upgrades

A. Electrical Work Permitting

- All electrical work requiring Borough connection/disconnection must comply with the **Electrical Work Permitting Process**.
- A **cut-in card** from a licensed electrician is required before reconnection.

B. Service Upgrades & Installations

- Customers requesting new or upgraded service must comply with the **Electric Service Upgrade & Installation Guide**, including:
 - Pre-application meeting.
 - Load calculations.
 - Engineering review if necessary.
 - Payment of required fees.

C. Staff Procedures

- Borough staff will not energize new or upgraded service until all required documents and inspections are complete.

XVI. Right-to-Know Requests

A. Governing Policy

- The Borough's Right-to-Know Policy governs all requests for public records.

B. Procedures

1. Requests must be submitted **in writing** using the Borough's Right-to-Know form.
2. Requests must identify the requester (anonymous requests are not accepted).
3. The Borough's **Open Records Officer** will process all requests.

C. Utility Records vs. Public Records

- Customer account information is subject to the **Utility Account Information Policy** (waiver or ownership verification required).
- Broader public utility data (such as ordinances, rate schedules, or Council resolutions) is available under the Right-to-Know Law.

Staff Quick Reference

Key Ordinances & Policies

- **Electric Ordinance 25-02A** – Governs all electric service, extensions, easements, and rates.
- **Utility Appeals Ordinance 25-06** – Establishes the two-step appeals process (Billing Admin → Council/Designee).
- **Utility Account Information Policy** – Governs release of customer account and billing data.
- **Right-to-Know Policy** – Establishes requirements for written, identified public records requests.
- **Utility Communications Policy** – Defines approved channels for customer/emergency notifications.

Essential Staff Procedures

1. **Applications for Service**
 - Must be completed in full and verified against occupancy inspections.
 - Deposits required for non-property owners, high-risk accounts, or temporary service.
2. **Billing & Payment**
 - Bills issued monthly (water, electric, refuse) via Tyler Incode + Sensus Analytics.
 - Due date: 15 days after mailing.
 - Late charge: 1% after Day 25.
 - Returned checks: \$15 fee.
3. **Disputes/Appeals**
 - Step 1: Written dispute to Utility Administrator (staff review within 10 business days).
 - Step 2: Formal appeal under Ordinance 25-06 (hearing before Council/Designee, \$50 fee unless waived).
 - Service is not shut off during staff-level review.
4. **Terminations**
 - 20 days after delinquency → delinquent notice mailed.
 - 5 more days → posting notice delivered to property.
 - 5 more days → termination unless paid.
 - No terminations Fri–Sun, Borough holidays, or during medical/winter exceptions.
5. **Restorations**
 - Require full payment of past due amounts, reconnection fee, and possible deposit.
 - Must be authorized by the Borough Manager.
6. **Service Requests**
 - Emergencies: 24/7, 365 days.
 - Non-emergencies: Routed to Public Works Director.
 - Forms: Service Request Form must be completed and filed.
7. **Permitting & Installations**
 - Reference: Electrical Work Permitting Process & Service Upgrade/Installation Guide.
 - No service restoration without a cut-in card.
8. **Easements**

- Borough has rights under the Electric Line Access & Easement Guide.
- Customers are responsible for keeping vegetation and structures clear.
- 9. **Customer Data Handling**
 - No account information released without written waiver, court order, or legal proof of ownership.
 - All staff must follow the Utility Account Information Policy.

Staff Training

- All staff using this manual must complete **annual training** on:
 - Billing & collections
 - Appeals process
 - Emergency communications
 - Customer data privacy
 - Service requests & permitting