

Water Shut Offs

What does it mean if I receive a water bill that has the words "Turn Off Notice" on it?

If you or your landlord owe the Water Department money on an unpaid bill, you will receive a bill with a "turn off" statement. If the water bill is in your name, you should pay as much of the bill as possible so you don't end up with a more serious problem.

What should I do if my bill says "turn off notice?"

When your bill says "turn off notice", call the Water Department to explain your situation. If you think there is a mistake in your bill, tell them. The number to call at the Division of Water is 851-4705. It is important that you don't let the bills pile up.

What if there is a mistake on my bill, but the Water Department doesn't agree?

If you are charged for something you don't have (such as an extra toilet) you must call the Water Department within 10 days after you receive the bill to protect the charge. If you disagree with the bill for other reasons, bring your payment records to Room 111 at City Hall or 281 Exchange Street, Buffalo, New York to prove you have paid. If you have had an appointment to discuss your bill and are not satisfied with the decision, you can make an appointment to see the Director of the Water Department.

What if there isn't a mistake on my bill?

Even if there isn't a mistake, ask for a payment arrangement to help you lower the amount of your debt. The Water Department requirement is that you must pay one-half the amount on the bill. They will discuss your situation with you and work out how much you should add to your payment each month to pay them back for the money you owe.

What should I do if I find a "Turn Off Notice" on my door knob?

This card on your door means that you have ten (10) days to call the Water Department before the water is shut off. When you call, say you want to have a meeting to make arrangements about your bill. You may be told that you have to pay one-half of the balance and the rest over 30 days. If you cannot do this, you may still be able to make other arrangements.

Am I charged interest when I owe money to the water department?

Yes. You are charged 4.5% every 3 months so it is important not to have a large balance.

What if my landlord is supposed to pay for the water?

If your landlord is supposed to pay for the water and you receive a bill that has "turn off notice" on the bottom, call him to remind him to pay the bill.

What if my landlord doesn't pay the bill and I find a turn off notice on my door knob?

Contact your landlord and tell him that you water is going to be shut off. Tell him that once the water is shut off, he will not be able to get it turned on unless he pays the balance in full and a turn on fee.

What if my landlord will not pay the bill?

If your landlord will not pay the bill, call the Board of Health at 881-4052. Tell the Board of Health your situation. If your water has already been shut off, the Board of Health can send out inspectors, have the water put back on and take the landlord to court. Also, call the Division of Water to tell them about your situation.

Is there anything else I can do?

Yes. If you live in a building with four or more apartments, you can use your rent money to pay the bill. Be sure to keep a copy of the receipt.

If I am on public assistance and am responsible for paying the water bill, can I get any help?

Yes. If you are on public assistance and are responsible for paying for your own water, the Department of Social Services should pay the bill for you. This is called a water allowance. Call your worker to be sure you are receiving it.

What if none of these suggestions works?

Call Neighborhood Legal Services at 847-0650.