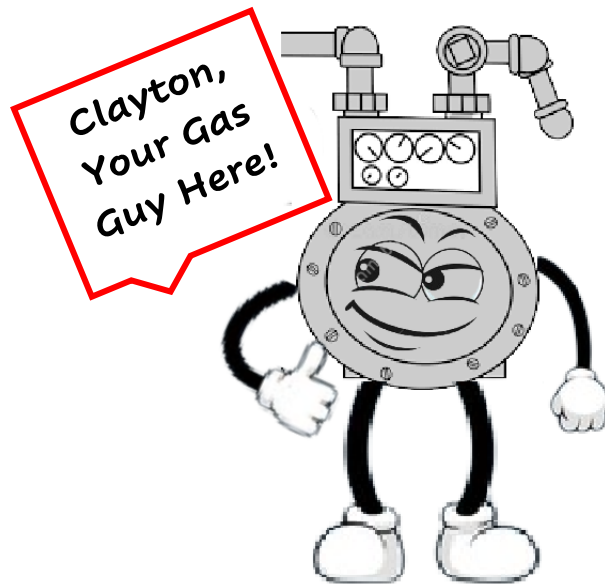


# Winfield Municipal Utility Handbook 2023



*115 North Locust Street  
PO Box 73  
Winfield, IA 52659*

City Hall: 319-257-6661  
Municipal Gas Dept: 319-257-6252  
City Hall Fax: 319-257-3602  
Email: [Winfield2@farmtel.net](mailto:Winfield2@farmtel.net)

At the City of Winfield, we are committed to providing safe, high quality water, sewer, and gas services to our community, while maintaining a standard of excellence in customer service and environmental conservation. All utilities policies and rates are controlled by the Winfield City Council. The purpose of this handbook is to provide general guidance on the issues most likely to be encountered. Feel free to call our office if you have any questions or need assistance with any matters related to the water we provide!

## **SECTION 1: APPLICATION FOR SERVICE**

Applicants for gas, water, sewer, and garbage services may apply by contacting the Utility Department office either by phone at (319)257-6661 or in person at City Hall. The City of Winfield shall supply service to the applicant in accordance with this policy and at a rate schedule as established by the City Council. Applications for service should be made 48 hours before the applicant takes possession of or lease begins on the property.

In order for the application to be complete, the applicant must provide, in addition to the above:

- Full name of primary account holder
- First and last name of other applicants
- Social Security Number, for **ALL** account applicants
- Telephone Number
- Employer and Business Telephone Number

All billings, notice and other correspondence will be addressed to the primary account holder. In the event an unpaid account is turned over for collection, the account will be turned over under **ALL** the account applicant's name.

### **Customer Deposits**

A deposit intended to guarantee payment of bills for service may be required from either an existing account holder or new customers. A person other than the customer may pay the deposit.

A deposit of \$100.00 for water and sewer services will be required at the time of application. Upon disconnection of the water and sewer service, any balance of such deposit shall be returned to the applicant without interest.

A deposit of \$150.00 min or equal to the amount to the highest gas utility bill for one month in the previous 12-month period of occupancy at the property. Upon disconnection of the gas services, any balance of such deposit shall be returned to the applicant without interest.

Home owners **ONLY** may provide a letter of credit from a former utility services, stating no disconnections on past utility services, new customers will receive 50% off their deposit requirement.

Commercial deposits will charge the same utility deposit as residential type in the city.

## **Deposit Refunds**

A deposit may be refunded to home owners after 12 consecutive months of prompt payment. This time may be extended if the City has reason to believe that continued retention of the deposit is required to insure payment for future billings for services. The records of a customer not eligible for a deposit refund on the first deposit refund anniversary date will be reviewed monthly until eighteen consecutive months of payments have been received. The deposit is credited to the customer's account. Upon termination of service, the deposit will be credited to the final bill, reimbursed to the account holder. Unless the deposit was paid by an agency, in which case the agency would receive the refund.

A deposit of account holder that rent or leases the service property the deposit will be remain on the account until the services are terminated. The deposit will be credited to the final bill, reimbursed to the account holder.

## **Unclaimed Deposits**

Deposits remaining unclaimed after termination of service will be transferred to the State Treasurer in accordance with Chapter 556.11, Code of Iowa.

## **SECTION 2: BILLING INFORMATION**

Customers shall be billed on a monthly basis according to the appropriate rate schedule on the first day of the month. Bills will be mailed or e-mailed, if enrolled in Paperless Billing.

### **Billing Form**

The following information will be included on the billing form:

- The actual or estimated meter readings at the beginning and end of the billing period.
- The date of the meter reading.
- The due date.
- The balance owed including penalty if not paid before the due date.

### **Bill Payment Terms**

Billings will be due and payable on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month and will be considered past due after the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. A bill is considered submitted for payment when deposited in the U.S. Mail with postage prepaid or sent by electronic mail. A late payment charge of ten dollars (\$10.00) will be assessed on all past due accounts. Each account will be granted at least one forgiveness of a late payment charge in a calendar year.

Bills shall be paid by mail, by direct payment at City Hall, by phone via a credit card transaction, by ACH through a bank or credit union, by depositing the payment in a

designated receptacle at City Hall, or online through the bill payment portal with a credit card.

Failure to receive a bill, late notice in the mail or by electronic mail or a disconnect notice hung on the account holder's address shall not entitle the customer relief from penalties for late payment.

## **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

You may be able to get help paying for part of your winter heating costs if you meet income guidelines. Community Action of Eastern Iowa will help you apply for benefits through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Until you apply, we cannot tell you how much money you will receive, but the amount could range from \$200 to more than \$500. Assistance levels depend on income level, family size, the type of fuel you use to heat your home, and other factors. If you are determined eligible for benefits through the LIHEAP program, you will also be prevented from disconnection from your heating and electrical service through April 1st of each year.

When you are approved for LIHEAP you will receive a notification paperwork stating that you have been approved, you need to provide the paperwork to City Hall. Until we receive your notification paperwork you will be required to pay for your gas usage.

You are required to pay for your WATER, SEWER, and GARABAGE services while receiving LIHEAP benefits. Water services will be disconnected for non-payment.

## **Returned Checks and Automatic Clearing House (ACH) Rejects**

A \$25 service charge shall be assessed to any customer whose check is returned unpaid by ACH payment, or check that was rejected by the bank. The service charge shall be in addition to the returned unpaid by ACH or check payment be paid within 10 business days after the notice is sent or prior to the due date of the bill. If the account was in delinquent status at the time of receiving the payment, and the ACH or check was to avoid disruption of service, upon receiving the item back from the bank, the city will discontinue service with a 24-hour disconnect notice posted on the property.

## **Payment Agreement**

A residential customer about to be disconnected who is unable to pay the delinquent bill in full may be offered an opportunity to enter into a reasonable agreement to pay that bill unless the customer is in default upon a prior agreement and not eligible for another payment agreement. The City may consider prior defaults on similar agreements in determining the reasonableness of a payment agreement.

The City may require the customer to provide confirmation of financial difficulty such as an acknowledgement from the Department of Human Services or another agency.

Reasonableness is determined by considering the current household income of the customer, the customer's ability to pay, the size of the bill, the customer's payment history, the amount of time and the reasons why the bill has been outstanding and any special circumstances creating extreme hardships within the household. The agreement may require the customer to bring the account to a current status by paying specific amounts at scheduled times. The City may offer customers the option of spreading payments evenly over up to a twelve-month period. A longer term of repayment could be negotiated in extraordinary circumstances. If the City intends to refuse a payment agreement offered by a customer, it must provide a written explanation to the customer within 30 days of mailing of the initial disconnect notice.

### **Minimum Bill**

The minimum bill provided in the rate schedule will apply to any billing period during which the service remains connected.

## **SECTION 3: BILLING INFORMATION**

### ***Billing Schedule***

Bills will be mailed on the first day of each month. Bills are due and payable on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. Late payment penalties of ten dollars (\$10.00) are added on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month to all outstanding past due balances. On the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month, past due notices are mailed to accounts with past due balances. The past due balance must be paid by noon on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the following month to avoid disconnection. Disconnect notices are hung on all properties that have failed to pay the past due balance or enter into a payment agreement with the City after 12pm (noon) on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Accounts on the disconnect list with outstanding balances on the 5<sup>th</sup> will be disconnected for nonpayment. If the 4<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend or a holiday, disconnect notices will be hung on the next working day after with the remainder of the process following the timeline above.

### ***Paperless Billing***

You can receive your Utility Bill via e-mail. You will receive an email notification when your bill is available. Bills will be available by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. The bill will be an Attached PDF file to the email. You will no longer receive a paper bill while enrolled in paperless billing. To get signed up and for more information on paperless billing contact City Hall, 319-257-6661 or Winfield2@farmtel.net

## ***Payment Options***

The City of Winfield offers a variety of convenient payment options for our residents. Simply choose the option that best suits your needs.

### Online Bill Pay

You may pay your bill online by clicking on the red **PAY YOUR BILL NOW** link, follow the step-by-step instructions.

*PROCESSING FEES DO APPLY TO ALL TRANSACTIONS.*

\$1.50 per transaction for Credit Cards  
2.35% additional for using a Credit Card

When using Iowa Interactive you will have two charges to your checking/credit card account, one for the amount you are paying the City of Winfield and the other for the amount of the processing fee being sent to Iowa Interactive.

### Payment by Mail

If paying by check or money order through the mail, *City of Winfield, PO Box 73, Winfield, IA 52659* please send all payments with your payment coupon. To avoid late fees, please mail your payment at least five-seven business days before the due date specified on your bill.

### Automatic Bank Draft

The worry-free way to pay your bill. With this service, the amount of your monthly bill is automatically deducted from your bank account and credited to your utility account. There is no set-up fee or charge associated with this method of payment. To set up Automated Bank Draft, simply fill out the ACH Recurring Debit Form and drop it off or mail it to our office, along with a voided check.

### Payment Drop-off Location

You may pay your bill in person at City Hall or in the drive up drop box located on the north side of the building. We accept cash, check, or money orders.

## **SECTION 4: DISCONNECT & RECONNECT OF SERVICES**

### **Disconnection or Denial of Service for Reasons other than Non-Payment or Deposit – Customer Initiated (Voluntary)**

The City reserves the right to refuse or disconnect service for any of the reasons listed below subject to provisions of this section and other provisions of these service rules. Unless otherwise stated, the customer shall be given written notice prior to disconnection of service.

### **Temporary Disconnects & Reconnects (Voluntary)**

The City may, upon reasonable notice by a customer, make temporary disconnects for the customer's convenience. A property owner may request water service be temporarily discontinued and shut off at the curb valve when the property is expected to be vacant for

an extended period of time. There shall be a thirty-five-dollar (\$35.00) fee collected for shutting the water off at the curb valve. During a period when service is temporarily discontinued as provided herein, there shall be no minimum service charge. The City will not drain pipes or pull meters for temporary vacancies. Only the City may reconnect the water service and will do so within a minimum of 48-hour notice from the property owner.

### **Permanent Disconnections (Voluntary)**

A customer requesting permanent disconnection shall provide a minimum notice time to the City of one business day. With proper notification, no charges shall be made for permanent disconnections.

### **Procedures for Discontinuance for Non-Payment**

Service Discontinuance Notice. Bills not paid before the City provides a door hanger notice of discontinuance of service to the customer, will be assessed a twenty dollar (\$20.00) posting fee. The bill plus applicable penalties must be paid in full to avoid discontinuance of service.

1. The Utility Clerk shall notify each delinquent customer that service will be discontinued if payment of the combined service account, including late payment charges, is not received by the date specified in the notice of delinquency. Such notice shall be sent by ordinary mail to the customer in whose name the delinquent charges were incurred and shall inform the customer of the nature of the delinquency and afford the customer the opportunity for a hearing prior to the discontinuance.
2. Notice to Landlords. If the customer is a tenant, and if the owner or landlord of the property or premises has made a written request for notice, the notice of delinquency shall also be provided to the owner or landlord.
3. Hearing. If a hearing is requested in writing by noon of the day preceding the shutoff, the City Utility Committee shall conduct an informal hearing and shall make a determination as to whether the disconnection is justified. In any case where the customer can demonstrate exigent circumstances resulting in the inability to make immediate and full payment of the bill and applicable penalties, the City Utility Committee has the discretion to allow water service to continue if the customer agrees to a payment plan and any other conditions set by the City Utility Committee. The customer must make arrangements to have the hearing as soon as the past due notice is received in the mail.
4. Fee. A fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) shall be charged before service is restored to a delinquent customer. This fee and all other disconnect fees shall be paid in full before services is restored to the property. No fee shall be charged for the usual or customary trips in the regular changes in occupancies of property.

## **Avoiding Disconnection – Residential Customers Financial Difficulty**

A residential customer may avoid disconnection by paying his or her bill in full or by providing confirmation of financial difficulty and entering into a formal payment arrangement. A check payment will not be postdated to avoid disconnection. Payment arrangements must be initiated before the disconnect date.

In general, failure to comply with a payment arrangement will subject the customer to immediate disconnection.

## **Utility Bill Relief Policy – Sewer Portion Only**

The City has a sewer fee adjustment policy. The Public Works Department will assist customers in processing the request for assistance and evaluating such request for approval.

The City Utility Clerk and Water Superintendent review high sewer claims and approve such based on the following criteria:

- Upon notification of the high usage bill the resident should have the issue investigated by a licensed plumber and/or home owner.
- Request form returned to City Hall within 15 days after a leak investigation is performed or 30 days after the date of the high bill, whichever occurs first.
- Provide proof that any malfunctioning plumbing fixture that caused the high usage has been repaired (repair bill or statement defining problem and confirming repair).
- One claim per account per address can be submitted over the lifetime of the account. All additional claims will need to be reviewed and approved by City Utility Committee and Council.

Relief will not be awarded if:

- Account holder does not possess a valid occupancy permit.
- Water was knowingly used by customer, i.e. water sod, gardening, filling swimming pool(s), washing vehicles, etc.
- Claims are filed after deadline outlined above.
- Proof of repair is not submitted.

Method of calculation of approved relief:

If excess water DID NOT flow into the City's wastewater treatment system:  
Relief = (Excess sewer charges minus average sewer usage) X 100%

If excess water DID flow into the City's wastewater treatment system:  
Relief = (Excess sewer charges minus average sewer usage) X 50%



## SECTION 5: Meters

All meters shall be so located where they are easily accessible to meter readers and repairmen. The City officials have the right of entry to access the meters at any reasonable time to read, remove, or change the meter.



### Gas Meters

The area (2.5 feet) around the gas meter shall be kept clear of any debris and trees/bushes. This is not just for convinces to the meter reader but also for the safety of the community. If the meter is not cleared the utility department will send a letter stating you will have two (2) weeks to get the meter area cleared. **If meters are not cleared the area will be cleared at the utility customer expense.**

### Caring for your Gas Meter in the Winter

Outdoor natural gas meters and/or pressure regulator sets are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions, but please remember to protect them from ice and snow build-ups during our harsh months.

Clean and repair your leaky eave/gutters regularly to prevent ice and melting snow from dripping onto the natural gas meter and/or pressure regulator set causing them to be encased in ice when the weather is cold. Do not pile snow against your natural gas meter and/or pressure regulator set when shoveling or using a snow blower.

Never allow snow to completely cover your natural gas meter and/or pressure regulator set. Remove soft snow build-up gently, using only a broom or your hand. Call Winfield Municipal Gas Utility (319)257-6252 if you notice an ice build-up on any part of the natural gas meter and/or pressure regulator set. Do NOT try to remove it by kicking or hitting the gas meter or piping.

### WATER METER CARE



In the winter time, if your water meter is in an area of your house that can get below freezing (unheated basement or crawl space) it is ***your responsibility*** to keep the water meter from freezing. You will need to insulate it from the cold. It is recommended to wrap it with an electric heat tape and then wrap insulation around it to keep the warmth from the heat tape in. If you feel you cannot do this yourself or don't know how, we recommend calling a plumber to do it for you.

In the case of a frozen meter, any damage to the bottom plate on the water meter will be replaced at the customer's expense. Meter replacement cost is estimated at \$150.00. Do NOT try fixing your water meter yourself. Trying to fix the water meter yourself will incur extra charges for tampering on your bill for the frozen water meter.

## **SECTION 6: ADDITIONAL CHARGES/FEEES**

Any charges or fees that accrue to providing the utility services to the residents is the residents responsibility. For example, curb valve repairs, meter replacement, clearing around meters, etc. All charges will be added to your utility bill. If the charges/fees are not paid or payment agreement in place the utility services will be disconnected until payment and reconnect fee is received.

## **SECTION 7: SERVICE CALLS**

The Public Works Department strives to provide same day service for our customers, and immediate response for emergency calls.

Service calls are complimentary during normal working hours, 8:00am to 2:30pm, Monday to Friday. Service personnel will not be dispatched after hours unless the situations deemed to be emergencies by the Public Works Superintendent.

## **SECTION 8: CUSTOMER SERVICE**

City utility staff are available for routine business calls Monday to Thursday 8am-5pm, Friday 8:00 am. – 4:30 p.m. at (319) 257-6661. Emergency 24/7 calls can be made to: (319) 257-6252.

## SUMMARY

- Applications for service should be completed 48 hours before the applicant takes possession of or lease begins on the property.
- All deposits must be paid in full prior to services beginning.
  - Water and sewer deposit \$100
  - Gas deposit \$150.00 min or equal to the highest gas usage for one month in the previous 12-month period of occupancy at the property.
- Bills mailed on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month
- Enroll in Paperless billing by email [Winfield2@farmtel.net](mailto:Winfield2@farmtel.net)
- Payments due on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month
- Payments Options:
  - In person at City Hall, drop box available
  - Credit Cards, online [www.WinfieldIowa.com](http://www.WinfieldIowa.com)
  - Automatic Bank Draft (ACH payments)
- Late penalties of \$10.00 applied on the 25<sup>th</sup> month
- Past due balance not paid by 12p (noon) on the 4<sup>th</sup> will be posted with a 24-hour disconnect notice. \$20.00 posting fee will be applied.
- Accounts on the disconnect list with outstanding balances on the 5<sup>th</sup> will be disconnected for nonpayment. \$50.00 fee shall be charged before service is restored
- A property owner may request water service be temporarily discontinued and shut off at the curb valve when the property is expected to be vacant for an extended period of time, \$35 fee will be applied.
- A check payment will not be postdated to avoid disconnection.
- Payment arrangements must be initiated before the disconnect date.
- Return checks and ACH payments will be charged with a \$25 fee and given 10 days to make a payment.
- You are required to pay for your WATER, SEWER, and GARABAGE services while receiving LIHEAP benefits. Water services will be disconnected for non-payment.
- Any charges or fees that accrue to providing the utility services to the residents is the residents responsibility
- SUBSCRIBE to the City of Winfield website to receive news and alerts. [www.WinfieldIowa.com](http://www.WinfieldIowa.com)