

## City of Springfield Department of Utilities Service Practice Policies

The City of Springfield owns and operates six utilities including electric, water, wastewater, gas, storm water management, and sanitation services within the city limits of Springfield and gas and water for a large area of rural Robertson County, and the cities of Cross Plains, Greenbrier, & Orinda. All utility services are collectively billed on 1 monthly statement as a convenience to our customers.

Applications for utility service may be made in person at Springfield City Hall, by mail, fax, email, or through the city’s website. You must provide two forms of identification. One must include a photograph (ex. Driver’s license, state ID card, US military ID, etc.) One must be a government issued ID that clearly shows the customer’s social security number. This can be a social security card or any government issued document with the social security number printed on it. Other forms of identification considered would be a passport, voter’s registration card, etc. You must be 18 years old or older to apply for service. After the application is submitted, amounts due for security deposit and service fees will be quoted by the customer service department. These charges are based on services requested, type of account, and customer’s credit history. If the customer has any outstanding past due balance with Springfield Utilities, this balance must be paid in full before any new service is connected. Deposits and service fees must also be paid in full before service can be established. Springfield Utilities does not accept partial payments for these charges. Application forms are available on the City of Springfield’s website at [www.springfield-tn.org](http://www.springfield-tn.org).

### **DEPOSITS**

Deposits will be two times the system average bill for the service type and rate classification applied for. This amount will be reviewed annually. Also, a non-refundable service charge for establishing the account is due. The deposits and service fees are per service, per account as listed here:

<b>DEPOSITS</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Industrial</b>
Electric	240.00	425.00	425.00
Water	95.00	265.00	265.00
Sewer	120.00	420.00	420.00
Gas	150.00	460.00	460.00
<b>Service Charge</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Industrial</b>
Electric	20.00	50.00	100.00
Water	20.00	25.00	50.00
Sewer	20.00	25.00	50.00
Gas	20.00	50.00	100.00

Deposits for residential and commercial customers may be waived or reduced if:

- 1.) The customer has had previous utility service with Springfield Utilities for at least 12 months with no late payments.
- 2.) If the customer has no previous service, Springfield Utilities uses Online Utility Exchange to provide a credit evaluation unique to utilities. The results of this inquiry will determine the requirement for deposits. This is a “soft” inquiry and does not affect credit scores.

The City of Springfield no longer accepts letters of credit from previous utility providers in lieu of deposits.

Interest will accrue on deposit balances held longer than one year at the rate currently received by Springfield Utilities on demand deposit accounts. Interest accrual will begin on the first full calendar month after the deposit has been held for one year. Interest will appear as a credit to the customer’s account. Upon written request, the deposit balance, including earned interest, may be reviewed by the Customer and Springfield Utilities.

Deposits are required for each billing account. (ex. If one address has two electric meters, there will be two billing accounts with two deposits and two service charges required to establish service).

Deposits for industrial service are required regardless of credit history.

Residential deposits are refunded upon termination of service or after 1 year of timely payments. For active accounts this will appear as a credit on the bill. Upon termination of service, deposit will be applied by distributor against unpaid bills of the customer, and if any balance remains after such application is made, said balance shall be refunded to the customer.

Commercial & industrial deposits are held until the account is closed.

Deposit refund checks are issued only when all services have been terminated and all outstanding balances paid. Credit balances on active accounts are not refundable until the account is terminated. Budget billing settlement at the end of the budget billing year is an exception to this rule.

Service charges apply for transfer of service from one location to another in the same amount as above. Additional deposits may also be required. (ex: Customer has existing electric & water service at one location and moves to another location with electric, water, and gas). Deposits can be transferred from one location to another if the previous account is to be terminated. If transferred deposits are less than current deposit rates, additional deposits will be required. If the previous account is to remain active, new deposits will be required for the new (second) account.

## **Additional Requirements**

### Customer’s Service Standards

All wiring, piping, and other utility connections must conform to Springfield Utilities’ requirements. Service lines and plumbing must be kept in good and workable condition. All accepted modern standards of National and Tennessee state codes must be followed. For example, contractors must have all water boxes and yokes to grade before service will be connected and any known leaks must be repaired. A certificate of Occupancy must be issued on new construction before utilities can be connected.

### Contractors

Contractors will not be charged for services not being used during construction if the utility account is in the construction company's name. All services will be charged when the utility account is set up under the occupant's name.

Springfield Utilities may refuse to connect or may disconnect service for violation of any of its rules and regulations or for giving false information on application for service.

Services may be disconnected for theft of utility service, destruction of utility property, appearance of theft devices on customer's premises, or any form of tampering that damages the utility service.

### Landlords & Tenants

When one meter serves two customers (ex. Duplex apartment with one water meter) the meter that serves both tenants must remain in the landlord's name. The billing can only be separated if the building is rewired or re-plumbed such that each tenant has a separate meter.

Normal service disconnection requests from all customers must be in writing or by personal appearance. This can be in the form of a letter, fax, email, or counter transaction.

Service turn on/turn off requests from landlords, real estate agents, or contractors must be received in writing by Springfield Utilities. This can be a letter, fax, or email or any media that provides a record of the request and an audit trail of the transaction. Landlords may not request a disconnection of service to property they own if the utility service is in the tenant's name. Landlords may not request Springfield Utilities deny utility service to any tenant who has the right to use his property and the means to pay for service connection. Springfield Utilities reserves the right to require copies of lease or rental agreements to verify that the tenant has the right to apply for service at any location. Springfield Utilities also reserves the right to contact landlords to further verify information.

Requests for disconnection will be completed on the next business day after the request has been received.

### **BILLING**

Utility bills in the service area of Springfield Utilities are rendered monthly. There are three billing cycles (territories). Bills will be rendered at least fifteen (15) days before the due date. Due dates are determined by the geographic location of the customer. Three due dates exist, depending on the area where the account exists. Those dates are the 1st, 10th, & 20th of each month. Bills not paid by the due date will incur a 5% late fee. This late fee is clearly stated on the billing statement. This fee applies once to each bill and is not a revolving interest charge.

There is a 5 day grace period after the due date to have payment in. During this 5 day period, payment of the bill amount plus the late fee must be rendered to keep account status current. Accounts unpaid after the grace period are subject to disconnection for nonpayment. Failure to receive the bill does not release the customer from obligation to pay the bill by the due date.

## Billing adjustments

City ordinance 92-13 allows for adjustment of water and sewer bills because of water leaks on the customer's side of the water meter. Adjustments may be given for excess water usage caused by faulty plumbing on the customer's premises. The amount of adjustment is limited to 25% of 2 consecutive high bills in one year. Proof that the leak has been repaired must be presented in the form of a plumber's repair bill or receipt showing purchase of repair parts. Sewer charges may also be adjusted. Adjustments on the customer side of the meter will be limited to 2 consecutive billing period adjustments in any 12 month period, and will be made to the water and sewer portion of the bill only.

Adjustments to sewer charges can be made once each year for customers filling swimming pools or other water-only features including, but not limited to agricultural ponds, fish ponds, etc. Customers may contact the billing department for an adjustment application. Applications must be approved by the Accounting Supervisor, and verification may be required prior to approval at the discretion of city staff.

Electric and Gas bills are only adjusted if there is an incorrect meter reading. Adjustments to charges for sanitation or storm water service must be authorized by the Public Works department.

Bill adjustments may be positive or negative. If an account is under billed, the adjustment will be an addition to the bill. If an account is overbilled, the adjustment will yield a subtraction from the bill. No billing adjustment will exceed usage for a period of three years. This is according to the Tennessee Code Annotated. (See TCA 28-3-301; 28-3-302, 28-3-303).

A customer may request that a meter be reread or checked for mechanical problems if they believe a billing error has occurred.

## **TERMINATION OF SERVICE**

An extension of time to pay may be granted in times of extreme hardship or unusual circumstances such as temporary loss of income by the customer, high bill caused by a water leak, or other circumstances that prevent timely payment. Under no circumstances will this extension exceed a period of time greater than two weeks after the regular due date. No more than three extensions may be granted in one year. Customers are encouraged to avail themselves of assistance programs available in the community to assist in payment of utility bills.

When payment has not been made after the grace period or an extension expires, and disconnection for nonpayment is pending, Springfield Utilities will notify customer in writing of pending disconnection. The written notice will contain a phone number for Springfield Utilities Customer Service where the customer can call to discuss the bill. This written notice may be in the form of a letter sent by mail or fax. It may also consist of an email or text message. Distributor will make reasonable efforts to receive consent from customers in advance of receipt of termination notices via email or text. A door hanger may be the means used for this notification. If no response is received after notification, disconnection will occur. A reasonable effort will made to contact customer before disconnection for non-payment.

If service is disconnected for non-payment, the past due amount plus a \$50 reconnection fee must be paid before service is restored. The fee is charged when the customer's account is placed on the disconnect order and will not be waived even if payment arrives before services are actually disconnected. If the customer requests reconnection after 4PM, the reconnection fee increases from \$50 to \$150. Electric reconnections for meters with current transformers or any electric reconnection

requiring the labor of a journeyman lineman will be charged a \$ 250 reconnection fee. Distributor may refuse to connect or may discontinue service for the violation of any of its Rules and Regulations, or for violation of any of the provisions of the Schedule of Rates and Charges, or of the application of customer or contract with the customer. Distributor may discontinue service to customer for the theft of current or the appearance of current theft devices on the premises of customer. The discontinuance of service by distributor for any causes as stated in this rule does not release customer from his obligation to distributor for the payment of minimum bills as specified in application of customer or contract with customer. If unauthorized service is discovered, customer will be charged a meter tampering fee per the Schedule of Rates and Charges. Additionally, customer will be charged an amount for estimated consumption plus a penalty fee of 100% of the estimated consumption charge. If the meter or equipment is damaged as a result of theft of services, customer will be responsible for cost of replacement.

#### Weather related exceptions

Springfield Utilities will not disconnect any residential customer for non-payment if the heat index is predicted to be higher than 105 degrees (F) or if the high temperature of the day is projected to be below freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit).

Weather related exceptions are not made for commercial & industrial accounts.

Springfield Utilities evaluates weather conditions daily at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for Springfield TN (Zip code: 37172).

#### Medical hardships

If a residential customer has durable medical equipment at the residence, a statement must be provided by the physician, medical professional, or supplier of the medical equipment, stating the consequences to the customer in case of interruption of utility service. This documentation must be updated annually. Any customer with documentation of durable medical equipment on file will be given priority for restoration of service, should an outage occur. Documentation of durable medical equipment does not exempt the customer from disconnection of service for nonpayment of the bill. If disconnection for nonpayment becomes necessary, the customer will be given three (3) day's written notice of the pending disconnection. No more than three (3) medical hardship extensions shall be granted in any twelve (12) month period.

#### Customer rights and remedies

If a customer feels that disconnection for nonpayment is not warranted, he may present any mitigating facts to Springfield Utilities by contacting the billing office and presenting these mitigating facts. Proof of payment in the form of a receipt or cancelled check or other evidence should be presented. Springfield Utilities will examine any evidence presented and determine if disconnection is still warranted. Inquiries should be directed to Springfield Utilities at 405 North Main St. Springfield TN 37172; phone (615)-382-2200 between the hours of 7:30 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

#### Returned checks

Since banks no longer send back the actual check, we cannot run anything back through. When a check or draft is returned unpaid, notice is sent to customer, who then has 10 days to pay the returned balance, along with a \$30 service fee. If payment is not made within the 10-day period, service may be disconnected without further notice.

If 3 payments are returned unpaid within a 12-month period, the account is placed on cash only status.

If the account was on automatic bank draft, it is removed from bank draft. If a check is presented on a closed account or a cash only account, the account is subject to immediate cutoff without notice.

If your due date falls on a weekend or holiday, you have until 4:30 PM on the next business day to pay without late charge. Payments received in the night drop by 7:30 AM on that next business day, will also be considered paid on time.

### Miscellaneous Fees

- Additional trip for gas turn-on: \$20
- Lighting gas on request: \$20
- Broken Seal/Meter Tampering Fee: \$150 for the 1<sup>st</sup> offense for any form of meter tampering that occurs and is covered under "Conditions of Service" regulations; \$300 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> offense
- Overtime: \$100 (per "Conditions of Service" regulations)
- Reconnect Fee: \$50 when customer service(s) are disconnected for nonpayment of a bill.
- Returned Check: \$30
- Summer Disconnect or Reconnect Fee: \$30

### **CUSTOMER INFORMATION**

Rates and service practices will be made available to customers in writing at the time of service application and will be available on the City of Springfield's website at any time. All retail rate actions shall be communicated to the customers by public statement issued through available print or electronic media.

Information on individual customer accounts may be obtained by visiting City Hall or by contacting a customer service representative by phone, fax, or email. Information available includes customer account detail (bills & payments), usage summary for each service, information about deposits, or any information relevant to providing utility service to customers. This information will only be released to the current account holder.

Upon request, customers will be provided statement of monthly consumption for the prior twelve months. Additional information about Springfield Utilities Service Practice Policies may be found at the city's website: [www.springfield-tn.org](http://www.springfield-tn.org).

### **Springfield City Hall**

405 N. Main Street

Springfield, TN 37172

[customerservice@springfield-tn.org](mailto:customerservice@springfield-tn.org)

Phone: 615-382-2200

Fax: 615-382-7602 (Customer Service fax)

Hours:

Monday - Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.