

City of West Richland Utility Billing

Residential Rental Property FAQs

1. How do I authorize the City to send utility bills to my tenant?

There is a form to be completed by the property owner.

2. How does the tenant access billing information and does my authorization of the City to bill my tenant allow them to access the residence billing information?

If a property owner has authorized a bill to be received at the service address, then the tenant will have access to the paper billing information. A tenant can still use the billing statement to make a payment online if they choose to. A tenant will also be able to create an online account to access the utility billing information.

3. I have previously authorized the City to discuss utility bills with my property management company, does this change any of this previous authorization and will late payment statements still be sent to them and/or myself?

Your previous authorization for property management will need to be updated with the new authorization form. Past Due Statements will still be sent to the owner and/or property management as authorized.

4. Will the property manager/owner be notified of late payments by tenants?

Yes, they will still receive a copy of the past due statement.

5. Will payment deferral requests be accepted from tenants?

No – payment deferral requests will need to come from the property owner.

6. What is the City's new process for turning off the tenant utilities for nonpayment?

The process will remain the same, as long as the City is sending a bill to the service address. If the owner has NOT authorized the City to send a copy of the bill to the tenant at the property address, then a 7-day door tag notification must be hung before water can be disconnected for non-payment.

7. Since the utility bill will be sent to my tenant, if it is not paid whose credit report is affected?

We do not report to anyone's credit until it reaches the point of being turned over to the collection agency. In this case – which is not changing from practice prior to October 1, 2019, the owner is ultimately and legally liable for the debt owed regardless of whether or not the property is rental.

8. Since a tenant utility bill will be sent to the Owner/Occupant, will the new bill (paper and electric) list this as the Customer Name?

Yes.

9. Where will utility bills be sent when the residence is vacant since you say bills will only be sent to the service address?

Utility bills will still be sent to the service address until a property owner notifies us to stop delivering. If they wanted it to resume, a new form would need to be completed.

We will offer the option for owners to receive a copy of the bill either paper or electronic to their residence/email address.

10. How will the LevelPay program be handled with tenants?

LevelPay will still be offered at the request of the owner. It is the owner's responsibility to notify the City if the account should be removed from LevelPay at any time. An owner can call and ask for an estimate of a built up credit/deficit based on actual usage at any time.

11. How will the low-income senior/disabled rate work with tenants?

Nothing much will be changing with this as it is currently. A tenant will need to provide proof of residency, rental agreement, and a completed application that meets all the qualifications of receiving a discounted rate. An affidavit will also need to be signed by the property owner stating the discounted rate will belong to the individual applying. This will need to be completed annually for as long as the an individual qualifies to be receiving the discounted rate.

12. During my research I came across the Request to Temporarily Discontinue Service/Restart Service request. Can tenants use any or all of these services?

The referenced form is only used in cases where the property will be empty for 6 weeks or longer. Under this policy, a tenant typically does not have use for the temporary discontinue/restart service. A tenant cannot use this form unless the owner has provided the City with written permission allowing the tenant to make this type of change.

13. Will tenants be able to use the Request to Temporarily Turn-On Water Services for Inspection (webpage link calls this Temporary Turn Off for Inspection)?

No – unless the owner has provided the City with written authorization for the tenant to make this type of request.

14. Garbage Collection:

a. How does a tenant get a non-routine pickup of their garbage if needed on the non-scheduled day?

They can call the office and request a non-routine pickup as long as the pickup falls within the bounds of included services. This includes extra bags or cans and furniture. Any request that would incur an additional fee to the billing would need to be requested by the owner or management company.

b. Will tenants be able to request a change in the number of garbage cans?

No – this will affect the billing amounts on the account and therefore can only be done by the owner or property manager.

15. What assistance will be provided in calculating a pro-rated bill for vacating and moving in tenant?

Owners can call to request a pro-rated bill for a specified end date which we will then calculate for them. We are hoping to develop an online calculator for property owners, but at this time, it is still not available.

a. What information is needed in calculating a pro-rated bill?

We just need the last day of occupancy to know the time frame to pro-rate for a tenant moving out. For a tenant moving in, the owner will need to provide us with the start date.

16. Can I have a copy of the information sheet detailing the billing cycle, payment options, and the property's garbage day?

Yes – we are currently in the process of finalizing this information sheet. We will send an information sheet for your property when they are completed.

17. Will there be any changes to the Application for Utility Service and how do I obtain a copy of the revised from prior to Oct. 1, 2019?

No – no changes are going to be made to the application for service at this time. Ownership changes and commercial renter application for service will remain the same as they are now.

a. What fees are there when a tenant moves into a property for the Application for Utility Service?

Currently there is a \$20 new application fee if the tenant is moving from outside of West Richland, as well as a \$20 closing fee applied to every account that is finalized.

With these upcoming changes, there will be no fees associated to tenants moving into a property because there will be no changes made to the utility account.

b. How will the city identify that they can discuss a bill with a tenant since the bill is still in the owner's name?

The owner can notify use of the current tenants in order to provide specific permission of who can discuss account details.

18. When logged into <https://bill.paystation.com/cowr> clicking the account number:

a. What application is needed to access this information?

A billing statement is needed to create a login account and view account information online.

b. What information is accessible in the account number for a tenant to access?

A tenant who creates an online account for the utility account number will be able to see the current balance due, and all previous billing statements associated with that utility account number. They will also be able to see previous payments made and when they were made, but no details regarding

who made the payment or payment details (i.e.: credit card numbers, checks, etc.).

c. Are multiple users allowed to access a single account number (ex. Owner, property manager, and tenant?)

Yes – as referenced above. The tenant can create a log in account using the same utility account number in order to see and pay bills online. A property owner or manager can also have an account linked to a particular account an can see current balance, previous statements, and payment history. But unless a payment was made from that login account, payment details will not be displayed.