



CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

TOWN OF CLAYTON

Duly Adopted by Town Council and effective on July 15, 2024

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SECTION 1

Customer Rights and Responsibilities

Customer Care Policy Statement

The Town of Clayton strives to treat all citizens in an equitable and non-discriminating manner while recognizing the distinct needs and requirements of each customer. To provide uniformity of service, the Town of Clayton has adopted a Customer Care Policy. This most recently adopted version will serve as a reasonable response to customers' needs while meeting the requirements of good business practices for the Town. Our policies apply to every customer or applicant for utility service with the Town. Copies are available online at www.townofclaytonnc.org. These policies are revised, amended, or otherwise changed from time to time by action of the Town Council.



Unique Rights and Responsibilities

The customers and the Town of Clayton have unique rights and responsibilities in connecting the utility service. These responsibilities and rights are detailed throughout this document, some of which are summarized here.

Customer Responsibility

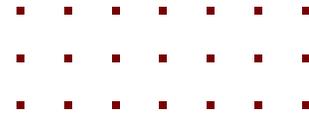
- Establish service in the following ways:
 - Provide proof of property ownership or a valid lease
 - Provide an acceptable letter of credit from a previous utility provider (if owner occupied) or pay a deposit as established by the Comprehensive List of Fees and Charges.
- Allow the Town staff to have access to the property to set up and maintain service.
- Pay bills by the "Due Date" shown on the monthly bill.
- Notify the Utilities and Billing Department if there is someone in the household who either is chronically or seriously ill, disabled, or on a life support system.
- Notify the Utilities and Billing Department of questions or complaints about service.
- Install, maintain, and repair wiring in the home/business that conforms to all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
- The Town provides utility services for the sole use and convenience of the premises under contract. The customer will ensure that utility service is not given to anyone, including a neighbor. Violation of this policy will be cause for disconnection of service in accordance with applicable ordinances.
- Keep customer information updated, such as phone number or email.

Customer Rights

- A residential customer that owns their property has a right to request that their deposit be refunded by applying the deposit to their utility account if they pay bills promptly for one year or discontinue service with the Town. Deposits for residential customers are held until the account is closed either by request or disconnection for non-payment. Non-residential customers' deposits are held until the account is closed.
- A customer is allowed 4 payment extensions per calendar year. Extensions must be requested in writing prior to their disconnection date.
- The customer has the right to request a free energy audit.

SECTION 2

Municipality Rights and Responsibilities



Municipal Responsibility

1. Refund a customer's deposit by applying the deposit to their utility account if conditions are met. If the account is inactive, a refund will be issued to the last known address on file.
2. Emphasize the disconnection date on every monthly bill. Customers who fail to pay their bill by the disconnection date can expect to have their services interrupted. No additional notice will be sent.
3. Avoid disconnection for non-payment during extreme weather conditions. The Town will consider the safety and well-being of customers during extremely cold or extremely hot days taking into consideration temperature and other weather conditions. (Below 32 degrees or above 95 degrees)
4. Avoid disconnecting for non-payment after 4 p.m. on a Friday or the day before a Town holiday.
5. Provide and explain our rate schedule, how meters are read, and any additional reasonable information.
6. Respond to questions or complaints from customers. The Town pledges prompt, courteous, and honest answers.
7. Provide energy usage and conservation information.

Municipality's Rights

1. To authorize access to the Town's equipment and facilities.
2. To receive notice of changes in address, status of utility service or any problems with the utility service.
3. To receive timely payment for services provided
4. The Town is allowed to take action in court or as otherwise permitted by law regarding equipment tampering or financial delinquencies.



Office and Service Hours

The Town of Clayton Utilities and Billing Department is located in the Clayton Town Hall at 111 E Second St. The office is open to walk-in customers from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on holidays.

All routine and regular services are available during these hours. Any customer requests for utility service or a request to add another service connection by a customer will be handled as a request for all services applicable to the location.

SECTION 3

Establishing and Billing for Services

Request For Service

1. To begin the process, a customer must complete a Utility Service Application which may be obtained by one of the following methods:
 - a. Visit our website complete the fillable form and email it to utilities@townofclaytonnc.org
 - b. Call the Utilities and Billing Department at (919) 553-5002 and request a form be faxed, mailed, or emailed.
 - c. Visit the Utilities and Billing Department at 111 E Second St. during business hours.
2. Additional Information and Deposits:
 - a. Account deposit
 - b. Photo ID
 - c. Social Security Number (or Federal Tax ID Number in the case of a non-residential account). In the absence of either, the account will be assessed a higher deposit.
 - d. Lease agreement or Deed from the home purchase.
 - e. Presence of swimming pool, if applicable.

Upon completion of the Utility Service Application, review of additional information, and payment of deposit, the account shall be scheduled for connection. Customers may request connection dates in the future. The Town does not provide same-day service. The Town is not responsible for any damage caused by turning on or off the Town's utility services.

The Federal Privacy Act of 1974 prohibits municipalities from denying "to any individual any right, benefit or privilege provided by law because such individual refused to disclose his social security account number." Additionally, any Town employee who requests disclosure of a social security number must inform that individual of the following:

1. Whether the disclosure is mandatory or voluntary
2. By what statutory or other authority the number is requested
3. What uses will be made of the number

Any request for a social security number on the utility application is completely voluntary. It is requested for verification of your identity and to serve as a means to collect any unpaid utility balance if you default on payment once the account is closed. Failure to provide results in a high utility deposit.

A customer is required to pay a one-time administrative fee to begin utility service. This is included on their first bill.

For any address where the Town of Clayton provides electric service, if the property has been vacant with no active utility account for a period of 1 year or more, an inspection is required by the Town's Inspections Department. All fees associated with an inspection must be paid before establishing a new utility service. As of 2021, all properties with active utility accounts with the Town of Clayton have AMI or digital meters. **If a customer applies for utility service at a property that did not have active utility service at the time of the meter changeouts, the owner will incur the charge for new meters at the Town's current cost.** If the Town discovers damages to any of our utility services, the customer will be responsible for the cost of replacement or repair as listed in the Comprehensive List of Fees & Charges.

SECTION 3

Establishing and Billing for Services

Billing

Each account shall be billed on a monthly schedule. From the date of the bill, the customer has 20 days to pay the account without penalty.

On the 21st day, a 5% penalty will be applied. If payment is not received prior to the 30th day, a non-payment penalty will be applied, and the account becomes eligible for disconnection. (See Comprehensive List of Fees & Charges located on the Town website)

Prior Debt

The Town may refuse to furnish new service to an applicant who is indebted to the Town for service previously furnished at any address in The Town of Clayton. Services will not be provided until all debts are satisfied in full.

Customer Deposits

1. Residential: All utility accounts must include a guarantee of payment, which can be demonstrated by either:

a. Paying an account deposit as defined in the fee schedule as determined by the Town Council.

--OR--

b. Providing a letter of credit from a current utility provider demonstrating good payment history with no late payments within the preceding, no returned checks, no returned drafts, and no disconnects for nonpayment within the preceding 12 months. (property owners only)

2. Non-residential: All non-residential utility accounts must include a guarantee of payment which must be demonstrated by paying an account deposit.

Future Deposits

Any customer whose service is involuntarily terminated for non-payment, meter tampering, or other reasons may be required to pay a deposit, or an additional deposit, as specified in the above information, before reconnection of service. This includes all customer accounts.

The future deposit may be at a greater amount based on account history.

Any customer required to post a deposit under the provisions of this paragraph shall forfeit any right for refund of the deposit in advance of closing out the account.

SECTION 3

Establishing and Billing for Services

Refunding Deposits

- A deposit will be credited to the customer's account upon disconnection of service.
- After the deposit is applied, all outstanding balances on the final bill will be the responsibility of the customer and must be paid within ninety (90) days or the balance will be turned over for collection.
- The deposit will not be refunded if the customer has another account with a past due balance.
- The remaining credit on the account will be transferred to the account with a past due balance.

Email and Text Authorization

Many times the Town attempts to correspond with customers through email and/or texts. By providing the Town an email address and a cell phone number, a customer authorizes the Town to communicate with them in this manner. Such communication can include private account information.

Returned Items

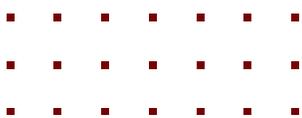
The Town will accept only cash, certified check, money order, or credit/debit card from any customer having two (2) returned payments. Upon receipt of the first returned payment, the customer will be informed either by phone call or email that they have 48 hours from notification to pay the returned item with either money order, debit/credit card, or cash.

Upon receipt of a second returned payment, the customer will be advised that all bills must be paid in cash, credit/debit card, or by money order for the duration of 12 months.

If a returned item is not paid within the 48-hour period, utility service will be disconnected without further notice. Customers disconnected subsequent to a returned payment which has not been satisfied within 48 hours shall be notified that they have 10-days to clear the unpaid balance with the Town or the matter is turned over to the Johnston County District Attorney's office for collection.

In the event a new customer posts a utility account deposit by personal or corporate check and the check is returned to the Town for any reason, the account will be immediately disconnected without benefit of prior notification. A notation of this provision shall be included on the agreement signed by the customer at the time of account activation. (Adopted July 20, 1998)

As allowed by the State of North Carolina, a charge is added to the customer's bill for each returned check. (see Comprehensive List of Fees & Charges located on the Town website)



SECTION 4

Payment and Collections Information

Payments

All accounts must be paid in full by the due date every month or they may become eligible for disconnection. Customers may make payments by:

1. Mailing a check or money order to Post Office Box 63024, Charlotte, NC 27263-3024.
2. Using a debit or credit card via the Town of Clayton's website at www.townofclaytonnc.org. Any payment made by debit or credit card will incur an additional processing fee.
3. Participation in automatic bank draft. An application for a bank draft can be found at www.townofclaytonnc.org.
4. Visiting the Utilities and Billing Department at 111 E. Second Street during normal business hours. We accept cash, checks, and money orders. Credit and debit card payments can be processed on-site by the customer at a Town provided terminal.
5. For customer convenience, payments by check or money order may be placed in our drive-thru drop box located in the parking lot at the Town Square (corner of Fayetteville and Second Streets). Payments are retrieved twice daily during regular business hours.

Bank Draft Plans

The Town offers customers the option of having their checking accounts drafted on a set date of the month. This relieves the customer of having a lost or late payment and saves a trip to Town Hall or the cost of an envelope or stamp. Draft dates are as follows:

Cycle 1	8th	15th	22nd
Cycle 2	15th	22nd	29th
Cycle 3	15th	22nd	29th
Cycle 4	8th	22nd	29th

Please contact the Utilities and Billing Department to determine your billing cycle. Participating customers are required to provide a Bank Draft Authorization Form and a voided check or a direct deposit slip for the purpose of establishing the draft. Only customers with good payment history are eligible for this program. The Town defines good payment history as no delinquencies, no returned checks or drafts in the most recent 12-month period for residential customers and non-residential customers.

Any draft returned by the bank because of insufficient funds, or a closed account will be treated as a returned item and the customer will be removed from the bank draft program.

To make any changes to the Bank Draft Plan requires a customer to complete a new Bank Draft Authorization Form and provide a voided check.

A final Bill will be drafted unless the amount is paid in full five (5) business days prior to the draft date.

No payment extensions are allowed for Bank Draft customers.

SECTION 5

Customer Assistance Programs

Extensions on Payment Due Dates

Customers may request an extension for their delinquent utility bill balance before their disconnect date. The maximum length of time allowed is 10 days past the disconnect date. The extension must be requested by the account holder and must be documented on the customer's account. These requests need to be made in person at our office at 111 E. Second Street or online at the Town website. These requests need to be made 48 hours before the cutoff date. If the request is made less than 48 hours before the cutoff date, the request will not be honored. If payment is not received as documented, utility services will be disconnected without further notice and the balance must be paid in full to restore services.

- Customers participating in Bank Draft or Budget Bill are not eligible for extensions.
- An extension is a privilege and may be granted based on customer needs and circumstances.
- Approval of an extension request is not guaranteed.
- No more than four (4) extensions shall be granted within 12 months.

Billing Adjustments

The Town makes every effort to accurately bill all utility accounts. From time to time however, errors may occur.

These errors may result in over billing or under billing a customer's account. Immediately upon discovery of such error, the Town shall begin the process of either billing the customer for undercharges or crediting the customer's account for overcharges.

In no circumstance shall the Town back bill a customer or credit a customer's account for greater than a 24-month period.

Courtesy Late Fee Forgiveness

The Town recognizes that customers have extenuating circumstances that may cause a customer to pay a bill late. The Town allows forgiveness of two (2) late fees per calendar year. The request must be made in writing to the Utilities and Billing Department.

Assistance For Paying Bills

There are several organizations that will assist customers who are having difficulty paying their bills. We encourage each customer to seek assistance prior to their disconnection of services for non-payment.

1. Johnston County Department of Social Services • 919-989-5300
2. Johnston-Lee Community Action • 919-209-0530
3. Salvation Army • 919-934-9102
4. St. Ann's Catholic Church • 919-934-2084

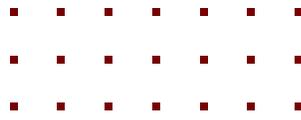
Deceased Customer Accounts

In the event of the Town discovering that an active utility account is listed in a deceased customer's name, the Town will send a certified letter requesting that service be transferred to someone in charge of the Estate within 30 days.

Failure to do so within 30 days will result in disconnection of utility services.

SECTION 5

Customer Assistance Programs



Budget Bill Program

The Town offers our customers a payment option that allows them to pay a flat amount per month for utility service. This amount is the average of the prior twelve (12) months of utility consumption. Due dates for payments remain the same as normal and all penalty and disconnect policies will remain in effect. No penalties will accrue, regardless of the account balance, if the payment is received by the due date. In the event of nonpayment disconnection, the customer will be required to bring their account to a zero balance and will no longer be eligible for the program. During the customer's twelfth month of participation, their monthly payment will be re-calculated. At that time, the credit or balance will be rolled into the new payment year and the customer will be notified by letter of the new monthly payment amount. If the customer chooses to be removed from the Budget Bill, any past due balance is owed immediately.

Any customer, who has had any delinquencies or bad checks, in the previous twelve months, will not be eligible to participate in the Budget Bill Program.

No payment extensions are allowed for Budget Bill customers.

Customer Requested Adjustments

The Town recognizes that customers may experience failure of equipment and appliances that can result in higher-than-normal consumption. On a case-by-case basis, the Town shall investigate the nature of the failure and determine if the account is eligible for an adjustment. In most cases however, accounts are not eligible for an adjustment. A notable acceptance would be in the case of a burst water pipe which may be eligible for a credit on the calculated cost of sewer service. If the Town determines that an account is eligible for an adjustment, proof of repair in the form of a paid invoice to a contractor or a receipt for repair supplies must be provided before to the adjustment can be completed.

Medical Alert Program

The purpose of this program is to identify customers with chronic or critical health concerns using a medical seal affixed to the electric meter on the home. In the event of unplanned interruptions of electric service, such as are common following storms, homes designated with a medical seal are given higher priority for restoration of service. Due to circumstances beyond the control of the Town and its employees (storm damage, loss of generation, etc.), electric power cannot be guaranteed 100 percent of the time. Each customer listed with the Medical Alert Program should have a backup plan for movement of the life support patient if the Town is unable to restore power in a length of time that is acceptable.

In the event of non-payment, homes designated with a medical seal are given personal notification in the form of a phone call, face-to-face meeting, or certified letter of the pending disconnection of electric service. Customers with a medical seal will be disconnected for nonpayment following diligent and proper notice.

Participation in the Medical Alert Program is restricted to customers with documented chronic or critical health concerns. The Town must receive an annual certification of medical necessity form completed by a physician or hospital. If this is not received annually, you will be removed from the Medical Alert Program.

SECTION 6

Energy Cost Savings Program

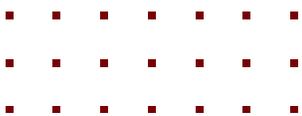
The Energy Cost Savings Program is a means of reducing the amount of electricity being consumed in the home, especially during periods of peak demand. This is used to reduce electric demands and provides savings to customers.

Participating customers can have a load management switch installed on their electric water heater, electric heat strips on the heat pump, and/or air conditioner compressor to receive participation credits on their monthly electric bill. During periods of heavy electricity demand, the switch will activate to interrupt the noted appliances.

The more switches the Town has in place the greater the impact of the load management program and the more savings available.

Customers can receive as much as \$148 per year in savings.

Device	Credit Amount	Duration
Electric Water Heater	\$ 5.00	January-December (12 months)
Heat Pump	\$ 12.00	December-March (4 months)
A/C Compressor 25%	\$ 6.00	June-September (4 months)
A/C Compressor 50%	\$ 10.00	June-September (4 months)



SECTION 7

Discontinuing and Reconnecting Service

1. Voluntary Disconnection: A customer may request voluntary disconnection of service. This can be done by:

- a. Visiting the Town's website and downloading a Utility Disconnect Request form.
- b. Emailing utilities@townofclaytonnc.org to request a Utility Disconnect-Request form.
- c. Call Utilities and Billing at 919-553-5002 and request a form be faxed, mailed, or emailed.
- d. Visit the Utilities and Billing Department at 111 E. Second Street.

The Utility Disconnect Request form must be completed in its entirety and submitted to the Utilities and Billing Department. Upon completion and review for additional information, the account shall be scheduled for disconnection. Customers may request disconnection dates in the future.

Same-day disconnections are not available.

2. Involuntary Disconnection of Service: The Town may discontinue utility service for any of the of the following reasons:

- a. Failure of the customer to pay bills for utility service.
- b. Failure of the customer to pay deposits for utility service.
- c. Failure of the customer to pay a returned payment.
- d. Upon discovery of meter tampering including bypassing the meter or altering its function.
- e. Failure of the customer to permit Town employees access to their meters and/or load management switches at all reasonable hours. Locked gates, loose dogs, parking cars over meters, etc. are violations of Town policy.
- f. Use of power for unlawful reasons.
- g. Discovery of a condition that is determined to be hazardous.
- h. Provision of false information on a Utility Service Application.
- i. Failure to provide all required documents for opening an account.

3. Transferring Service: If transferring service from one location to another that the Town services, all past due bills must be paid in full. The remaining amount owed and any fees will be transferred to the new account. **A new deposit may also be assessed.**

After an account has been closed either by customer request or policy of the Town, all funds, including deposits, refunds, load management, and overcharge credits will be first applied to amounts owed to the Town on the closed account. The remaining funds will then be applied to any amounts owed on any other accounts the customer may have with the Town. When those accounts have been fully satisfied, a check for any remaining funds will be issued to the customer.

4. Disconnection During Extreme Weather: The Town will not exercise its right to disconnect service for non-payment of any bill when the safety and well-being of a customer may be at stake. For that reason, disconnection for non-payment may not be conducted on an extremely cold winter day or extremely hot summer day, taking into consideration temperature, precipitation, and other weather conditions. If a customer's bill remains unpaid on the next business day, the disconnect for non-payment may then occur. This delay in disconnection for non-payment will not preclude the Town from disconnection at a future date and does not change the customer's liability for payment of all bills and fees.

When it becomes necessary for the Town to discontinue services for any of the reasons listed in Involuntary Disconnection of Service, service will be restored after payment of:

1. All past due bills due to the Town including additional fees and charges required by this policy
2. Any deposit as required
3. Any material and labor cost incurred by the Town according to the current fee schedule.

After hours reconnection is not available to our customers. Same day reconnections aren't promised.

SECTION 8

Metering Guidelines

Meter Reading

Utility meters are read by the Town according to an established schedule. Reading dates vary slightly from month to month due to weekends, holidays, weather conditions, and other factors. Monthly billing periods are assumed to be 30 days but may range from 27 to 33 days. The Town's well-trained meter readers use modern meter reading equipment and techniques.

If meter reading corrections are necessary, the Town will make the adjustments and a new bill may be issued upon request. A credit due to a customer from a meter reading error will be posted to the customer's account.

Meter & Load Management Switch Tampering

Tampering with a meter or bypassing a meter is the same as stealing. The large majority of good-paying customers who would be financially burdened with paying for the stolen services require the aggressive enforcement of this policy.

The Town will call for the prosecution of cases of meter tampering, electric/water theft, and fraud to the fullest extent of the law. Load management devices are considered by this policy to be the same as meters. Any damage to these devices will be paid by the customer.

Should any Town personnel find an electric meter with the seal cut or removed, whether, during utility disconnection or normal meter reading cycles, a charge of up to \$500 will be added to the customer's account, which will be subject to any utility payment policies of the Town. Should a customer discover and report their seal cut, no charge will be levied.

Any person with three or more incidences of a cut seal, whether voluntarily reported or through Town discovery, will face permanent discontinuance of service with the Town.

Electric Vehicles

The Town of Clayton encourages customers to make us aware when they have an electric vehicle. The charging of electric vehicles causes increases in our load factor. Making the Town aware helps for the planning of infrastructure by our Electric Department.

SECTION 9

Important Links

Create an Online Portal Account

Register for an online account to manage your utility services conveniently.

ClaytonNC.org/createaccount

Extension Request Form

Submit a request for an extension on your utility bill due date.

ClaytonNC.org/extension

New Service Application

Apply to initiate utility services at your residence or business.

ClaytonNC.org/newservice

Service Disconnect Request

Fill out this form to terminate your existing utility services.

ClaytonNC.org/disconnect

Bill Payment

Use this link to pay your utility bills online quickly and securely.

ClaytonNC.org/billpay

Medical Seal Program

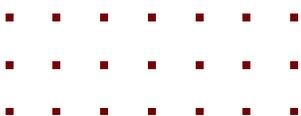
Enroll in a program designed to prevent utility disconnection in case of medical emergencies.

ClaytonNC.org/medicalseal

Budget Billing Application

Apply for a billing program that allows for consistent monthly payments based on your average utility usage.

ClaytonNC.org/budgetbill





TOWN OF CLAYTON

111 E. Second St.

Clayton, NC 27520

919-553-5002

TownofClaytonNC.org

Think
CLAYTON
NORTH CAROLINA