

ATTENTION: RELIEF MEASURES FOR RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CUSTOMERS

This notice announces relief measures for residential ratepayers that have experienced economic challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review this message in its entirety. For more information please call us at 732-363-4422.

INSTALLMENT PLAN AVAILABILITY

BE ADVISED that State law requires the Lakewood Township MUA to offer residential customers an installment plan for unpaid water and sewer arrearage charges accruing between March 9, 2020 and March 15, 2022. Residential customers offered an installment plan have 30 days to agree to the plan. To maintain the installment plan, a residential customer must make timely payments on all current charges. If the residential customer fails to pay their arrearages and/or current charges within 30 days after the due date, then the installment plan is void and the Lakewood Township MUA can proceed with enforcement.

LATE FEES, CHARGES AND PENALTIES

BE ADVISED that P.L. 2021, c. 317 and P.L. 2022, c. 4 prohibit local governments from charging residential customers interest, fees, or charges for late payment of water and sewer charges accruing between March 9, 2020 and March 15, 2022. This prohibition does not apply to sewer liens that were sold before January 1, 2022. Late interest, fees or charges may be enforced against unpaid charges accruing before March 9, 2020 and after March 15, 2022 but may be waived to the extent required by a utility assistance program.

BILL ASSISTANCE AND ARREARAGE FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS

BE ADVISED that the application period for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) is now open. This federally funded program provides financial assistance to eligible low-income households to reduce the balances on their residential water and sewer bills. LIHWAP will provide benefits directly to water and sewer service providers on behalf of residential customers. The assistance can be used, in order of priority, to:

- restore services where services have been terminated and pay reconnection fees and other charges accrued due to a disconnection;
- avoid service disruption for those residential customers who are in danger of disconnection (i.e., received shut off notices or have past due balances) and to help them afford bill payment going forward; and
- support those household customers who are current in their bills but might be in danger of falling behind in the near future.

Priority will also be given to families with elderly or disabled household members and/or with children under the age of five, no matter which category they fall into.

To be eligible for LIHWAP assistance, applicants must be water/sewer bill holders who are responsible for paying their water and sewer bills directly to the water/sewer provider. Also, applicants' total gross household income must be at or below 60% of the State Median Income (\$6,439 a month for a family of four). Participants in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are automatically eligible for LIHWAP assistance so long as they are water/sewer bill holders. The LIHWAP frequently asked questions webpage, available at <https://njdca-housing.dynamics365portals.us/lihwapfaq>, has additional information about maximum income limits and other items.

People can apply online through the DCAid application portal at <https://njdca-housing.dynamics365portals.us/en-US/dcaid-services/>. Those without computer or internet access can call 1-800-510-3102 to be directed to one of the community action agencies for assistance with starting, completing, and submitting an application online.

If a residential customer applies for assistance from a State-administered utility assistance program prior to June 15, 2022, enforcement actions on unpaid water and sewer balances are placed on hold for up to 60 days or until such time as a complete application is approved or rejected by the Department of Community Affairs. Please notify the Lakewood Township MUA immediately at 732-363-4422 if you have applied for water and/or sewer assistance, providing the name of the program, the agency administering the program, and the date the application was submitted.