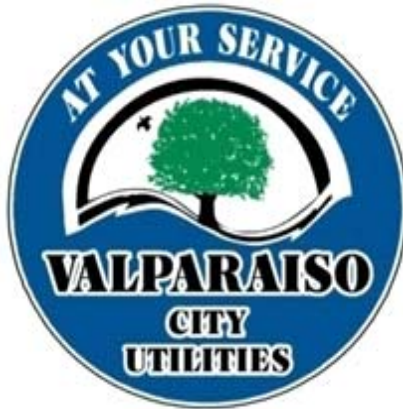


# **Valparaiso City Utilities Customer Handbook**



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**May 2015**

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**VALPARAISO CITY UTILITIES  
205 BILLINGS STREET  
VALPARAISO, INDIANA**

**Valparaiso City Utilities  
Board Of Directors**

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**Utilities Director**

Steve Poulos

**Attorney**

Michael Langer

**PHONE NUMBERS**

Utilities Business Office: 219-462-6174

Service Line Locates 1-800-382-5544

Public Works -Trash/Recycling 219-462-4612

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Welcome! You are now in an area that is being served by the  
**VALPARAISO CITY UTILITIES.**

We are constantly striving for ways in which to serve you better. As a result, we have had this handbook printed. We hope that it will help you to better understand our utility and the Public Works Department.

Please visit our website:  
<http://www.valparaisoutilities.org>

## **GENERAL**

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Our office hours are 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. If our office is closed for a holiday, notice is posted ten days prior to the holiday.

### **ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION**

Valparaiso City Utilities employees who work with the public are required to carry identification cards with his or her photograph. Our vehicles are white or dark charcoal in color with the Valparaiso City Utilities logo on the side of the vehicles with a blue municipal plate.

### **BILLING DATES**

Valparaiso City Utilities has two billing periods. If your account number begins with a 1 or a 2, you will receive your bill on approximately the 15th of each month. You have until the 1st of the following month to pay the current net amount.

If there is any past due balance illustrated in red font, this portion of the bill must be paid by the 20th to avoid termination of water service. See “**Shut Offs**” for detailed information.

If your account number begins with a 3, 4 or 5, you will receive your bill on approximately the 5th of each month. You have until the 20th of the month to pay the current net amount.

If there is any past due balance illustrated in red font, this portion of the bill must be paid by the 10th of the following month to avoid termination of water service. See “**Shut Offs**” for detailed information.

## **DEPOSITS**

Residential customers are deemed to be creditworthy and are not required to pay a deposit until proven otherwise. If a customer presents an NSF check for payment or appears on our shut off list for non-payment, they will be required to pay a deposit. This deposit will be returned after nine months of good credit history or applied to your final bill.

All other type customers will be required to pay a deposit in accordance to their meter size. This deposit will be returned after nine months of good credit history or applied to your final bill. No interest is paid on the deposit.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This deposit is for water only and cannot be used to pay any portion of your sanitation bill. The State Board of Accounts will not allow any portion of the deposit to be applied to your sanitation bill. In the event that a resident moves without paying his or her final bill, the deposit is applied to the water portion of the bill, including sales tax and penalty. If there is still a balance owed on the water portion, this is turned over to our Utility Attorney for collection.

## **WATER DEPARTMENT**

### **WATER METERS**

In April of 2000, the Valparaiso Water Department started an intensive Residential/Commercial water meter change out program. Our water meters and radio read system are made by Invensys Metering Systems, a leading manufacturer of water flow measurement equipment and systems. The water meters are equipped with radio read electronic devices which transmit the water measurement data to a portable unit carried by the meter reader or a mobile device used in a vehicle. The system saves time, increases efficiency and reduces meter reading and billing errors.

If your meter is inside a building or basement, our meter readers no longer need to bother you to visually read the meter for regular reading cycles. Meters in underground reading pits can be read without crossing lawns or property lines in most cases. No more trampled lawns or shrubs.

Our water meters record usage in cubic feet, not in gallons. There are 7.48 gallons per 1 cubic foot. 100 cu. ft. = 748 gallons. A minimum bill is based on your meter size. For any consumption under 300 cubic feet, or for a billing cycle of less than thirty days, you are still required to pay a minimum bill.

There is a minimum bill for water, sewage, storm water and trash whether you use any water or not.

**WATER LEAK DETECTION**

Our meters have a low flow leak detector. The black triangle or red pointer is visible under the meter's lens cover. They rotate whenever water is passing through the meter, even at extremely low flows, such as when small leaks occur in the piping system. To use this leak detector, turn off all your water outlets including such automatic devices as the ice maker in the refrigerator, then watch the triangle for about one minute. If it does not move, it means your plumbing system is not leaking.

If you wish to check your water usage, the new meters can be visually read by the odometer wheels under the clear lens housing.

**YARD WATER METERS**

An additional meter may be installed off of your domestic service line for yard watering purposes. The plumbing configuration must be in compliance with the Department's policy. There is an additional fee to add this meter.

This meter is charged for water usage only. There is a minimum bill based on meter size per month. The customer is responsible to order the water off in the winter to avoid paying a minimum bill when the line is not in use. There is a service fee to shut off the water in the fall and another service fee to turn the meter back on in the spring.

**TAMPERING**

It is unlawful for anyone other than an employee of Valparaiso City Utilities to repair or adjust the meter. Should our service person notice that someone has tampered with a meter, he will report the incident to the office. The customer will then be billed three times his highest bill during the past year plus labor and parts required to make the needed repairs.

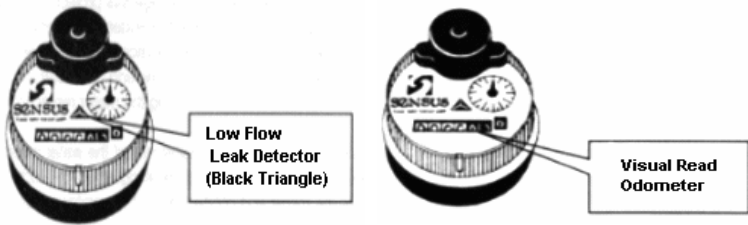
**WHY IS MY BILL SO HIGH?**

If your bill seems to be higher than usual, compare the actual consumption, not the dollar amount. While the rates may have changed, your consumption should not fluctuate greatly.

Almost all homes develop plumbing leaks over time. These leaks can add up to a significant amount of wasted water and additional cost to you. Leaks always get larger and cost you more, in the volume of water and repair bills, the longer you wait to repair them.

Toilet tanks are often the largest source of water loss in your home. Just a small, invisible toilet leak of only two tablespoons per minute is equivalent to 15 gallons per day, 105 gallons per week, and 5460 gallons per year! Leaks of this small nature are not uncommon. Many toilets quietly run, wasting many gallons each day.

**Toilet Leak Detection Kits are available in our office free of charge. We ask that you test all of your toilets before we send a serviceworker out.**



- Look particularly around these tank parts:
- the *Flush Valve* and attached *Plunger Ball*
  - the *Flapper Seal* at the bottom of the tank
  - and the standing *Overflow Pipe*

Toilet tank leaks typically result from worn parts that need replacing or from misalignment of some part of the flushing mechanism. Most repairs can be done by an experienced “do-it-yourselfer.” If you’re not sure you can handle the job, your local hardware store may be able to help. Otherwise, call a plumber. It is important to stop the leak. Make sure to check your toilet tank at least twice a year.

After you have tested your toilets and they are working properly, the

next thing to look for is a leaky faucet or hose bib. If you still cannot find the cause of your high consumption, then call our office at (219 -462-6174 ext. 2) and ask a customer service representative to have a meter technician come out to your home and look for leaks.

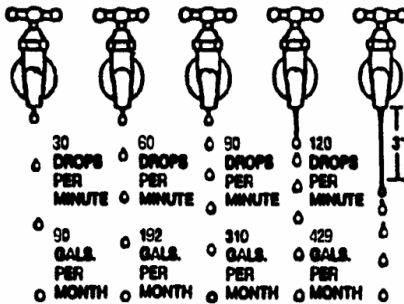
**SHUT OFFS**

There are several reasons for shut offs.

**1. Transferring Service.** If you are moving to another location, please call for an appointment to terminate your service. This must be done during the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Be sure to give your forwarding address so when you pay the final bill, your deposit can be mailed to you. If you are moving to another location within our service area and wish to leave the water on at both places and you have a good paying record, we will allow you to have water at both places for no longer than forty-five days without paying another deposit.

**2. Going Away.** If you are going away for some time and do not

**FIX THE LEAKY FAUCET!**



**HOT WATER LEAKS  
ADD TO YOUR ENERGY BILLS!**

	Kwh's/ Month	Gallons Propane/ Month
30 Drops/Minute	22	1.02
60 Drops/Minute	48.36	2.22
90 Drops/Minute	77.64	3.48
120 Drops/Minute	108.83	4.89
3" Solid Stream	274.27	12.73

Average loss of water from leaking faucets over a period of 1 month

wish to have a minimum bill every month that you are gone, you may make an appointment to have the water turned off. Notify us **in advance**, when you want it turned on. Current service fees will be charged for this service. If you wish to leave the water on while you are gone, you will be charged a minimum bill. Please notify our



office of any address change.

**3. Non-payment of bill.** Those account numbers that start with 01 and 02 are billed on the 5th of the month and have until the 1st of the following month to pay the net. The bill must be paid by the 20th of the following month or service will be terminated.

Those account numbers that start with 03, 04 and 05 are billed on the 25th of the month and have until the 20th of the following month to pay the net amount due. The bill must be paid by the 10th of the month following the actual due date or service will be terminated.

In the event we must send a serviceperson to your home to terminate your water service for non-payment, there is a service fee in addition to the total water bill. Both must be paid before service is reinstated.

Reconnection for terminated service must be scheduled between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. After 4:00 p.m., the customer will be required to pay the overtime rate in addition to the service fee. It is not our policy to turn on water between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30 a.m.

### **SERVICE FEES**

There are times when you will be billed a service fee to defray costs that are attributable directly to your needs. For example:

1. Your meter is turned off for non-payment.
2. Your service is turned off for your convenience (Vacations, summer home, yard meters, etc.)
3. Your service is reinstated after it has been turned off for any of the above (item 2).
4. Non Sufficient Fund (NSF) checks.

### **WATER SERVICE LINE RESPONSIBILITY**

Each customer has a separate water service line. The department is responsible for maintenance of this line from the water main to the curb stop. The curb stop is located between the curb and the sidewalk. The customer is responsible from the curb stop to the house. In the event of freezing, call your plumber of choice.

If the frozen area is between the curb stop and the house, it will be the customer's responsibility and expense to have it thawed before anything can be done to the Department's portion of the service line.

Once you have heat restored and the line is thawed, call Valparaiso City Utilities and we will replace parts on the meter as needed at the customer's expense. If your service line develops a leak between the water main and the curb stop, we will repair it at no cost to you. However, you must pay for all repairs if the leak is between the curb stop and your home. The Valparaiso City Utilities does not perform work on the customer side of the curb stop.

### **RATE SCHEDULES**

Rate schedules for water, sewer and storm water are available at our office or on our website at <http://www.valparasioutilities.org>

### **SPRINKLING AVERAGE**

All residential customers that have at least three bills prior to June, will receive the summer reduced sewage rate for five (5) months. The charge is based on the average of your December through May consumption. The discount starts on your June bill and continues through your October bill. **Ordinance No. 9, 2001**. For further information, please contact our office at 462-6174.

### **SWIMMING POOL OWNERS**

It is the customer's responsibility to make sure that your route has been read by Valparaiso City Utilities to cover the sewage charges on the water used to fill the pool. If you fill your pool before you are covered by the **Sprinkling Average**, you will be responsible to pay the sewage charges on the water.

### **PAYMENT OPTIONS**

To accommodate our customers, we have several payment options. Payment can be made at our office in person or through our drive up window during regular business hours. Return envelopes are provided for mail payments. We accept cash, checks, credit cards, debit cards and money orders at our office. Automatic Bank Payment Service (ACH) is also available for your convenience.

Credit card or debit card payments can be made over the phone by calling 219-462-6174 ext. 1.

To pay your bill online, go to our website:

<http://www.valparaisoutilities.org>

There is a service fee assessed to payments made by credit card or debit card via telephone or online. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express can be used.

You can also now pay by Debit Card, Credit Card or E-check over the phone.

- Can't find your Valparaiso City Utilities Bill?
- Forgot when your bill is due?
- Can't remember if you paid your bill already?
- Need to Pay Your Bill fast?
- Can't remember your disconnection date?
- Want to opt out of paper billing and receive an e-bill?

Call our Interactive Voice Response line at 219-462-6174, ext. 1, and find out the answers to these questions quickly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.

Want to sign up for e-billing?

Go to our website at: <http://www.valparaisoutilities.org> and register today. You can opt out of paper billing, pay your bill by E-check, debit card or credit card. Single use or continuous payment processing options. Save time, gasoline, and postage. You

do not have to wait for the office to open to access your account information.

## **CHECKS**

Willfully writing a check without sufficient funds in your account to honor it is a crime in the State of Indiana. It is our practice to give customers an opportunity to make the check good at our office **before** we contact the County Prosecutor for legal action.

If it is possible to contact you by phone, we do so; otherwise, you

will receive written correspondence from our office. You will then be given the opportunity to pick up a copy of the check at our office and pay your debt in cash or by money order. An additional service fee is also billed to you at this time. We will only accept cash or a money order in payment of your bill when this has occurred.

Your service will be terminated and an additional service fee will be billed to you if the check is not satisfied within the time specified.

Be sure to return your stub when mailing payment to us. We have bar code scanners and OCR readers that read your account information. This allows us to process your payment faster.

Our office does not accept third-party checks. The check must be drawn on your personal account, a cashier's check, or a money order. We also request that you place your account number on your check and include your payment stub to process your payment accurately.

### **PAST DUE NOTICES**

The Valparaiso City Utilities does not mail out a separate past due notice. If the bill that you received has a blue background, your account is current.

If your bill has a red background, your account is past due and that bill serves as your past due notice **and** your current bill.

The Past due amount and the shut off date is clearly marked in addition to your current bill amount and the due date for the current charges.

If our service representative has to come out to your home to attempt collection of your past due account, you will be charged a **collection fee** whether you are disconnected or tagged for non-payment.

Any account that is on our non-payment list at the time we start non-payments on our designated shut off day is subject to paying a deposit.

Our regulations are in compliance with the State of Indiana laws for government utilities.

# **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

## **TRASH COLLECTION RATES**

All billing for trash service from Valparaiso Public Works will appear on your bill from Valparaiso City Utilities. For those residents inside city limits that do not have city water service, please contact Valparaiso City Utilities at 462-6174 to set up billing for trash service.

## **REGULAR RESIDENTIAL RATES**

The cost of weekly trash pickup for city residents is \$12 per month. This rate is for pickup of one trash can, either 48 or 96 gallons. Residential customers may not opt out of the trash fee.

In order to minimize the amount of waste that is land filled, the city encourages residents to take advantage of recycling service. Public Works provides 18-gallon blue bins or 96-gallon yellow-topped recycling totes for your convenience. Recycling pick-up is included in your weekly service at no additional charge.

## **BUSINESS RATES**

Businesses choosing to contract with the city for trash removal are billed \$15 per 96-gallon can per month and may have up to 3 cans. Businesses requiring more than 3 cans must contract with a private waste hauler.

## **LOW-INCOME RATES**

Those residents or households who qualify may apply for a reduced rate for trash pickup of \$6 per month. Qualifying residents are those who are at 150% of the federal poverty rate or below.

To request an application, please contact our office at 462-4612. You may also access a printable form online.

## **ADDITIONAL DISPOSAL RATES**

Unless it is a Holiday Cleanout Week, any items outside your can will require notification to our office at 462-4612 or online.

Residents who require extra pickup of trash may request this on their regular pickup day. Furniture, appliances, electronics or the

*occasional* extra bag will be collected free of charge. For those residents who consistently have overflow, we will provide a second trash can at an additional monthly rate of \$9 per can per month. (Two 96-gallon trash cans would incur a \$21 per month charge, three cans would be \$30, etc.)

Construction debris, carpet, and other household debris up to three cubic yards will also be picked up on your collection day. Debris must be contained and carpet must be rolled in sections; carpet rolls and lumber may be no longer than 5 feet. Extra pickups will be assessed by a manager, and any pickup of more than one cubic yard will incur a rate of \$15 per cubic yard. If you will be generating more than 3 cubic yards of trash, you must contact a private waste hauler and arrange for roll-off/dumpster service. The city does not provide dumpsters at this time.

Large pickups may require a roll-off container provided by a private waste hauler. Always call us at 462-4612 before setting out debris from a large demolition project.

## **HOLIDAYS**

The Department of Public Works observes only the following holidays: New Year's Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving and Christmas. On all observed holidays the Public Works Department will be closed and scheduled pickups will be delayed one day.

## **BRUSH AND WASTE**

The City of Valparaiso provides curbside collection of residential leaves, brush, and yard waste. This separate collection diverts biodegradable material from the landfill, reducing landfill costs and ultimately providing beneficial organic garden material. The brush and yard waste is processed at the Valparaiso Compost Site for mulch and compost that is made available to residents.

Large amounts or heavy items like tree stumps will be picked up by a grapple truck. Place items in area with no obstacles or overhead wires. Contact us at 219-462-4612 if you have items requiring the grapple truck.

Never place grass clippings in your garbage or recycling containers. Use a mulching mower, or spread grass clippings underneath your

shrubs. This replaces moisture and nutrients in your soil. For Valparaiso residents who still wish to bag, grass clippings may be brought to Valparaiso Public Works, 406 Don Hovey Drive, Monday - Friday, 7:00 am - 4:00 pm and Saturday 7:00 am - 3:00 pm CT.

For Porter County residents that do not have city garbage service, grass clippings may be taken to the County's Boone Grove compost site only. For hours and directions, call 465-3694 or visit their website.

### **GUIDELINES FOR LEAF PICKUP**

Fall leaf collection will be scheduled for the same day as trash and recycling pick-up for all areas in the city.

Leave your leaves at the curb (not in the street) by 7:00 am CT on pickup day. In the event that we do not complete a route on your scheduled day, we will continue the following workday. Fall leaf season is the only time leaves may be left loose at the curb.

Leaves should be the only thing in the pile – no sticks, bricks, boards, or other items. If you wish to bag your leaves, please use biodegradable bags only. We do not service alleys for leaf pick-up with the vacuums. If you wish to have leaves picked up in an alley, they must be bagged in biodegradable bags, and they will be collected by brush trucks.

### **WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL THOSE LEAVES?**

Leaves picked up by Public Works are taken to the city-owned, state-sanctioned composting facility located at 2150 W. Lincolnway. This compost is available to city residents.

### **MULCH AND COMPOST**

The city of Valparaiso works in conjunction with Porter County Recycling and Waste Reduction District to produce compost and mulch from the leaves, brush and logs collected by Public Works. These materials are taken to the Compost Site, where along with yard debris from Porter County residents, it is processed into mulch and compost. Diverting these materials saves landfill costs, as well as providing valuable landscape material to residents.

### **HOW TO GET MULCH AND COMPOST**

Always verify the availability of mulch and compost first by calling

Public Works at 462-4612. Self-Loading for any Porter County resident is free at the Compost Site (2150 W. Lincolnway) or at Valparaiso Public Works (406 Don Hovey Drive) during regular business hours.

Loading is available at 406 Don Hovey Drive only, for any Porter County resident/business for the following rates:

- \$10 per cubic yard - Loaded, residential

- \$15 per cubic yard - Loaded, businesses

Delivery is available to city residents/businesses inside the city's trash service area only for the following rates:

- \$15 per cubic yard - Delivered, residential

- \$20 per cubic yard - Delivered, businesses

Minimum order for delivery is two yards.

Brush is picked up on a continuous rotation throughout the city. The varying amounts of brush at any given time make it impossible to maintain a set schedule. Please set out brush and our brush crews will collect it the next time they are in your neighborhood. There is no need to request a pickup. Once all streets in a neighborhood have been collected, we move on to the next and can not come back for special pickups.

During heavy seasons (spring, after storms, leaf season, etc.) it can take two weeks or more for us to collect brush from all routes. We appreciate your patience during these times.

Residents also have the option to drop off brush at the Site (2150 W Lincolnway) during regular hours.

**For Porter County residents** that do not have city garbage service, grass clippings may be taken to the County's Boone Grove compost site only. For hours and directions, call 465-3694.

### **SNOW REMOVAL**

Road salt is used judiciously and spread primarily at intersections, railroad crossings, hills, curves, bridges and in school zones.

Please understand that our plows cannot keep snow out of resident's driveways. Snow from the roadway is pushed from the center

to the edges. It is the homeowner's responsibility to clear the snow from the end of his or her driveway, as well as in front of the mail



box. **The snow should not be placed back in the street.**

- City Code prohibits property owners to place snow from their property in the street. (City Ordinance 72.53)
- City Code prohibits parking on the street when snow is in excess of two inches until streets have been cleared. (City Ordinance 72.04)

While snow is still falling, our plows will plow the centers of roadways allowing traffic to pass. When snowfall lets up, crews will return to plow the routes, getting as close to the curb as possible. To clear all lanes and parking areas in the roadway and allowing access to mailboxes. During the night (8:00 pm - 4:00 am CT), plow crews concentrate on main arterials. After 4:00 am CT, subdivisions will be cleared to allow residents to get to work and school.

#### **MAILBOX DAMAGE**

If you believe your mailbox is damaged by a city plow please see our policy on Mailbox Damage on our website:  
<http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/index.aspx?NID=1076>

#### **SOD/LANDSCAPE DAMAGE**

Plow damage to the sod in the right of way is one of the unavoidable side effects of clearing the streets. In the Spring when the ground has thawed, our plow drivers inspect their routes, replacing rolled sod, filling with topsoil, and planting grass seed wherever warranted. Homeowners wishing to stake their curb line are welcome to do so.

Residents who place landscaping (shrubs, stones, and plantings other than sod) or irrigation systems in the city right of way assume any liability for damage.



Drinking Water



Protection  
Area

