

## LANDLORD INFORMATION



# JEFFERSON UTILITIES

PEOPLE YOU KNOW, SERVICE YOU TRUST

*Proudly Service Jefferson and Surrounding Areas Since 1901*



CONTACT US

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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JEFFERSONUTILITIES.COM

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## Property Owners Responsible for Tenant Utility Bills

Jefferson Utilities (JU) will use tax roll to collect delinquent utility bills. This is different than a privately owned utility, such as WE Energies. Jefferson Utilities is owned by the City of Jefferson, which makes us a municipal utility. Wisconsin Statute § 66.0809 allows municipal utilities to place delinquencies on the tax roll. If your tenant is behind on their payments, you will receive a landlord letter in the mail informing you of their past due balance. **Please watch these balances carefully. If your tenant does not make payment, you will be responsible for the balance.** It is very important that we have your up to date contact information on file. If something changes, (address, phone number, ownership etc.) make sure to contact us right away.

On October 1st of each year, all past due balances are eligible to be sent to the tax roll. Any remaining past due balance as of November 1st, will be assessed a 10% late penalty. If payment is still not made by November 15th, the balance is transferred to the tax roll.

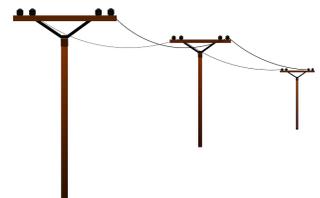


If your tenant's delinquent utility bill is paid by you during the tax roll process, you are able to apply for a lien against their assets with the Jefferson County Clerk of Courts. This information will be sent to you with your notice of intent to transfer to the tax roll each year.

## Tips to Keep Tenant's Delinquent Utilities off of Tax Roll

There are a some things you can do as a landlord to help reduce the number of delinquencies placed on your tax bill.

- ◇ **Write it in the lease.** Some landlords have it written in their lease that a tenant must stay current with their utility bills, or an eviction notice will be issued. This is highly effective.
- ◇ **Place utilities in your name.** Increase your monthly rent to cover utilities and place the bill in your name. This ensures you are not held liable for a tenant's delinquencies.
- ◇ **Keep in contact with tenants.** Landlords that stay on top of their tenants' delinquencies have more success getting tenants to pay their balances. Do not let the balances get too high before making contact.
- ◇ **Stay in contact with the utility.** Contact our office to verify that your tenant is following up as you have discussed with them.





### Did you know?

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin regulates the operations of utilities. They enforce the laws utilities must abide by per state statute. You can contact them by phone or visit them on the web.

Public Service  
Commission of WI

General toll-free:  
(888) 816-3831

<http://psc.wi.gov/>

## What is JU doing to collect unpaid balances from tenants?

We do what we can, within the realm of the law, to collect delinquencies directly from tenants. Here are our practices:

◇ **Disconnect notices are issued two days after a bill has gone delinquent.** If payment is not made, or a deferred payment arrangement signed, the tenant's electricity is disconnected.

◇ **Enacting tariffs.** We have approved language in our tariffs that make ten-

ants ineligible for a deferred payment arrangement if they (1) have a balance more than 80 days past due, which accrued during the winter moratorium, (2) had a balance placed on a tax bill within the last two years, or (3) have defaulted on a prior arrangement within the last 12 months.

◇ **Disconnecting current accounts for past due balances.** If a customer moves from one property to another within our

service territory, we disconnect the current property for the previous address' past due balance.

◇ **Submitting to State Debt Collection (SDC).** We use the Department of Revenue to attempt to collect past due balances on **finaled accounts**. There are stipulations to this process and cannot be used for all delinquencies. **If collection is unsuccessful through SDC, the balance will transferred to the tax roll.**

## Winter Moratorium - November 1 thru April 15

A utility cannot disconnect electricity, if it is used for heating, for non-payment of bills during the winter moratorium. It is during this time when a customer's balance begins to increase. Each month, we continue to send a reminder notice to customers for unpaid balances to encourage payment.

## Heat Advisories and Public Safety

If the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory, utilities are unable to disconnect electricity, regardless if we have given proper notice. If this occurs, we will notice our customers and advise that the disconnection will take place at a later time.

**Please be aware that the Public Service Commission advises utilities to err on the side of public safety when determining whether or not to disconnect. We may decide not to move forward with disconnections if we feel it could be hazardous to human health.** For example, in 2019 there was a snow storm in the month of October. While we were allowed to disconnect services, we determined it was not in the best interest of human health, and did not move forward with the scheduled disconnections.

## Joint Metering—Water and Electric Meters



Per Wisconsin Statutes § 196.643, if one meter serves more than one unit, the bill must be placed in the landlord's name. This most often is the case with duplexes and water meters. For example, if there is only one water meter for your property, the water usage must be paid for by yourself. If you would like your tenants to pay for their own water, you will need to contact a plumber to have the plumbing split. Your plumber will work with our water department to have an additional water meter installed.

## Applying for Service/Moving Out

JU has a written application for service. We require the application to be submitted in person with a current photo ID. If a customer is a tenant, the landlord must also sign the application. We advise that you have the tenant fill out this application at the same time as you have them sign your lease. The purpose of your signature is to make sure you are aware of who is placing service in their name. **The landlord cannot tell the utility to not allow service if it is not in your tenant's name.** If you do not sign the application, the utility can still move forward with placing service in the name of the applicant. If the application is submitted without your signature, we will attempt to contact you via phone.



It is the responsibility of the occupant to inform the utility if they are moving out. If a customer fails to contact the utility, they will be responsible for bills that accrued from their move out date until the utility was notified. Please work with your tenant to make sure you or they have contacted our office. **Once a customer informs us they are moving out, we have to cease billing, even if your lease indicates they are responsible until a future date.**

Before removing service from a customer's name, we will require an in home visit to view the water meter, normally located in the basement. Someone at least 18 years of age must be present.

## Disconnections

Outside of the winter moratorium, we issue 10-day disconnection notices to tenants that are past due one month and owners that are past due two months. If after 10 days, payment is not made or a deferred payment arrangement is not made, we will issue a 24/48 hour disconnection notice by calling the customer or placing a tag on their door. This notifies the customer when the disconnection will occur. For ease of scheduling and notifications, all 10-day notices are due on Mondays, 24/48 hour notices are given on Tuesdays and disconnections occur on Thursdays. *(In the event of a holiday, this schedule may be altered).* **It is not our practice to notify landlords if their tenant has been disconnected, unless you have requested such contact from our office.**

Services will be restored once the customer has made payment or has set up a deferred payment arrangement (if they are eligible).

JU crews do not reconnect services after hours, weekends or holidays, unless there is an emergency. Reconnections take place between 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday. **Please note, that we may decide to reconnect services without payment or a deferred payment arrangement if there is a safety/medical concern within the home that would require electricity. In this instance, the customer is given a 21-day extension to make payment.**

If we are ever unsure about the occupancy of a dwelling, we may require someone be present when electricity is restored. This is to prevent a fire that could start from the stove being left on etc.

**JU cannot disconnect a residence per the request of a landlord if the dwelling is occupied. We must follow the laws in relation to when we are able to disconnect a premise.**

## Utilities Commission

Jefferson Utilities is overseen by the City of Jefferson Utilities Commission. The commission is made up of the Mayor, two alderpersons from the City of Jefferson Common Council and four citizens. The Mayor appoints members to the commission for four year terms. In addition, the City Administrator serves as an ex-officio member.





## VISIT OUR WEBSITE!

[www.jeffersonutilities.com](http://www.jeffersonutilities.com)

On our website, customers can...

- ◇ Enroll in Automatic Bill Pay
- ◇ Pay Their Bill
- ◇ Remove Service from Their Name
- ◇ Report a Street Light Outage
- ◇ Change Their Mailing Address



### WISCONSIN DEPT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection publishes a guide for tenants and landlords with commonly asked questions.

You can direct questions to the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128.

Please visit <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Publications/LandlordTenant-Guide.aspx> for more information.

## What is a Deferred Payment Arrangement (DPA)?

JU is required to offer eligible customers a deferred payment arrangement or DPA. This allows the customer to pay their past due balance in installments (three or more) over time without being disconnected. The customer must make each month's payment as well as their current month's bill to stay current. If either of the two payments are missed or not paid in full, the DPA is defaulted and the entire past due balance must be paid to avoid disconnection. In order to set up a DPA, the customer must pay at least 50% of the past due balance as a down payment. JU is lenient on how the additional payments are determined, as long as the balance is paid off within 12 months.

## What is a budget billing?

To help customers plan their monthly expenses, we offer budget billing. A customer's annual usage is broken out in 12 month payments. Rather than paying higher bills in the summer and winter months, the customer pays the same amount through each season, avoiding the seasonal highs and lows. This program is only available to customers that have an up to date account and have shown at least six months of consistent on time payments. If your tenant is enrolled in this program, you will continue to receive a landlord letter each month showing you their balance. The notice will indicate they are on the budget program with a Y in the Budget column. **We will not notify you if they are removed from the program, so please watch this notation each month.**



## What is a landlord letter?

A landlord letter is a monthly notice sent to you informing you that your tenant is past due. It will also inform you if the property is disconnected, if the customer has a current DPA or if they are enrolled in the budget billing program. Please make sure we have your current information on file to ensure you are receiving your landlord letters. **If no past due balance is owed, a landlord letter will not be sent to you.**

## Who do I contact if I have questions about JU's practices?

We encourage you to reach out to our office with any questions you may have. If you would like to discuss any practice mentioned in this flyer, please reach out to Office Manager Shannon Statz via phone at (920) 674-7711 or via email at [sstatz@wppienergy.org](mailto:sstatz@wppienergy.org).

In addition to reaching out to our staff, you can also contact the Public Service Commission at (888) 816-3831 or you can contact any of our Utilities Commission members. Names of the members are listed on our website, but phone numbers are not. Staff can provide their contact numbers upon request.

## Customer Privacy Law

The State of Wisconsin has a customer privacy law in relation to utility bills (Acts 25 and 47 and § 196.137). This means that only the name of the person on the account has access to the record. There is an exemption for a landlord. This allows the landlord to be made aware of past due balances. Not all information is available to be shared, such as forwarding address, birth date and social security number.