



# Press Release

City of Detroit • Mike Duggan, Mayor

**FOR RELEASE:**

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Curtrise Garner (313) 701-2147

Gregory Eno (313) 573-0775

## **Payment plans and assistance programs reduce number of DWSD customers facing water shut off by 50%**

The number of Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) residential customers facing potential water shut off is less than half what it was at this time last year, said Deputy DWSD Director Darryl Latimer.

Last year at this time more than 40,000 residential accounts met the criteria and received shut off notices, although a little more than 10 percent (4,531) actually had their water shut off for any period of time. The remaining accounts were abandoned homes and customers who either became current on their bills or entered payment plans.

To be at risk of having their water service disconnected, customers must be behind more than \$150 on their bill AND at least 61 days past due. Today, fewer than 20,000 are in shut off status, said Latimer, who credited DWSD's payment plans for the improvements.

More than 30,000 Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD) residential customers behind on their monthly bills are currently enrolled in payment plans, preventing the risk of their water being shut off for nonpayment, Latimer said. That number is more than twice what it was last year at this time when approximately 12,000 customers were in payment plans.

"We have made significant progress since this time last year and we continue to work very closely with our customers to help them keep their water on," he said.

Since DWSD began posting door hangers two weeks ago informing the account holder they are in shut off status, 2,882 accounts have received the notices. During the last 10 days 1,971 residents came into a

customer service center within 10 days and either paid in full or entered into a payment plan and stopped the shut-off process; 794 of those were in direct response to the door hanger notice.

As of today, DWSD expects that contractors will conduct 1,000 shut offs this week, however, that number is likely to drop as more account holders enter into payment plans.

Typically, within 24 hours after a shut off, 60 percent of the affected customers paid their accounts in full or entered into a payment plan, and 40 percent of the remaining had their service restored within 48 hours. Today, fewer than 21,000 are in shut-off status, said Latimer.

“People are responding to the 10-day notices,” said Latimer. “Our customer care hours are very flexible and we have three locations to accommodate everyone. It’s easy to get into a payment plan and there is more assistance available for low-income residents than ever before.”

The Detroit Water Fund recently modified its plan and now will pay 50 percent of all past due amounts on arrearages up to \$2,000 for qualifying low income residents. It also will pay 25 percent toward future water bills for 12 months. In addition, residents that default on their payment plans can re-enter immediately without penalty. The average arrearage for a Detroit resident is \$755 and the average monthly water is \$75.

The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) also announced recently that it has received a \$1 million donation to boost its efforts to assist many Detroit water customers with their bills.

To get into a payment plan, residents should visit one of the DWSD Customer Care offices. The locations are:

Downtown Customer Service Center - Water Board Building  
735 Randolph Street, First Floor (enter off Bates Street)  
Monday through Saturday 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., (Closed Saturday, August 2, 2014)

Eastside Customer Service Center  
13303 E. McNichols (1 1/2 blocks west of Gratiot)  
Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Westside Customer Service Center  
15600 Grand River (1 block west of Greenfield)  
Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

The following organizations provide financial assistance to many Detroit water customers, based on their own qualifying criteria.

**Wayne Metro Community Action Agency**

Customers whose arrearage is more than \$2,000 can apply for funds from Wayne Metro Community Action Agency by calling (313) 388-9799 to help pay down their balance so they can qualify for the Detroit Water Fund program.

**The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW)**

THAW will provide water bill assistance. For more information, please contact THAW at (800) 866-THAW.

**Department of Human Services (DHS)**

Customers in need of assistance with their water bills can also visit their Department of Human Services local District Office.

**Water Access Volunteer Effort**

The Water Access Volunteer Effort (WAVE) pays up to \$500. Call (313) 267-8000 for assistance.

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