



# Guide to Your Chicago Water Bill

FACT SHEET

August 2022

## Reading Your Water Bill

### What is a metered or unmetered account?

In Chicago, your home may not have a water meter. Homes with a meter are billed based on the number of gallons used per billing cycle. Other homes are charged based on an assessment from the City Department of Water Management. The formula considers building size, lot size and number of water fixtures.

### How do I know how much water I'm using?

The back of your bill will have a detailed reading of your charges. For metered accounts, you will see a section called "Your Meter Reading Details." It shows the number of gallons of water for which you were billed. For unmetered properties, you will see "Your NonMetered Water Account Details." That breaks down the estimated amount of water used by how the property was assessed by the Department of Water Management. A 2022 report by the nonprofit Elevate shows Chicago residents without a meter pay significantly more for their water bill than customers with meters.

### How do I know if I have a water leak?

If your bill changes significantly from one month to the next, call the City at 311 to report a potential leak. Note: you are responsible for repairing water leaks between your home and the City's water main.

### How can I get a meter installed?

Register for the waitlist at [MeterSave.org](https://meter-save.org) or call 312-744-4H2O. You may have to replace your water service line at your expense. The Equity Lead Service Line program can cover the replacement costs for qualifying residents. If you don't qualify, it doesn't hurt to ask if the City can waive some permit fees.

### What if I'm concerned about lead in my water?

The City offers free water lead testing kits at [311.Chicago.gov](https://311.chicago.gov).

### What are some typical charges on my bill?

**Sewer charges** are based on how much water is used. In Chicago, this is 100% of water usage.

**Garbage fees** are a standard charge based on size or the number of dwelling units in a building.

**The Water-Sewer tax** is based on water use for metered and estimated usage for unmetered properties.

## Financial Assistance

### What if I can't afford my water bill?

The City of Chicago's Utility Billing Relief program offers qualifying customers reductions for water and sewer charges. Also, if you are struggling, keep the lines of communication open with the City: Call the water department to discuss payment options and make at least a partial payment on your water bill each month. In Chicago, it's now illegal to shutoff residential water for nonpayment.

### Am I eligible for the Utility Billing Relief program?

Applicants must own and reside in the property (single family unit or duplex), meet income eligibility for LIHEAP (generally 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and provide forms of identification. For more details, visit the [Utility Billing Relief website](https://www.utilitybillingrelief.org) or call (312) 744-4426.

### Is there a Cook County program to help with my bill?

The Cook County Low-income Household Water Assistance Program (LIWAP) provides a one-time grant of up to \$1,500 to prevent water shutoffs and to pay past-due bills and fees. For more details on applying, call 1-800-571-2332 or visit [www.ceda.org](https://www.ceda.org).

### Does the state offer any assistance with water bills?

The Illinois Low Income Household Water Assistance Program is a limited, one-time assistance program for consumers facing water disconnection or with a past due water and sewer bill of more than \$250. This funding is available through August 31, 2023. You can apply through your local **Community Action Agency**.

### Are there any senior discounts?

Seniors are exempt from paying the sewer fee, the water-sewer tax and penalties. There's also a 50 percent senior garbage fee discount. Homeowners 65 years or older can apply through the **City Finance Department**.

## Customer Assistance

### How do I dispute my water bill?

Call the City at 312-744-4426 or email [utilitybill@cityofchicago.org](mailto:utilitybill@cityofchicago.org). Make sure you have documentation to back up your claim, including billing history or any other records from the water department.