

FIRGROVE MUTUAL WATER COMPANY

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First and foremost, we hope that you and your families have stayed healthy and safe through this most unusual time. Beyond the health aspects of this pandemic, all individuals, families, and businesses have been impacted. These impacts have been recognized by state and local governments, and providers of essential services, including Firgrove Mutual Water Company (Firgrove) as a public water supplier.

On February 29th, Governor Inslee proclaimed a State of Emergency for all counties throughout the State. To help ensure that water service could be maintained and mitigate the risk to the Company's essential workers, the physical office was closed to the public on March 18th. Notice of this action was provided to customers via Firgrove's website. While direct, at the counter payments cannot be received, payments can still be made via regular mail, direct bank ACH payments, and drop box located on the south side of Firgrove's conservation garden.

To further help address the impacts of the pandemic, on March 18th, Governor Inslee issued proclamation 20-23 which among other actions, directed all utilities in the State to: 1) avoid disconnection of services due to non-payment during the statewide emergency declaration, 2) waive late fees, 3) use payment plans to fulfill customer outstanding balances, 4) employ internal employee safety measures, and 5) close facilities to the public. This proclamation has now been extended five times and extends through July 28th, subject to further extensions. Firgrove had already ceased disconnections and applying late fees prior to proclamation 20-23 in acknowledgement of the issues created by the coronavirus.

To address customer concerns about the status of their water service, we have been contacting customers who may be behind on their payments via courtesy letters and phone calls. Through these communications, we have provided account status updates, while also noting that disconnection will not occur and late fees will not be assessed. This article provides preliminary information on a **Customer Assistance Program** Firgrove is developing. It is anticipated this program will be initiated in August or after the final waiver date the Governor designates in a proclamation, whichever occurs later, and will incorporate deferred payment arrangements.

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM — DEFERRED PAYMENT PROGRAM

This program offers customers a DEFERRED PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT option.

A deferred payment program arrangement will be extended to customers for the payment of delinquent accounts where the customer attests to the temporary inability to make full payment due to COVID-19 related issues.

This Deferred Payment Program grants customers up to **six months of payment deferral** (three bi-monthly billing cycles) beginning March 18th without late or reconnection fees imposed on outstanding balances and suspension of disconnection of water services. After the **six month deferral**, customers would then be allowed to request up to a **twelve-month payment arrangement** to spread the costs of outstanding bills over that period, based on amount of payments outstanding.

Customers will be required to complete a **Deferred Payment Arrangement Request Application**. Customers must attest that, due to COVID-19-related issues, the customer is unable to timely pay his/her/their utility bill.

On a case-by-case basis and at customer request, deferred payment arrangements may be extended in conjunction with review of the documented circumstances, a satisfactory payment history, and approval by Finance Director or General Manager.

If you believe you will need to participate in this program, please contact our office at 253-845-1542.