



## City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities COVID-19 Customer Service FAQs

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities (DPU) & Richmond Gas Works is committed to the safety of all during **COVID-19**. The City of Richmond government is under a Phase 3 operating plan. Following CDC-recommended guidelines, DPU continues to focus on the health and protection of our customers as well as that of our technicians. DPU's services have expanded beyond emergencies, new consumer connections and restoration of water and gas services. We are providing additional support for billing inquiries and other account concerns. However, *the moratorium on service disconnections for non-payment will continue*. More information is detailed below.

We thank you for the opportunity to be of service to you and appreciate your continued patience as we respond to the evolving impacts of COVID-19. Our Customer Care Call Center message (804-646-4646) reflects our current status and we invite you to visit our website [www.richmondgov.com/dpu](http://www.richmondgov.com/dpu) for general account information. Please reference the following FAQs to avoid high call volumes during our peak periods and better understand how we can assist during these challenging and uncertain times.

### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. I have a natural gas emergency. What should I do?**

If you have an emergency related to gas, or a gas leak, please leave immediately and go to an area where the odor of gas is no longer present and call 911.

**2. I have a non-natural gas related utility emergency. What should I do?**

If you have an emergency related to water, sewer or carbon monoxide please call 646-4646 and select Option 1 IMMEDIATELY.

**3. I don't have a utility emergency. Can I still speak to a representative about my account?**

To avoid long wait times, we encourage customers to visit [www.richmondgov.com/dpu](http://www.richmondgov.com/dpu) for account information or email [dpucustserv@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpucustserv@richmondgov.com) with a detailed account inquiry. Please allow up to three (3) business days for us to research your inquiry and provide a written response. The phone lines at (804) 646-4646 are open, however high call volume is expected.

**4. Should I dial 311 if I'm unable to reach your office?**

No. The 311 Citizen Service and Response Call Center is unable to respond to DPU billing, payment, connection and disconnection requests. However, you may report stormwater, sewer and streetlight issues by calling 3-1-1 or using [www.rva311.com](http://www.rva311.com).

**5. How can I pay my bill?**

Due to social distancing guidelines, we encourage customers to use one of the options listed below.

- a. **One-time payment:** [CLICK HERE TO PAY WITH KUBRA EZ-PAY](#). Have your account number and zip code available.
- b. **Self-Service:** Call (804) 646-4646 and follow the prompts.
- c. **Check or money order:** Mail your payment using the enclosed envelope with your bill.

**OUR MAILING ADDRESS HAS CHANGED!** Please update all records to ensure receipt and proper credit of your utility payments. This includes automatic bill payment services and personally addressed payments. New address: **City of Richmond Utilities PO Box 71210 Charlotte, NC 28272-1210**

- d. **City Hall Dropbox:** Located on the 10<sup>th</sup> Street side. Please do not deposit cash. Checks and money orders only.
- e. **In person:** Visit our payment center at City Hall (900 E. Broad Street).  
**Please note that in support of continued social distancing guidelines, visitors are required to sign in at the guard's desk and wear a mask or face covering while conducting business at this location. You must enter the building on the 9<sup>th</sup> Street side.**

**6. Is my utility payment still due during COVID-19?**

Yes. DPU is continuing to bill for regular monthly usage. We encourage all customers that are able, to continue to make utility payments as bills are received. However, we are offering flexible payment terms of up to 12 months, regardless of your balance, upon request. Based upon your payment history the normally required down payment can be waived. Please note that payment term amounts must be paid in full each month along with your current monthly charges. *See #12 for additional resources.* Call us today at (804) 646-4646 to discuss your options.

**7. If payment for my current charges is received after the due date, will I receive a late fee?**

DPU is here to support you during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you receive a late fee associated with your current charges, please contact us at (804) 646-4646 for assistance.

**8. Will my services be disconnected if I am unable to pay my bill on the due date?**

No. Public health and safety remains a priority and we will continue to honor the moratorium that was declared on March 13 to suspend disconnections due to COVID-19. DPU remains committed to helping our customers through this time. If you have specific questions, call us at (804) 646-4646. Agents are standing by to assist Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

**9. What company do you use for collections? How can I reach them?**

Ballato Law Firm handles collections for DPU. Their agents are available Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm to address your account needs. You can dial them directly at (804) 433-1060 or visit their website [www.ballatolaw.com](http://www.ballatolaw.com) to send an email or submit a payment using a credit or debit card.

**10. My services were restored because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Will I lose my service immediately after COVID-19?**

If your services were restored due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage you to contact us promptly at (804) 646-4646. Agents are standing by to assist you.

**11. What type of notification will I receive prior to disconnection after COVID-19?**

DPU continues to honor the moratorium declared on March 13 to suspend disconnections until further notice. At the end of the state of emergency for COVID-19, DPU will resume normal collection activity. If your services are scheduled for disconnection, you will be notified through your monthly bill. To avoid interruption, we encourage you to contact us to establish payment terms of up to 12 months.

**12. What resources are available to assist customers experiencing financial difficulties?**

We understand the continued financial uncertainty of customers during this time and are working to assist customers through post-pandemic impacts. We continue to honor the moratorium suspending disconnections but encourage customers to explore the following assistance programs:

- **MetroCare Water Program** – This water bill payment assistance program provides funds to eligible families and individuals who are having difficulty paying their primary water bills due to financial concerns. There is an application process and ratepayers can receive up to \$500 per applicant if approved. For more information, call (804) 646-4646.
- **MetroCare Heat Program** – This heating bill payment assistance program provides funds to eligible families and individuals who are having trouble paying their primary heating bills due to a financial difficulty or other special hardship. The program period began Dec. 15. Residents within Richmond

Gas Works' service territory may apply for funds through MetroCare. For more information, call (804) 646-4646.

- **SeniorCare Program** – This program caters to the unique needs of seniors 65 years of age and older in the Richmond metropolitan community. Senior customers can sign up for this program and take advantage of Winter Service Assurance, no late fees, security deposit waiver program, annual weatherization kit giveaways and third party notification. For more information, call (804) 646-4646.
- **NEW: Universal Payment Arrangement** – This program assists customers with managing their finances through the COVID-19 pandemic and proactively creates payment terms for residential customers more than 90 days in arrears with the exclusion of ELDERLY coded accounts and accounts currently on a BUDGET plan. The mass creation of the universal payment arrangement, scheduled to start on June 1, 2020, will allow customers to pay the arrears in 6 or 12 monthly installments plus current charges as billed. Eligible customers are notified via their monthly bill.

**13. For recordkeeping purposes, I submitted my payment with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, with a request for a copy of the receipt to be returned. When can I expect to receive the receipt?**

Your next bill will show payments applied against balance owed. If you have additional questions, feel free to follow up via email at [dpucustserv@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpucustserv@richmondgov.com) or call (804) 646-4646.

**14. I am moving to a new location and need a final bill. What should I do?**

Please email your details to [dpucustserv@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpucustserv@richmondgov.com). The billing department will work to ensure that your final meter reading (from the move-out location) along with your start meter reading (for the move-in location) is processed for billing purposes. Please allow up to one billing cycle for your account to be finalized or adjusted as needed.

**15. My account was billing on actual meter readings prior to the City closing. I am now receiving a bill based on estimated usage. Why is this happening?**

When an actual meter read is not available for billing purposes, DPU will estimate the account based on historical usage. We will diligently work to resolve any account issues. If you have a question or concern, please email us at [dpucustserv@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpucustserv@richmondgov.com) with your detailed request.

**16. I don't use my natural gas service during the summer months. Can I request DPU turn it off?**

Due to the ongoing events of COVID-19, DPU is unable to honor requests for seasonal turn-offs until further notice. We thank you for your patience.

**17. I have an escalated account issue requiring immediate attention. How can I reach someone?**

If you need to speak with someone regarding an escalated issue, please send us an email at [dpucustserv@richmondgov.com](mailto:dpucustserv@richmondgov.com). Please provide a brief description of your request and indicate that you would like to speak with a supervisor. Please allow up to two (2) business days for a supervisor to contact you.

**18. Why can't DPU provide free water to its residents?**

As this pandemic emphasizes, clean and safe water is one of the most valuable resources in the protection of public health and safety. It is also one often taken for granted. The City's sole source of drinking water is the James River. Water has to be pulled from the river and then treated, stored, distributed, and routed to homes and businesses. This is no small feat and requires a significant amount of capital and human resources, not to mention the added burden an aging infrastructure places on a utility. Rates paid by consumers help to ensure the water you receive at the tap is clean and safe and there when you need it.