

March 16, 2020

Hon. Marybel Batjer, President
Hon. Liane M. Randolph, Commissioner
Hon. Martha Guzman Aceves, Commissioner
Hon. Clifford Rechtschaffen, Commissioner
Hon. Genevieve Shiroma, Commissioner
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Maintenance of Residential Service during the Current Public Health Crisis

Dear President Batjer and Commissioners:

On behalf of the California Water Association (CWA), I wish to inform you that all of the Class A Companies including California-American Water Company, California Water Service Company, Golden State Water Company, Great Oaks Water Company, Liberty Utilities (Apple Valley Ranchos Water) Corp., Liberty Utilities (Park Water) Corp., San Gabriel Valley Water Company, San Jose Water Company, and Suburban Water Systems and all of the Class B Companies including Alisal (Alco) Water Company, Bakman Water Company, East Pasadena Water Company and Del Oro Water Company have determined in response to the public health crisis presented by the COVID-19 corona virus pandemic that, effective immediately and until further notice, residential water service provided by each of those companies will not be terminated for nonpayment of customer bills due to financial difficulty resulting from the current crisis. To the extent these CWA member companies have recently terminated water service to residential customers who are presently without service, the companies intend, in consideration of the present crisis, to restore service without regard to nonpayment of outstanding charges.

Customers will still be responsible for paying their water bills for service rendered. Once the current public health crisis has passed, normal procedures will be restored, including those for addressing nonpayment of accrued amounts owed for past service.

A more detailed description of the actions of each of the Class A water utilities is presented in the attached notice. Many of CWA's Class C and D water utility members also have suspended service terminations for nonpayment of bills and CWA is actively encouraging all regulated water utilities in California to adopt that policy for the duration of the present crisis.

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In addition, CWA has instituted weekly calls with participation by our board of directors, our regulatory committee, and our safety, security and emergency management committee to discuss and share best practices for our member companies in managing their operations and policies during the ongoing corona virus crisis.

If you have any questions or concerns about this matter, please contact me or the regulatory representatives of any of the referenced water utilities.

Very truly yours,



Jennifer Capitolo

cc: Alice Stebbins, Executive Director, California Public Utilities Commission
Lucian Filler, Deputy Executive Director, Communications and Water Divisions
Bruce DeBerry, Program Manager, Water Division
Elizabeth Echols, Executive Director, Public Advocates Office
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Richard Smith, Program Manager, Water Branch, Public Advocates Office



SPOTLIGHT

A periodic series of emails that spotlight the work of CWA members and issues important to California's regulated water utilities.

Largest Regulated Water Utilities Halt Water Shutoffs During Coronavirus Crisis

California's largest regulated water utilities will not shut off service to residential customers who are unable to pay their bills because of the coronavirus health crisis.

The announcement was made by California Water Association (CWA) Executive Director Jennifer Capitolo in a letter sent to the Commissioners at the California Public Utilities Commissions (CPUC) on behalf of all the Class A Companies including California American Water Company, California Water Service Company, Golden State Water Company, Great Oaks Water Company, Liberty Utilities (Apple Valley Ranchos Water) Corp., Liberty Utilities (Park Water Corp.), San Gabriel Valley Water Company, San Jose Water Company, and Suburban Water Systems and all of the Class B Companies including Alisal (Alco) Water Company, Bakman Water Company, East Pasadena Water Company and Del Oro Water Company.

"Effective immediately and until further notice, residential water service provided by each of those companies will not be terminated for nonpayment of customer bills due to financial difficulty resulting from the current crisis," Capitolo writes. Furthermore, "To the extent these CWA member companies have recently terminated water service to residential customers who are presently without service, the companies intend, in consideration of the present crisis, to restore service without regard to nonpayment of outstanding charges."

In addition, many of CWA's smaller Class C and D water utility members also have suspended service terminations for nonpayment of bills. "CWA is actively encouraging all regulated water utilities in California to adopt that policy for the duration of the present crisis," she writes. Customers will still be responsible for paying their water bills during the crisis, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal procedures will be restored.

The letter was sent as a result of the growing coronavirus pandemic, which has forced the state to take unprecedented steps in order to slow transmission of the disease and limit oncoming burden to the state's health care system.

“CWA members clearly understand the critical role that providing reliable, clean water plays in protecting public health,” Capitolo said. “Providing this essential service while also keeping customers and employees safe continues to be their top priority.”

Additional examples of actions CWA members are taking include (*as of March 16, 2020 at 2 p.m.*):

- **California American Water** issued a press release placing a moratorium on discontinuing service shut offs for nonpayment at this time. Additionally, they will begin the restoration of service to previously shut-off customers.
- **California Water Service** has suspended water shutoffs for nonpayment amid the COVID-19 outbreak. The company also issued a statement assuring consumers of tap water safety, closed its customer service centers and eliminated all non-essential business air travel and conference participation.
- **Golden State Water Company** has suspended water shutoffs for nonpayment amid the COVID-19 outbreak. As of Tuesday, March 17th, all local customer service offices will be closed to the public. GSWC has also eliminated all non-essential business air travel and conference participation and continues to encourage customers to use online and phone communications. The 24-hour call center will continue to provide customer support services.
- **Great Oaks Water Company** closed its walk-in customer service to protect customers and employees and is accepting payments by telephone and through its website. If a customer is unable to pay a bill from Great Oaks due to COVID-19, the customer should contact Great Oaks’ Customer Service for assistance, including deferred or alternative payment plans, to avoid a service disconnection for nonpayment.
- **Liberty Utilities** has indicated that it will keep its customer service offices open at this time (subject to change) but encouraged online and phone transactions, advising customers that customer service representatives will be wearing gloves and practicing social distancing.
- **San Gabriel Valley Water Company** has suspended water shutoffs for nonpayment amid the COVID-19 outbreak. San Gabriel has also formed an internal emergency response task force to continually assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both its employees and customers and has issued a statement assuring consumers of tap water safety.
- **San Jose Water** closed their Customer Service Center and moved solely to online and phone communications to serve customers. Additionally, San Jose Water has suspended in-person customer visits at their residences.
- **Suburban Water** closed their Customer Service Center, is moving to online and phone communications, is waiving bill payment late fees and is offering assistance programs to customers experiencing financial hardship.

The California Water Association (CWA) represents the interests of approximately 90 regulated water utilities that provide reliable, high-quality drinking water utility services to 6 million people throughout California. CWA provides a forum for sharing best management practices, a means of promoting sound water policy to legislators and regulatory agencies, and opportunities for educating the public on the protection and efficient use of water resources. Additional information is available on-line at www.calwaterassn.com.