

WATER DEPARTMENT AND WATER REVENUE BUREAU COLLECTION TOOLKIT

The Water Department (PWD) and Water Revenue Bureau (WRB) have several tools at their disposal to collect delinquent utility service charges. The tools can be divided into two groups: “in personam” and “in rem” remedies. The choice by the City of one of any of the remedies does not preclude the right to resort to another remedy, because the City may use multiple remedies concurrently.

“IN PERSONAM”

These actions are taken “against the person,” so they are against PWD/WRB customers. This can mean the owner of the property *or* a tenant at the property who has a tenant account with WRB.

A. Bills and Collection Agencies

Once a water bill is sixty (60) days late, WRB forwards the delinquent account to a contracted collections agency, who holds onto the delinquent account for approximately 150 days. After the 150 days has expired, the delinquent account will be forwarded to the collection agency for an additional 150 days. If the delinquency remains unresolved the account is then forwarded to the Law Department.

B. Lawsuits

The Law Department files Code Enforcement Complaints in the Municipal Court. The Complaint is based on distinct billing cycles, thus does not include the full balance due on the account. If the property is not owner occupied a fine is also requested.

If the delinquency is large enough, a Complaint will be filed in the Court of Common Pleas.

“IN REM”

These actions are taken “against the property,” so they are against the property that is receiving utility service.

A. Liens

The WRB files liens for outstanding balances twice a year, in January and in July. These liens are recorded by the courts and available for searching in Judgments and Lien Index Office in City Hall Room 262. Each time a lien is recorded the account is charged a \$10 lien fee.

B. Shut Off

Utility service may be shut off ten (10) days after a Customer is delinquent for two billing periods or when PWD/WRB are denied access to the water meter for two consecutive billing periods. Customers can avoid the shut off by bringing the account current or entering into a payment agreement. There are provisions to address low income customers and medical delays.

C. Sheriff Sale

The property may also be selected for Sheriff Sale based on the amount of the delinquency. During this process the property is placed on auction by the Sheriff and the proceeds are used to satisfy outstanding utility service charges, real estate taxes, and other City liens.