



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tacoma Public Utilities Announces \$1 Million Relief Fund

New Emergency Assistance Program Designed to Help Customers Struggling to Pay Bills During COVID-19 State of Emergency

TACOMA, Wash. – Today, in response to The City of Tacoma’s COVID-19 State of Emergency, Tacoma’s Public Utility Board approved the creation of a new Emergency Assistance Program for low-income customers, funded for up to \$1 million. The new program will support Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) customers whose incomes are within 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines, as established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Emergency Assistance Program will provide a utility credit of up to \$250 for eligible single-family households, usable toward TPU bills. The eligibility requirements for this new program will allow more TPU customers to qualify for bill pay assistance than under the existing [Bill Credit Assistance Plan](#) (BCAP).

“By making these funds available and expanding the eligibility guidelines of our bill assistance program, we can support significantly more households during this state of emergency,” said Karen Larkin, chair of the Public Utility Board. “We are proud to be part of this community, and it is crucial that we are there for our customers.”

Customers in need of assistance can apply by calling 253-502-8600 or online at MyTPU.org/COVID19.

“This is an uncertain situation for all of us. For many of our customers, the state of emergency as a result of COVID-19 presents a significant financial hardship,” said Jackie Flowers, director of Tacoma Public Utilities. “We are here to support those in need with the new Emergency Assistance Program and encourage customers to call us. We will continue to work with our customers on payment arrangements as long as assistance is needed.”

At the conclusion of Tacoma’s State of Emergency, the Emergency Assistance Program will continue while there are funds available and customers who need the program.

The newly created program is in addition to the multi-pronged effort TPU already has underway to ease the burden of COVID-19 on customers.

Tacoma Public Utilities’ COVID-19 response initiatives to date include:

- \$1 million available in bill assistance for low income customers (new)
- Payment plans may be extended to 12 weeks and late fees may be waived for residential and business customers
- New precautions have been put in place for dispatchers and field staff when visiting homes to curb the spread of the virus to both customers and employees
- Employees have been asked to telework if possible
- Large events have been postponed or canceled
- Additional sanitation efforts are underway at TPU facilities
- TPU's lobby will be closed to the public effective March 18

Existing measures

- Budget billing – making bills more predictable with a standard monthly bill amount based on the previous year's use
- Payment assistance programs – for seniors, disabled and income-eligible customers
- Offsite account options – online with MyAccount, by phone or PayBox locations throughout Tacoma

TPU will continue to monitor this rapidly changing situation and will implement new solutions as needs arise.

For more about TPU's' COVID-19 response, visit: www.MyTPU.org/COVID19

About Tacoma Public Utilities

Established in 1893, Tacoma Public Utilities is one of the oldest municipal utilities in the nation. Nearly 1,400 employees work in three divisions: Tacoma Power, Tacoma Water, and Tacoma Rail.

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