

Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD)

Lifeline Plan - FAQs



- **What's the difference between the Lifeline Plan and the Inclining Block Rate?**

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) Lifeline Plan is Detroit's first water affordability plan that provides a fixed bill each month based on your income eligibility in one of three tiers. The Inclining Block Rate is the water usage rate based on volume, with a higher rate for water usage above the 4,500 gallons because it puts more burden on the city's water system. Customers using less than 4,500 gallons pay a lower water usage rate per gallon.

\$18

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **at or below 135% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**

\$43

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **above 135% of FPL but at or below 150% of FPL**

\$56

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **above 150% of FPL but at or below 200% of FPL**

- **If income-eligible, when will I see the fixed rate and my past-due balance erased?**

Your residential water debt is wiped out when you are enrolled in the DWSD Lifeline Plan and will not be put back on your account in the future for any reason. However, you must make regular monthly payments at the fixed tier so you do not become subject to a service interruption. If you suffer a hardship that prevents you from making your fixed payment, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency will guide you through wraparound services to get you back on track.

- **How did DWSD determine the average household size of three people?**

According to the U.S. Census, the average household size for Detroit is 2.6 people. In terms of average household size for low-income households only, DWSD is open to reviewing that data and taking it into consideration. We will continue to study census data to compare census tracts, household population, and household income.

- **How do you know the average household uses 2,300-3,000 gallons?**

According to a review of residential water usage data in Detroit, 72% of households use less than 4,500 gallons per month. For the remaining 28%, DWSD and Wayne Metro will work with them to provide plumbing repairs and other resources to reduce their monthly water usage and help get their bill to be as low as possible.

- **What if I go over 4,500 gallons?**

If you are enrolled in the DWSD Lifeline Plan and your water usage for a specific month is more than 4,500 gallons, you will be charged for the water usage at the higher rate of \$4.492 per each additional CCF (748 gallons) under the new Inclining Block Rate. For example, a household that has income at or below 135% of the poverty level is enrolled in the Lifeline Plan tier one (\$18). If they use 6,000 gallons of water in one month, the bill will be \$38.06 instead of \$18.00 (which is still substantially less than the \$100 the bill would be if not enrolled in the Lifeline Plan).

- **Why are there three tiers to the Lifeline Plan?**

DWSD created a tiered approach based on recommendations from an affordability study which is posted on the city website at detroitmi.gov/water. The tiered approach, versus income-based for each individual household, is the most cost effective way to manage the pilot program.

- **Why not an income-based rate structure in Detroit?**

This **is** an income-based rate structure. We assess household income and place the customer in one of three tiers.

- **What does SNAP/FAP mean?**

SNAP and FAP are the federally-funded food assistance programs, which used to be known as food stamps. SNAP/FAP enrollment is at or below 135% of the federal poverty level, though you do not need to be enrolled in SNAP/FAP in order to be eligible for the DWSD Lifeline Plan as long as you meet the income guidelines and are responsible for the water bill in your household.

- **Will Wayne Metro help me enroll in SNAP/FAP?**

Yes. As part of their wrap-around services, Wayne Metro will help you enroll through the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) in SNAP/FAP, which will provide your household with added benefits. They will help customers enroll in other programs as well.

- **What does moderate income mean?**

The moderate income range is household income greater than 150% of Federal Poverty Level, but less than or equal to 200% of Federal Poverty Level. The capped payment for moderate-income customers (\$56) is based on the average of moderate household income in this range, per the water affordability study DWSD relied upon in crafting this pilot plan. For example, if your household has four people, annual income is \$56,400 or less and you are responsible for the water bill, you're eligible for one of the Lifeline Plan tiers.

- **What documents do I need to enroll in the Lifeline Plan?**

In order to start the enrollment process with Wayne Metro, you will need to provide the following:

- Photo ID — Detroit ID, State of Michigan ID or driver's license, federally-issued ID, or passport
- Social Security Card (required by federal programs)
- Current water bill
- Proof of most recent 30 days income
- Proof of income category eligibility (SNAP or FAP Food Assistance benefit letter)

- **How can I monitor my water usage so I don't go over 4,500 gallons?**
Register on the DWSD Customer Service Portal at csportal.detroitmi.gov to access your account, view and print your bill, see real-time water usage, and pay your bill. We will also alert you when you have used 3,000 gallons of water.
- **Will residential water shutoffs resume?**
The water shutoff moratorium will end on December 31, 2022. **No Detroit resident** will face a water shutoff if enrolled in the Detroit Lifeline Plan or the 10/30/50 Plan. DWSD will continue working with Wayne Metro and coalition partners to ensure it offers eligible Detroiters the help they need. And, DWSD will provide extensive outreach for all households at risk. The moratorium can no longer continue in its current form – the unintended consequence is those who can afford to pay their water bill are choosing not to pay and therefore DWSD has seen the bill collections fall by \$40 million in 2022 which is not sustainable.
- **How long is enrollment available?**
We will continue to enroll customers until all funds have been exhausted for the program year. The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIWHAP) funds must be used by September 2023. WRAP funds are replenished annually.
- **What is the long-term plan?**
The DWSD Lifeline Plan is a pilot program using currently available regional, state and federal funding. We need the support of elected officials, water advocates and community leaders to lobby the state legislature and congress for a permanent funding source, and also provide feedback on how the plan can be improved.
- **What is Wayne Metro?**
Wayne Metro is a community action agency that receives federal, state and local funding for housing, food, utility, head start and other assistance. It has been the administrator of the Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP) since it began in March 2016.

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