

**Emergency Utility Assistance Program
2020 COVID-19 Pandemic Program Changes**

The Emergency Utility Assistance Program was approved by Council in 2004 to assist qualified City of Salem utility customers facing financial difficulties. Dependent on donations, program funding was depleted annually. In 2016, the Water/Wastewater Task Force recommended a match of up to \$10,000 per year with utility rate funds. Since 2017, available funding has met or exceeded demand and assisted qualifying customers with urgent financial needs. The program was readopted in 2019 with the following terms and qualification requirements:

1. Customers who are facing temporary financial difficulty and cannot pay their utility bill are referred to local nonprofit service agencies that qualify customers for the City of Salem Emergency Utility Assistance Program based on the following criteria:
 - Applicant must be the named customer on a single-family residential account;
 - Account must be past due or delinquent;
 - Applicant may not be a Salem Housing Authority client or receive housing assistance; and,
 - Applicant must meet the income guidelines for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
2. Emergency assistance is applied to the utility account in the amount of the delinquent bill or balance to a maximum of \$150 per rolling 12-month period.
3. If the delinquent bill / balance is less than \$150, the customer may reapply during the 12-month cycle until the \$150 maximum has been reached.
4. Assistance may only be applied to utility rates and charges and may not be applied to fees for violations such as meter tampering, meter obstruction, or meter bypass.

To meet increased demand during the economic challenges resulting from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the following rule changes shall be effective immediately upon City Council approval:

1. Maximum per account is increased to \$500 from \$150 per account per rolling 12-month period.
2. Salem Housing Authority clients receiving Section 8 Rental Housing Assistance and those living in Salem Housing Authority units are pre-qualified recipients and eligible to receive emergency assistance.
3. City of Salem utility customers participating in the Utility Rate Relief Program are pre-qualified recipients and able to receive emergency assistance.
4. Customers who have been qualified to receive Emergency Utility Assistance since on or after July 1, 2019 are pre-qualified and able to receive emergency assistance.
5. Maximum utility rate contribution is increased to \$500,000.

These changes shall remain in place until July 31, 2020, funding is exhausted, or Council acts to continue or terminate these temporary program requirement changes.