

Section 25: Collection of Overdue Bills

An amount owed by the customer shall be subject to collection as provided in Section 66.0809, Wisconsin Statutes, which provides as follows:

66.0809 66.0809 Municipal public utility charges.

66.0809(1) Except as provided in sub. (2), the governing body of a town, village or city operating a public utility may, by ordinance, fix the initial rates and shall provide for this collection monthly, bimonthly or quarterly in advance or otherwise. The rates shall be uniform for like service in all parts of the municipality and shall include the cost of fluorinating the water. The rates may include standby charges to property not connected but for which public utility facilities have been made available. The charges shall be collected by the treasurer or other officer or employee designated by the city, village or town.

66.0809(2) If, on June 21, 1996, it is the practice of a governing body of a town, village or city operating a public utility to collect utility service charges using a billing period other than one permitted under sub. (1), the governing body may continue to collect utility service charges using that billing period.

66.0809(3) Except as provided in subs. (4) and (5), on October 15 in each year notice shall be given to the owner or occupant of all lots or parcels of real estate to which utility service has been furnished prior to October 1 by a public utility operated by a town, city or village and payment for which is owing and in arrears at the time of giving the notice. The department in charge of the utility shall furnish the treasurer with a list of the lots or parcels of real estate for which utility service charges are in arrears, and the notice shall be given by the treasurer, unless the governing body of the city, village or town authorizes notice to be given directly by the department. The notice shall be in writing and shall state the amount of arrears, including any penalty assessed pursuant to the rules of the utility; that unless the amount is paid by November 1 a penalty of 10 percent of the amount of arrears will be added; and that unless the arrears, with any added penalty, are paid by November 15, the arrears and penalty will be levied as a tax against the lot or parcel of real estate to which utility service was furnished and for which payment is delinquent. The notice may be served by delivery to either the owner or occupant personally, or by letter addressed to the owner or occupant at the post-office address of the lot or parcel of real estate. On November 16 the officer or department issuing the notice shall certify and file with the clerk a list of all lots or parcels of real estate, giving the legal description, for which notice of arrears was given and for which arrears remain unpaid, stating the amount of arrears and penalty. Each delinquent amount, including the penalty, becomes a lien upon the lot or parcel of real estate to which the utility service was furnished and payment for which is delinquent, and the clerk shall insert the delinquent amount and penalty as a tax against the lot or parcel of real estate. All proceedings in relation to the collection of general property taxes and to the return and sale of property for delinquent taxes apply to the tax if it is not paid within the time required by law for payment of taxes upon real estate. Under

this subsection, if an arrearage is for utility service furnished and metered by the utility directly to a manufactured home or mobile home unit in a licensed manufactured and mobile home community, the notice shall be given to the owner of the manufactured home or mobile home unit and the delinquent amount becomes a lien on the manufactured home or mobile home unit rather than a lien on the parcel of real estate on which the manufactured home or mobile home unit is located. A lien on a manufactured home or mobile home unit may be enforced using the procedures under s. 779.48 (2). This subsection does not apply to arrearages collected using the procedure under s. 66.0627. In this subsection, "metered" means the use of any method to ascertain the amount of service used or the use of a flat rate billing method.

66.0809(4) A municipal utility may use the procedures under sub. (3) to collect arrearages for electric service only if one of the following applies:

66.0809(4)(a) The municipality has enacted an ordinance that authorizes the use of the procedures under sub. (3) for the collection of arrearages for electric service provided by the municipal utility.

66.0809(4)(b) In 1996, the municipality collected arrearages for electric service provided by the municipal utility using the procedures under s. 66.60 (16), 1993 stats.

66.0809(5)(a) This subsection applies only if all of the following conditions are met:

66.0809(5)(a)1. Water or electric utility service is provided to a rental dwelling unit.

66.0809(5)(a)1m. The water or electric utility service is provided by a town sanitary district created under subch. IX of ch. 60 that has sewerage connections serving more than 700 service addresses, by a public inland lake protection and rehabilitation district under subch. IV of ch. 33 that has sewerage connections serving more than 700 service addresses or by a municipal public utility.

66.0809(5)(a)2. The owner of the rental dwelling unit notifies the utility in writing of the name and address of the owner.

66.0809(5)(a)3. The owner of the rental dwelling unit notifies the utility in writing of the name and address of the tenant who is responsible for payment of the utility charges.

66.0809(5)(a)4. If requested by the utility, the owner of the rental dwelling unit provides the utility with a copy of the rental or lease agreement in which the tenant assumes responsibility for the payment of the utility charges.

66.0809(5)(b) If this subsection applies, a municipal public utility may use sub. (3) to collect arrearages incurred after the owner of a rental dwelling unit has provided the utility with written notice under par. (a) only if the municipality complies with at least one of the following:

66.0809(5)(b)1. In order to comply with this subdivision, a municipal public utility

shall send bills for water or electric service to a customer who is a tenant in the tenant's own name. Each time that a municipal public utility notifies a customer who is a tenant that charges for water or electric service provided by the utility to the customer are past due for more than one billing cycle, the utility shall also serve a copy of the notice on the owner of the rental dwelling unit in the manner provided in s. 801.14 (2). If a customer who is a tenant vacates his or her rental dwelling unit, and the owner of the rental dwelling unit provides the municipal public utility, no later than 21 days after the date on which the tenant vacates the rental dwelling unit, with a written notice that contains a forwarding address for the tenant and the date that the tenant vacated the rental dwelling unit, the utility shall continue to send past-due notices to the customer at his or her forwarding address until the past-due charges are paid or until notice has been provided under sub. (3).

66.0809(5)(b)2. In order to comply with this subdivision, if a customer who is a tenant has charges for water or electric service provided by the utility that are past due, the municipal public utility shall serve notice of the past-due charges on the owner of the rental dwelling unit within 14 days of the date on which the tenant's charges became past due. The municipal public utility shall serve notice in the manner provided in s. 801.14 (2).

66.0809(5)(c) A municipal public utility may demonstrate compliance with the notice requirements of par. (b) 1. or 2. by providing evidence of having sent the notice by U.S. mail.

66.0809(5)(d) If this subsection applies and a municipal public utility is permitted to collect arrearages under sub. (3), the municipal public utility shall provide all notices under sub. (3) to the owner of the property.