



## **Utility Customer Service Policy**

**Town of Benson  
303 E Church St  
Benson, NC 27504  
(919) 894-3553**

**Effective Date  
July 1, 2021**

**Adopted by Council  
June 8, 2021**

# **WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF BENSON**

*Welcome Town of Benson Resident:*

*Thank you for doing business with the Town of Benson. As a provider of public utilities (electric, water, sewer and trash) we seek to provide the best experience at a rate that is competitive with other towns and utilities. In doing so, we commit to serving you in the best manner possible.*

*If at any time you have concerns regarding the services provided by the Town of Benson, please make your concerns known to our staff. Our goal is simply to be the "Best small town in North Carolina."*

*Jerry Medlin.  
Mayor*

## ***UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES***

### **SCOPE**

It is the intent of this policy to establish uniform procedures for providing utility services to Town of Benson customers that will insure all citizens receive equitable consideration in an indiscriminate manner.

Town of Benson utility services are regulated by the Benson Municipal Code of Ordinances. Policies adopted and amended by the Board of Commissioners are available on file with the Town Clerk.

### **RATES AND FEES**

Rates and fees for all utility services are established and adopted by the Benson Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners meets every second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the conference center within Town Hall; the public is invited to attend. Rates are subject to change without notice.

### **ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF PAYMENT**

The Town accepts cash, checks made payable to the Town of Benson, money orders, and VISA/MasterCard/Discover credit card payments in person, online and through our IVR system.

### **APPLICATION FOR SERVICES**

ORIGINAL APPLICATION --- Persons requesting utility services will be required to complete an application in person at Town Hall between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday or online at [www.townofbenson.com](http://www.townofbenson.com). No service will be connected until all proper application procedures have been completed and payment in full has been made. Payment for new services must be made by cash, money order, or credit card.

RESIDENTIAL --- All persons requesting residential utility services will be required to provide a valid social security card, along with one form of ID (Valid Driver's License, Valid US Passport, or Valid State-Issued ID), service location, mailing address, and start date. Any person who does not provide the Town with a valid social security number will be charged a higher deposit. Applicant must sign the application in person at Town Hall.

**Homeowners** must provide a closing statement or deed to verify ownership. Property owners may have utilities connected at more than one location as long as all accounts remain current.

**Renters** shall provide the Town with a copy of the lease agreement and will be limited to one service location at any given time. The renter utility account will be set up in

the name or names specified in the lease. In the event that any renter named in the lease has any outstanding bill with the Town, that bill shall be paid in full before service is provided.

Any residence without utility services for more than twelve (12) months shall require an inspection by the Town Building Inspector, Code Enforcement Officer, and/or Town Fire Inspector. Any residence, which does not meet minimum housing standards, current building codes, and/or zoning ordinances, may also require an inspection. Should a residence fail inspection, the property owner and/or applicant will be notified of code and ordinance violations. All violations must be corrected before utility services will be connected.

COMMERCIAL --- Persons establishing accounts for commercial utility services shall be required to complete an application, provide a lease or proof of ownership of property, as well as a contact person who will be responsible for payment of account. Contact person will be required to provide a social security number, one form of ID as listed above, and a home address.

TEMPORARY SERVICE --- Any person requesting temporary services to show, paint, clean or repair a residence shall be billed for all utilities and refuse collection. Habitation shall not be permitted under temporary service.

Temporary Service Pole accounts will be billed for electric usage under the commercial rate and there will be a \$25 connection fee and a \$25 disconnection fee. Work orders must be created to do all connects and disconnects.

ACCOUNT CHANGES --- Any changes of account information, such as mailing address, account holder's name, and telephone number, transfer of service or disconnection must be requested in writing by the primary person in whose name the account is listed.

LANDLORD ACCOUNTS --- No landlord will be allowed to turn on utility services (either in their name or the tenants name) if they have a past due balance on any property that they own. If a landlord (or real estate company) owes at ANY address, services will not be turned on for them, OR for the tenant, until the delinquent account(s) is paid. Delinquent account balances must be PAID IN FULL before utility services are turned on.

## **CUSTOMER DEPOSITS**

### **RESIDENTIAL DEPOSITS**

At time of application, any delinquent bill with the Town must be paid in full prior to connection of services.

*Homeowners* requesting residential service are exempt from paying a deposit, unless they are unable to provide a social security card. They will then be required to pay a regular deposit.

**Renters** requesting residential utility services shall be required to furnish a deposit guaranteeing payment of utility charges based on a current credit report obtained by the Town.

Deposits (Green Credit Rating):

Electric	\$ 50
Water	\$ 25
Sewer	\$ 25
Separate Service/ Same Premises (Ex. Utility Bldg.)	\$ 50

Deposits (Yellow Credit Rating):

Electric	\$ 250
Water	\$ 40
Sewer	\$ 40
Separate Service/ Same Premises (Ex. Utility Bldg)	\$ 50

Deposits (Red Credit Rating/No Social Security Card Provided):

Electric	\$ 450
Water	\$ 80
Sewer	\$ 80
Separate Service/ Same Premises (Ex. Utility Bldg)	\$ 50

**Prepaid customers** are not required to pay a deposit unless they are unable to provide a social security number. If no social security number can be provided, cost of deposit will be the green credit rating deposit. All prepaid customers must pay a \$25.00 start-up charge that will be used towards the account. There will be a monthly minimum fee that will cover the base charges for each service that is provided in the fee schedule. This fee will be deducted on a daily basis.

For the best outcomes for this service, it is important for every customer to have a valid email address and access to the internet. If the customer has a smart phone, then we encourage them to download the free App: MyUsage

Note: For those customers who have been disconnected for three consecutive months or a total of six times in a twelve-month period, a Pre-Pay electric meter will be installed.

## SOLAR CUSTOMERS

Solar customer must complete any applicable renewable energy interconnection request documents and submit to the Town of Benson for approval prior to receiving service. (Documents can be found in the Interconnection Standards Manual). Customer's service

shall be metered with two electric meters, one for which measures all energy provided by the Town and used by the customer, and the other measures the amount of energy generated by the customer's alternative energy generator. In the event the Town of Benson determines that it is necessary to install a dedicated transformer or other equipment to protect the safety and adequacy of electric service provided to other customers, the Customer shall pay a monthly facilities charge of 2% of the total installed cost of the additional facilities or \$25.00 per month, whichever cost is greater. The Town of Benson reserves the right to test the Customer's alternative energy generator and associated equipment for compliance with the applicable interface criteria. Should it be determined that Customer's installation is in violation, the Town of Benson will disconnect the alternative energy generator from the Town's distribution system and it will remain disconnected until the install action is brought back into compliance.

The contract period for service shall be one (1) year and thereafter shall be renewed for successive one-year period. After the initial period, Customer may terminate service by giving sixty (60) days previous notice of such termination in writing to the Town of Benson. The Town of Benson may terminate service at any time upon written notice to Customer. In the event that the Customer violates any of the terms or conditions set out in the Interconnection Standards Manual, or operates the generating system in a manner which is detrimental to the Town or its customers, service will be terminated immediately.

#### BUSINESS, COMMERCIAL, & INDUSTRIAL CUSTOMERS

***Renters*** requesting utility service will be required to pay a deposit of 2 times the 12 month average of the previous tenant, or a minimum of \$380.00 (whichever is greater) or provide a surety bond. The business must be approved by the Planning Director and a Fire Inspection is required for any new business account and is based on square footage of the building.

***Property Owners*** requesting utility service will not be required to pay a deposit as long as a social security card is provided. If the property owner is unable to provide a social security card, they will be required to pay a regular deposit.

#### REFUNDING DEPOSITS

Upon account closing, the deposit will be applied toward the customer's utility account. Remaining funds will be used against any amounts owed on any accounts the customer may have with the Town. A refund check for any remaining balance will be mailed to the customer's forwarding address, if provided when disconnection is requested, within 4 weeks of account closing. The Town of Benson bills for utility service consumption used prior to the actual billing date, so most customers disconnecting services will have at least one more bill for a full month's services and a final bill for a partial month's service.

## UPDATING DEPOSITS

Any customer without the minimum deposit on file, whose service has been involuntarily terminated, for nonpayment, returned check, meter tampering, or any other such reason shall be required to pay the full deposit or update the existing deposit to the minimum requirement as specified above prior to reconnecting services. Deposits will not be refunded after termination of services until all final bills are paid.

## TEMPORARY SERVICE

All residential customers applying for temporary service to show, paint or repair a residence MUST provide a connect date and a disconnect date at the time of application. This period shall not exceed 30 days. At the end of the 30-day limit, an extension may be requested for an additional period up to 30 days. Habitation shall not be permitted under temporary service. All residential customers receiving temporary service to show, paint, repair or construct a residence will be required to pay for all utility services, including garbage collection. If there is no existing structure (such as a new development or construction of a new home/business), only services that are available (and requested) will be charged.

Customers applying for temporary service for a new construction service pole shall be granted temporary utility services until such time that the Town of Benson Planning Director/Inspector performs the final construction inspection and issues a Certificate of Occupancy. At that time, the builder must abide by the 30-day rule as specified in the above paragraph.

## SERVICE FEES

Service fees shall be charged to customers for the purpose of recovering costs associated with supplying utility services and are not refundable. Except in emergencies or unusual circumstances, no new service connections or restoration of delinquent accounts shall occur outside of normal working hours.

Late Penalty (Applied Day after Due Date)	1.5% of Account Balance
Reconnection Fee (Following Involuntary Termination)	\$25.00
Reconnection Fee (After Hours)	\$65.00
Returned Check Fee	\$25.00
Meter Testing Water	\$50 ¾ in / \$75 1 in
Meter Testing Electric	\$50.00
<b>Meter Tampering Fees</b>	
Cut Seal/Lock: Electric or Water Meters, Load Management Switch	\$50.00 each
Electric/Water Meter Tampering: Manipulating the device	\$500.00 + usage
Load Management Tampering: Manipulating the device	\$200.00

*\*\*Additional Charges may apply for replacement of damaged equipment\*\**

## **SERVICE CONNECTION**

When the application has been completed, deposit requirements met, service charges paid, and any non-routine work (such as wire pulling or inspection) completed, the Town of Benson will connect utility services by the close of the next business day. The Town of Benson does not guarantee any same day service, but will make every effort to connect utility services as soon as possible once all requirements have been met.

## **TERMINATION OF SERVICES**

All requests for termination of service must be made in person, by the account holder in the form of a signed work order. The customer will be responsible for all service usage within the next 24-hour period, weekend, or holiday through the next business day following the time of notice given to the Town.

## **TRANSFERRING UTILITIES**

Utility customers wishing to transfer their service from one Town of Benson location to another must complete and sign a work order, provide a copy of the new lease, an updated form of identification, and update the application information. The fee to transfer is \$10.00. The customer may also be required to update the deposit at this time. When transfer paperwork is being completed, a "connect" date at the new address and "disconnect" date at the previous address must be given. Services at two addresses may not "overlap" for more than 14 days. The customer is still responsible for any outstanding balances at the previous address. Failure to pay these bills will result in involuntary disconnection at the new address.

## **ACCESS TO METERS**

Access to metering facilities is essential in order to accurately read and check meters. The Town of Benson requires customer cooperation in allowing access to meters and ensuring that obstructions such as shrubs, fences and domestic animals do not interfere with the reading process. Access to each meter base is also necessary for safety reasons in case of emergency, such as a fire. An obstruction that is not removed (following a warning by a staff member), will result in an involuntary disconnect of utility services. Fees may apply for restoration of services.

## **GARBAGE AND TRASH COLLECTION**

All residential customers will be billed a monthly garbage collection fee, which will be included on the customer's monthly utility bill. Finance Office Customer Service may be contacted at 919-894-3553 concerning any questions or problems.

Per Town of Benson Ordinance, all trash cans should be brought back to their proper spots, away from the street, 24 hours after their cans have been emptied. Failure to comply with



this ordinance will result in a fine, which will be invoiced to the customer. If fine is not paid, then it will be placed on the customer's utility bill upon the next billing cycle.

## **IRRIGATION METERS**

Separate water taps for irrigation purposes shall be allowed when the customer has met the following requirements:

- (1) Residential/Commercial customers must pay a water tap fee (see current rate schedule).
- (2) Customer must obtain a building permit for the irrigation system and the system must pass inspection.
- (3) Customer must sign a contract stating the meter will be used for irrigation purposes only.
- (4) Customer must pay for consumption plus a basic facility charge each month; the basic facility charge will be billed monthly even if there is no consumption or usage.

Meter readings will be taken each month and any unusual consumption will be investigated. THIS SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR FAUCETS OR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN IRRIGATION.

## **SWIMMING POOLS**

Customers may **avoid paying sewer charges only** on pool consumption if they fill pool from a garden hose *and provide written proof of the pool capacity* to the Finance Department-Customer Service at Town Hall. Once verification that a pool has been filled at your residence an adjustment will occur on the next billing cycle.

## **WATER LEAKS**

Adjustments will be made **ONLY on the sewer charges for leaks which do not cause water to go into the sewer lines**. Adjustments will be applicable only when the customer provides proof (such as a plumber's bill or an invoice for repair and parts) for a repairable and unavoidable water leak.

The method for calculating an adjustment will be as follows:

- The average usage is computed by averaging six months' usage prior to the leak.
- The sewer consumption is adjusted down to the average usage.
- Customer pays for adjusted sewer usage at applicable rate.

*Note: Customers may receive only one adjustment in any six-month period.*

## **INVOLUNTARY DISCONNECTION OF SERVICES**

The Town of Benson reserves the right to disconnect utility services without further notice for any customer due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Failure to pay bill for utility services as required by current disconnection policy
- Failure to pay or update deposit as required
- Upon evidence of meter tampering or attempt to defraud the Town
- Refusal of legitimate access to premises, or damage to or loss of Town property on the customer's premises for which the customer is liable
- When the condition of the customer's wiring equipment and appliances is either unsafe or unsuitable for receiving electricity or may be detrimental to the supply of other customers, as determined by the Electrical Superintendent, Building/Electrical Inspector and/or Meter Reader
- Excessive water usage not repaired in a timely manner
- Failure to pay for returned check within 48 hours of notice.
- Failure to fulfill terms of a payment or extension agreement
- Unlawful discharge of waste water

## **RECONNECTION POLICY**

When it becomes necessary for the Town to disconnect services for any of the above-referenced reasons, services will be restored only after payment of: (1) delinquent utility bill, (2) any deposit or deposit update, as required; (3) reconnection fees; and (4) any material and labor costs, if required, are paid.

After regular business hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday, reconnections will be made only after the amount owed has been paid in full, included with an after-hours reconnection fee. These payments can be taken over the phone by the Town of Benson On-Call Associate.

## **BILLING REQUIREMENTS**

The Town utilizes a billing service to distribute utility bills. This billing cycle is defined as the period between meter readings. Electric and water meters are read once each month. The billing cycle reflects a calendar month of consumption; however, inclement weather, weekends, holidays and other circumstances may cause a fluctuation in the number of billing days. The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Benson sets the rates for all utility services. The current rate schedules are available at Town Hall and online.

**PAYMENT REQUIREMENTS** --- All utility bills are due by the due date to avoid penalty. Any customer who fails to receive a bill is not relieved of payment responsibility. Utility bills may be paid by cash, check, money order, Visa/MasterCard/Discover in person at Town Hall on 303 East Church Street; by placing check or money order in the drop box located in the parking lot of Town Hall; by credit card or e-check payment through our web portal or IVR

system; or by mailing a check or money order to the Town of Benson, PO Box 69, Benson, NC 27504.

All checks must be made payable to the Town of Benson. Two-party checks ARE NOT an acceptable form of payment by the Town of Benson. Also, no cash change will be given for checks written for an amount greater than the utility bill; any overpayment will be credited to the customer's account. The Town of Benson reserves the right to verify funds on any check presented for payment on account before accepting such payment.

Customers utilizing the drop box should be aware that the drop box is only opened at 8:30 a.m. every business day. Therefore, payments dropped after 8:30 a.m. will not be credited until the next business day.

An Online Customer Portal is available to customers for paying utility bills at <https://ipn.paymentus.com/cp/tbup> Town of Benson Customers will sign up for this portal and can save their payments and set up re-occurring payments through this site. If one wishes to just make a One Time Payment without having a log in, the site for that can be accessed at <https://ipn.paymentus.com/rotp/tbup> Credit card payments can also be paid through Town of Benson's IVR system by dialing 844-200-2972. If none of these options available satisfy the customer, then credit card payments are accepted at Town Hall by the CSRs. All of these options are at no charge to the customer. All payments will post to individual bank accounts within 48 business hours of transaction.

LATE PAYMENT PENALTY --- Any billing payment not received in the office by 5:00 p.m. on the due date or placed in the drop box or paid online before 8:30 am the day after the due date will accrue a penalty of 1.5% of the account balance. When the due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the next business day will be considered as the due date.

## **DISCONNECTION POLICY**

All utility bills are due on the due date and payable at Town Hall in person, online or by mail. If payment in full is not made in the office by 5:00 p.m. on the last day to pay or placed in the drop box/paid through our online system before 8:30 a.m. the following business day; service will be placed on a cutoff list. NO SECOND NOTICES WILL BE MAILED. Prior to reconnection of services, all delinquent utility charges must be paid in full, plus any reconnection fees, deposits, deposit updates, or charges for materials or labor, which may apply.

If payments are made online, reconnection will likely not occur until next business day once payments are posted into the billing system.

If service has not been restored 9 days following disconnection, the account will be permanently closed and all deposits on file will be applied to the account. In order to have services restored, a new application must be completed (along with a new lease), all balances paid, and a deposit paid before connecting services.

## **CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS PRIOR TO DISCONNECTION**

Any customer subject to disconnection for nonpayment may appeal to the Utility Billing Specialist.

**DISPUTED BILLS** --- If a customer believes the Town has made an error in calculating a utility bill, or otherwise disputes the obligation to pay the bill, the customer or the customer's authorized representative may arrange a meeting to discuss the matter. Any dispute of a utility bill must be expressed to the Town 10 days after the mail date of the bill.

**EXTENSIONS** --- The Town of Benson only acknowledges extensions on a case by case basis. There is no guarantee that an extension will be granted and if one is granted, there must be a signed agreement by both parties. Strict deadlines will be held on extensions.

## **RETURNED CHECKS**

Returned checks are defined as any check, bank draft, or Credit Card dispute returned unpaid for any reason by the financial institution on which the check/credit was drawn.

When a check is returned by the bank, the customer will be notified of the returned check by a phone call or hand-delivered letter and will be given 48 hours to pay for the check by cash, money order, or online billing system, plus a returned check service charge. If not paid within 48 hours, utilities will be disconnected and charged a disconnection fee.

After the return of two (2) check for any reason, the Town requires the customer to pay all utility bills by cash, credit card, or money order **ONLY** for **ONE** year. A customer in "cash-only" payment status will be allowed to present checks again after 12 months. After the return of three (3) checks for any reason, the Town will require the customer to pay all utility bills by cash, credit card, or money order **ONLY** for **TWO** years. Should a customer write a fourth check that is returned by the bank for any reason, the customer's check writing privileges will be **PERMANENTLY** revoked.

If an item is returned to the Town of Benson due to a bank error, the returned service charge may be waived if the customer provides written documentation from a bank official taking responsibility for the returned check.

## **EQUAL PAYMENT PLAN**

The Town offers its customers an equal payment plan that allows payment of a fixed amount per month for utility service. This amount will be determined by adding the previous 12 months of utility bills plus 10% and dividing by 12. This amount will be billed for 11 months, and the 12<sup>th</sup> month will be used to settle the account.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

- (1) Customer must have maintained an active utility account with the Town of Benson for at least 12 billing periods.

- (2) Customer must have excellent credit history with the Town (all payments must have been paid by the due date with no returned checks).
- (3) Customers will be allowed to sign up during the months of May and November.

*\*Due dates will remain the same as normal billings; penalty and cutoff policies will remain in effect.*

Penalties will not accrue if payments are made by the due date. In the event of disconnection due to nonpayment, the total balance on account will become due immediately. Customer will no longer be eligible for the equal pay plan.

The Town reserves the right to require a payment adjustment and/or conference with the customer between anniversary dates if it appears that the amount being billed and the actual consumption varies by a substantial amount.

### **LOAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

~~The Town of Benson offers residential and commercial customers a load management program, which provides a monthly credit to customers for permitting the Town to install a switch on electric hot water heaters and central air conditioning units to allow power interruptions for short periods to these appliances. This program allows the Town to reduce its peak demand. Periodical inspections will be performed by the Town to review the need for load management and to ensure switches are still properly installed. A meter tampering fee will be imposed to offset loss revenue by the Town for unauthorized removal of, damage to, or denied access to a load management switch.~~

~~Any new construction is required to have a Load Management Switch installed. The switch is available through the Planning Department. Please contact them to schedule installation when your site is ready.~~

### **INTERRUPTION OF SERVICE**

The Town will exercise reasonable care to provide adequate, safe and continuous electrical service, but does not guarantee same and shall not be liable for injury, loss or damage resulting from any loss of power. The Town reserves the right to suspend service when in the judgment of the Electrical Superintendent, Building Inspector, or the Meter Reader, the building condition requires repairs or improvements.

### **EMERGENCIES**

Should an emergency arise concerning utility services, customers should contact Town Hall at (919) 894-3553 during normal business hours of 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. After 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday or on weekends and holidays, customers should contact (919) 934-9411.

## **CHRONICALLY ILL AND LIFE SUPPORT CUSTOMERS**

The customer has the responsibility to notify the Town of Benson of any person in their household who is chronically ill, on a life support system, and/or wears a medical alert device by completing the proper forms and providing a doctor's letter of certification. It is the responsibility of each customer to update certification letters annually each January. If such certification renewal is not received, the customer will be removed from the program.

The customer has the right to name another person within the Town to receive a copy of any interruption notice sent to the customer. This other person may be able to help the customer avoid interruption of services, but is not obligated to pay the customer's bill.

The customer has the responsibility of paying all utility bills when due. In the event of nonpayment or when utilities become subject to disconnection, the customer has the responsibility of notifying the Town to make arrangements for payment. The customer and the third party (if one has been named by the customer) will be notified by telephone, if possible, or in writing 24 hours prior to disconnection.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The Town has the responsibility of helping the customer understand its rate schedules, informing the customer of how the meters are read, and furnishing additional reasonable information.
- The Town has the responsibility of responding to questions or complaints from its customers. The Town accepts responsibility of providing prompt and courteous treatment to all customers.
- The customer has the right to have the Town provide a copy of the customer's billing information for the past 12 months. The town will provide this information, upon request, once every 12 months without charge.
- The customer has the right to contact the Town's Customer Service Department concerning any questions or complaints regarding service.
- If the customer questions the consumption listed on a bill, the customer has the right to request that the Town re-check the readings for accuracy. One meter recheck is permitted every twelve months without incurring a charge. Every subsequent recheck with a twelve-month period will require a fee, which must be paid prior to performing recheck. Recheck must be requested 10 days after billing.

## **UTILITY THEFT AND DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT**

North Carolina General Statute 14-151.1 states the following with regard to meter tampering, utility theft and fraud:

- (a) It shall be unlawful for any unauthorized person to alter, tamper with or bypass a meter which has been installed for the purpose of measuring the use of electricity, gas or water, or knowingly to use electricity, gas or water passing through any such tampered meter, or use electricity, gas or water bypassing a meter provided by an electric, gas or water supplier for the purpose of measuring and registering the quantity of electricity, gas or water consumed.
- (b) Any meter or service entrance facility found to have been altered, tampered with, or bypassed in a manner that would cause such meter to inaccurately measure and register the electricity, gas or water consumed or which would cause the electricity, gas or water to be diverted from the recording apparatus of the meter shall be prima facie evidence of intent to violate and of the violation of this section by the person in whose name such meter is installed or the person or persons so using or receiving the benefits of such unmeasured, unregistered or diverted electricity, gas or water.
  - (1) It is unlawful for any unauthorized person to reconnect electricity, gas or water connections or otherwise turn back on one or more of those utilities when they have been lawfully disconnected or turned off by the provider of the utility.
  - (2) It is unlawful for any unauthorized person to alter, bypass, interfere with, or cut off any load management device, equipment or system which has been installed by the electricity supplier for the purpose of limiting the use of electricity at peak-load periods; provided, however, if there has been a written request to remove the load management device, equipment or system to the electric supplier, and the electric supplier has not removed the device within two working days, there shall be no violation of this section.
- (c) Whoever is found in a civil action to have violated any provision hereof shall be liable to the electric, gas or water supplier to triple the amount of losses and damages sustained or five hundred dollars (\$500.00), whichever is greater.
- (d) Any person violating any of the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or imprisoned not longer than two years, or both fined and imprisoned, in the discretion of the court.
- (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to licensed contractors while performing usual and ordinary services in accordance with recognized customs and standards.

The Town of Benson reserves the right to prosecute all cases of meter tampering, utility theft and fraud to the fullest extent of the law. Should any Town personnel find an electric meter with the seal cut or removed or a water meter reconnected after being turned off, whether during utility disconnection or normal meter reading cycles, a meter-tampering charge will

be added to the customer's account, which will be subject to the Town's current payment policy. Any subsequent such discoveries by Town personnel shall result in a higher fine. However, if a customer discovers and reports his or her seal cut, no charges will be levied. Any person with three or more incidences of a cut seal, whether voluntarily reported or through Town discovery, shall face permanent discontinuance of services with the Town.

*\*If the meter tampering incident is at an address which has no active account, then the property owner will be liable for meter tampering charges and usage unless the landlord reports the tampering upon discovery.*

## **ELECTRICITIES**

In 1965, Governor Moore chaired negotiations in which the state was divided into electric utility territories between private power companies and rural cooperatives. Municipally owned electric systems were excluded and did not participate. As a result of those negotiations, the 1965 Electric Act came into effect, severely restricting municipal franchising and operating rights. The enactment of this piece of legislation made quite evident that for municipally owned electric systems to continue to be competitive, unity on the part of all electric cities were essential. Therefore, in order to speak from a position of strength and with a unified voice, the ElectriCities concept developed.

Formed in the late 1960's and incorporated on January 1, 1984, ElectriCities of North Carolina has authority to provide aid to member cities in areas of construction, ownership, maintenance, rate design, etc. In addition to expanded services, the goal is to provide competitive rates and present an even stronger voice of public power in North Carolina.

## **NCEMPA**

The North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) was formed in 1976 and is managed by ElectriCities of North Carolina, Inc. The Agency provides all power requirements to its 32 participating municipalities, including Benson. Participation in NCEMPA assures the Town of Benson that it will have adequate supplies of electricity in the future. NCEMPA has ownership in the following power plants: Brunswick Nuclear Plant, Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant, and Mayo and Roxboro Coal Plants.



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q:What do I need to bring to get my services turned on?**

A: A valid state-issued photo I.D, Social Security card, lease agreement, or closing statement and any applicable fees.

### **Q: Do I have to come in to Town Hall to apply for service?**

A: No. We will allow the applications to be done online. Once the application is received, we will need the customers email address to ensure that all information is obtained prior to connecting utilities.

### **Q: When will my service be connected?**

A: By the close of the following business day, after all requirements have been met.

### **Q: How can I lower my utility bill?**

A:

- Check A/C and heating equipment (thermostat) for proper functioning.
- Keep thermostat at a consistent temperature.
- Check operation and temperature setting on hot water heater.
- Change A/C filters regularly.
- Check for leaks in heat/air ducts under house.
- Make sure A/C coils are clean and not blocked.
- Check for leaking pipes inside and outside.
- Make sure all faucets are completely turned off and do not drip.
- Make sure toilets aren't "running" when flushed.
- Keep lawn watering and water play to a minimum.

### **Q: Do I have to come in to Town Hall to disconnect my services?**

A: Yes. With a valid ID and a signature is required by the account holder.

### **Q: What does IVR mean?**

A: Interactive Voice Response-a method of payment using the telephone and voice prompt.

## **TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Town Hall (Main Number)	919-894-3553
Town Hall (Main Fax Number)	919-894-1283
Customer Service (Utilities)	919-894-3553
Parks & Recreation	919-894-5117
Museum	919-894-1266
Mary Duncan Public Library	919-894-3724
Police/Fire	911(Emergency)
After Hours	919-934-9411 911