Village of Spencer

Leaving for the Winter? Frequently Asked Questions About Utility Billing

Customers who leave Spencer for the winter may request a temporary water shutoff. However, a seasonal absence does not suspend all utility charges. This FAQ explains which charges continue, how usage charges are handled, and what to expect when you return.

1. Can I have my water shut off while I am away?

Yes. You may request a temporary shutoff while your property is unoccupied.

Under the Village's water tariff, a customer who voluntarily disconnects and resumes service at the same location within 12 months is considered a seasonal customer, unless another customer receives service at that location during the intervening period.

2. Will my utility bill stop while the water is shut off?

No. The following charges continue during a seasonal absence:

Charge	What happens while you are away?
Fixed water service charge	Continues year-round, including during a temporary disconnection.
Public fire protection charge	Continues for seasonal customers.
Meter-size-based sewer charge	Continues, even if the meter is temporarily removed.
Water usage charge	Based on actual metered consumption; no consumption means no usage charge.
Sewer usage charge	Based on actual water consumption; no consumption means no consumption-based sewer charge.
Garbage and recycling charges	Continue because the Village's collection contract charges per service address year-round and does not allow seasonal discontinuation.

Water charges are governed by Schedules Mg-1, Sg-1, and F-1 of the Village's water tariff. Sewer treatment is governed by Village Code §§ 461-8J and 461-18. Garbage and recycling treatment reflects the Village's Waste Management contract.

3. Why do fixed water charges continue if I am not using water?

The water tariff requires seasonal customers to pay the applicable fixed service charges year-round, including during a temporary disconnection. These charges are separate from charges for gallons of water used. The public fire protection schedule also expressly applies to seasonal customers.

Shutting off the water therefore does not eliminate these fixed charges.

4. Why does my fixed sewer charge continue?

The wastewater ordinance specifically addresses seasonal absences. Section 461-8J states:

“Seasonal or temporary removal of meters shall not eliminate charges based upon meter size.”

Your applicable meter-size-based sewer charge continues while you are away. The consumption-based portion of your sewer bill is calculated from actual water usage.

5. Why do garbage and recycling charges continue if I do not put my carts out?

The Village’s Waste Management contract charges the Village for each service address regardless of whether the property is temporarily occupied or carts are placed out for collection. The contract does not allow seasonal discontinuation.

Because the Village continues to incur those costs for your address, garbage and recycling charges continue during your absence. A temporary water shutoff does not suspend garbage or recycling billing.

6. What is the benefit of a seasonal water shutoff?

A seasonal shutoff is primarily a property-protection measure rather than a way to eliminate fixed utility charges. Turning off the supply limits the potential for water to continue flowing into an unattended home if a downstream pipe breaks or a plumbing leak develops.

A shutoff does not drain the plumbing or replace proper winterization. Customers remain responsible for protecting their plumbing and the water meter from freezing.

7. Is there a fee to shut off or reconnect my water?

There is no charge to disconnect water service.

When you request reconnection, the tariff provides these charges:

Reconnection time	**Charge**
During normal business hours	$25.00
After normal business hours	$45.00

The reconnection charge includes reinstalling the meter and turning on the curb-stop valve, if necessary. These amounts are established in Schedule R-1 of the Village’s water tariff.

8. Can I temporarily close or suspend my account to avoid the fixed charges?

No. Temporarily closing or labeling the account as suspended does not change the seasonal-service requirements when you return to the same location within 12 months.

The fixed water and public fire protection charges continue under the water tariff, and the meter-size-based sewer charge continues under the wastewater ordinance. Garbage and recycling charges also continue under the Village's collection arrangement.

9. Can I make different payment arrangements while I am away?

The water tariff allows the Village and customer to agree to an alternative payment schedule for seasonal water service during the voluntary disconnection period.

An alternative payment schedule changes when payments are made; it does not waive the charges. Upon reconnection, the tariff requires payment of unpaid seasonal-service charges and the applicable reconnection fee. Contact the Village Office before leaving to discuss available arrangements.

10. What should I do before leaving?

- Contact the Village Office to request and coordinate a seasonal water shutoff.
- Provide written notice of the vacancy and requested discontinuation for the Village Board, as required by the wastewater ordinance.
- Confirm your mailing address and payment arrangements so you continue receiving and paying your bills.
- Arrange appropriate winterization and freeze protection for the property.

The wastewater ordinance requires written notice from the owner when premises are to be vacated or service discontinuation is requested.

11. What should I do when I return?

Contact the Village Office to arrange water reconnection. Utility personnel must perform or authorize the restoration of water service; customers should not operate the utility's curb-stop valve or remove or reinstall the meter themselves. The applicable reconnection charge and any unpaid seasonal water charges will be due.

Questions or service requests

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