



CITY OF HOUSTON - CITY COUNCIL

Meeting Date:

ALL

Item Creation Date:

HPW-20HPW09 Winter Storm Uri Utility Bill Relief

Agenda Item#:

Background:

SUBJECT: Ordinance authorizing utility bill relief due to Winter Storm Uri.

RECOMMENDATION: (Summary) Requesting approval to implement a Utility Winter Storm Uri Relief Program authorizing adjustments to affected water and wastewater customer accounts, suspending fees for late payments, and suspending utility disconnections for customer accounts with unexpectedly high water and wastewater consumption and direct loss or damages related to frozen pipes, water leaks, flood damage, significant loss of income, or other unforeseen costs and losses as a result of Winter Storm Uri, the COVID-19 pandemic and their related secondary effects.

SPECIFIC EXPLANATION: Beginning on or about Sunday, February 14, 2021, Winter Storm Uri brought sub-freezing temperatures to more than 70 counties across the state of Texas including Harris County. Power outages and freezing conditions continued through Thursday, February 18, 2021 resulting in many customers experiencing loss of power, frozen pipes, and private-side water leaks. As a consequence of these impacts of Winter Storm Uri, many customers will receive unexpectedly high water utility bills.

In order to address these customer account issues, the Director of Houston Public Works recommends that City Council implement a Utility Winter Storm Uri Relief program which will provide for a one-time adjustment to all affected utility customers' water and wastewater utility bills to the lower of the average monthly usage billed over the previous 12 months immediately preceding the Winter Storm Uri period or the monthly billed consumption which includes the storm period, and suspension of late fees and disconnections. Applicable leak adjustments available under City Code Section 47-74 will not be used in favor of the Winter Storm Uri Adjustment. The program will be administered by the Director of Houston Public Works.

In anticipation of the number of customers who may receive extraordinarily high water bills due to defective private water lines, the Director requests that water bills for affected single-family residential customers be automatically adjusted without the need for application or documentation of FEMA or private insurance claims. The Director further recommends that affected non-single-family residential customers (multi-family, commercial and industrial) be required to apply for the Winter Storm Uri adjustment and to provide evidence of a FEMA or insurance claim.

DocuSigned by:

Carol Haddock

3/2/2021

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ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Draft - Ordinance

Type

Backup Material