Chester Public Utility District

Manual of Policies

POLICY TITLE:	District Facility Access and Winter Meter Reading Policy
POLICY NUMBER:	6075
ADOPTED:	September 22, 2026
EFFECTIVE DATE:	October 1, 2026
LAST REVIEWED:	Initial Adoption
NEXT REVIEW DUE:	Annually — each January Regular Meeting
REVIEWED BY:	General Manager
APPROVED BY:	Board of Directors

1. PURPOSE

This Policy sets out what the District needs in order to reach and service the water and sewer facilities it owns, and establishes a voluntary program under which a customer may ask to have their meter read during the winter. It applies to every metered service in the District.

2. DEFINITIONS

- *"District Facilities"* means the water and sewer infrastructure owned by the District — meters and meter boxes, mains and service lines, valves and valve cans, fire hydrants, blowoffs, air and vacuum release valves, sewer mains, manholes, and cleanouts — wherever located.
- *"Meter Assembly"* means the water meter, the meter box and lid, and the curb stop, which are the property of the District under CPUD Code §5-2.3.5.
- *"Clear Zone"* means the area within eighteen (18) inches of every edge of the meter box and eighteen (18) inches above the lid.
- *"Obstruction"* means any condition that prevents District personnel from reaching, opening, reading, operating, or servicing a District Facility, or that makes doing so unsafe.
- *"Winter Period"* means October 1 through March 31, the months during which CPUD Code §5-2.5.1 allows the General Manager to suspend regular meter readings.
- *"Winter Read List"* means the list of services whose customers have asked to have their meters read during the Winter Period, maintained under Section 9.
- *"Estimated Bill"* means a bill computed under CPUD Code §5-2.5.5(b)(3) from the customer's own prior use in the same season, or by comparison with similar customers in the same period.
- *"Minimum Monthly Charge"* means the fixed monthly charge for the meter size, set by the Board's current rate resolution.
- *"Temporary Shutoff"* means discontinuance of water service under CPUD Code Article 5-2.6. It is not a termination of the account or of the right to service, and service is restored when the condition is corrected.

3. OWNERSHIP AND ACCESS

3.1 District Facilities belong to the District wherever they are located, and the District maintains them at its own expense under CPUD Code §5-2.3.6.

3.2 The customer is responsible for keeping District Facilities on or adjoining their property accessible. Under CPUD Code §5-3.1.7 the District may enter the premises at reasonable times for any purpose connected with water service.

3.3 Access matters for more than billing. The District needs to reach its facilities to shut water off in a main break or a fire, to find and stop leaks, to operate valves and hydrants, to maintain sewer manholes and cleanouts, and to test and replace meters.

4. FACILITY ACCESS — YEAR-ROUND REQUIREMENT

4.1 The customer shall keep the Clear Zone free of Obstructions at all times and keep the meter box lid uncovered and able to be opened.

4.2 Obstructions include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicles, trailers, boats, equipment, or dumpsters parked or placed over or against a facility;
- Firewood, building materials, soil, gravel, bark, or other stored materials;
- Trash, recycling, or green waste containers on or against the lid;
- Shrubs, hedges, tree limbs, or other landscaping grown over or around a facility;
- Fences, gates, walls, planters, decks, or sheds built over or around a facility;
- Pavers, concrete, or asphalt placed over a facility;
- Regrading or fill that buries a facility below grade;
- Locked gates, unrestrained animals, or other conditions preventing safe entry.

4.3 A customer planning landscaping, paving, fencing, or grading near a District Facility should contact the District first so the location can be marked and access preserved.

4.4 Permanent structures. No fence, gate, wall, deck, shed, or similar structure shall be built over a District Facility or within the Clear Zone. Where one already exists and blocks access:

- The District and the customer will restore access by the least disruptive means available — ordinarily an access gate or removable panel rather than removing the structure.
- The customer has thirty (30) calendar days to restore access, which the General Manager may extend for good cause. The ten (10) day period in Section 7.2 does not apply.
- If the structure was built after the facility was installed, the cost is the customer's. If the District installed or moved the facility after the structure was already there, the cost is the District's.
- Instead of altering a structure, the General Manager may approve relocating the Meter Assembly under CPUD Code §5-2.3.3, with cost allocated as that section provides.

4.5 Facilities other than meters. No person shall park or place anything over, or build, pave, landscape, or grade over, a main, service line, valve or valve can, hydrant, blowoff, air or vacuum release valve, sewer main, manhole, or cleanout. For these facilities the area to be kept clear is the area reasonably necessary to locate, reach, and operate them, as determined by the General Manager.

4.6 Rights-of-way and easements. A facility in a public right-of-way or a District easement is covered by this Section. Building, paving, or filling over it does not extinguish the District's right of access.

5. VEHICLES BLOCKING DISTRICT FACILITIES

5.1 The District does not tow vehicles. Moving a vehicle is the responsibility of the customer or the vehicle's owner. Where a vehicle blocks a facility, District personnel will leave written notice at the premises identifying the location and asking that the area be kept clear.

5.2 Where the facility is in a public right-of-way and the vehicle is not moved after notice, the District may refer the matter to the Plumas County Sheriff's Office or other agency with parking enforcement authority there, which may have the vehicle removed at the owner's expense.

5.3 Where a vehicle blocks a meter on the reading date, the service is billed as an Estimated Bill under CPUD Code §5-2.5.5(b)(3), or during the Winter Period under Section 9.7. Damage is charged under Section 8.

6. EMERGENCY ACCESS

6.1 Notice and cure do not apply in an emergency. Where a leak, main break, service line failure, sewer overflow, fire, contamination event, or similar condition requires immediate access, Section 7 does not apply and the District will do what is reasonably necessary to reach and operate the facility without delay.

6.2 The District will make reasonable efforts to contact the owner or occupant first but will not delay action to do so.

6.3 Where a vehicle blocks a facility in an emergency, the District will ask for its immediate removal and may request assistance from the Sheriff's Office or the responding fire agency, which have removal authority the District does not have.

6.4 Where a customer's Obstruction required additional measures or delayed the District, the cost of those measures is charged under Section 11 and any damage to District property under CPUD Code §5-3.1.2.

6.5 The District is not responsible for landscaping, paving, decking, fencing, or other improvements placed over a facility that are disturbed in reaching it.

7. CORRECTION OF OBSTRUCTIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

7.1 Field notice. Where a facility cannot be reached or serviced because of an Obstruction, District personnel will leave written notice at the premises describing the condition and its location.

7.2 Written notice and cure period. The District will follow with written notice to the customer of record stating the condition, that it must be corrected within ten (10) calendar days, what charges and further action may follow, and that the customer may contest the notice by contacting the District office. The General Manager may require correction sooner where the condition is a safety hazard or prevents emergency shutoff.

7.3 Billing meanwhile. A service whose meter cannot be read is billed as an Estimated Bill under CPUD Code §5-2.5.5(b)(3) until an actual reading is obtained.

7.4 Correction by the District. If the condition is not corrected in time, the District may correct it and charge the cost under Section 11, as CPUD Code Article 5-2.5 provides. This does not extend to moving a vehicle. Correction is limited to what is reasonably necessary to restore access, and Section 6.5 applies.

7.5 Unpaid charges. Delinquent charges, with interest and penalties, are billed to the account and are subject to the District's collection remedies under the CPUD Code, including the lien provisions of CPUD Code Article 6-5.1, where the applicable charge has been adopted at a properly noticed public hearing.

7.6 Final notice and Temporary Shutoff. Where an Obstruction remains uncorrected, or the same condition repeatedly recurs, the General Manager may issue a final written notice at least ten (10) calendar days before a Temporary Shutoff, stating:

- the condition, its location, and what must be done;
- the date on or after which water may be shut off;
- that the customer may request a review by the General Manager first, and how; and
- that service will not be shut off while a requested review is pending.

Only the General Manager may authorize a Temporary Shutoff. Service is restored when the condition is corrected, subject to the restoration charge set by the Board.

7.7 Limits on Temporary Shutoff. Shutting off service requires that the District be able to reach the curb stop or another point where the service can be safely isolated. Where an Obstruction prevents that, a Temporary Shutoff is not available and the District's remedies are those in Sections 7.3 through 7.5 and any referral under Section 5.2. The District will not excavate or dismantle a customer's property to isolate a service.

7.8 Snow is not covered here. This Section does not apply to snow or ice during the Winter Period, which is governed by Section 9.

7.9 Other remedies. Nothing in this Policy limits or expands the District's remedies under the CPUD Code.

8. DAMAGE TO DISTRICT FACILITIES

8.1 Under CPUD Code §5-3.1.2 the customer is liable for damage to District property caused by the customer or by their tenants, agents, employees, contractors, licensees, or invitees, including damage from vehicles or equipment, from paving or grading over a facility, or from striking one.

8.2 The District will repair the damage and invoice the customer under Section 11.

9. WINTER METER READING

9.1 Clearing snow is voluntary. No customer is required to remove snow from a meter. A customer who does not is not in violation of this Policy and is not subject to any charge or penalty on account of snow.

9.2 The District does not remove snow. District personnel will not shovel, dig out, or otherwise clear snow or ice from a meter in order to read it, for any customer. This replaces the District's prior practice of clearing snow and reading meters for a selected group of about forty customers.

9.3 The Winter Read List. A customer who wants their meter read during the Winter Period asks the District to add the service to the Winter Read List. A request may be made by telephone, in writing, in person, or by email.

- Any customer who asks is added. There is no charge, no eligibility requirement, and no approval step, and the District does not deny a request.
- A request may be made at any time and stays in effect until the customer asks to be removed. Customers do not need to renew each year.
- The District maintains the list and will provide it on request.

9.4 What the customer does. A customer on the list keeps the meter box lid and the Clear Zone free of snow and ice, keeps the lid able to be lifted, and keeps a safe path to the box, on or before the reading date. Marking the meter with a stake or flag before the first snowfall makes it much easier to find.

9.5 What the District does. The District reads the regular route at the end of each month. During the Winter Period it will attempt a reading at each service on the Winter Read List, and at any other service where the meter is accessible when the reader reaches it. In a month with little or no snow, the full route is read as usual.

9.6 A reading is not guaranteed. Even a cleared meter may not be readable — a fogged, frosted, or iced register face, water or ice in the box, a lid frozen shut, or a damaged register. Where no reading is obtained the service is billed under Section 9.7.

9.7 Billing when no reading is obtained. Under CPUD Code §5-2.5.1, a service not read during a month of the Winter Period is billed the Minimum Monthly Charge for its meter size, and usage above that volume is billed with the next actual reading. Where the General Manager finds an Estimated Bill more accurate, the service may instead be billed under CPUD Code §5-2.5.5(b)(3). This is not a penalty.

9.8 After March 31. Where snow or ice still prevents a reading after March 31, the service is billed under CPUD Code §5-2.5.5(b)(3) until an actual reading is obtained.

10. LEAKS

10.1 A meter reading records the volume the meter registered. It is not an inspection of the customer's plumbing and does not locate leaks.

10.2 Where a reading shows continuous flow, or use materially above that service's history for the same period, the District will notify the customer using the contact information on file.

10.3 Where no reading is obtained the District has no consumption data and cannot identify unusual use until the next actual reading. This is the main practical reason a customer may want to join the Winter Read List.

10.4 Under CPUD Code §5-3.1.6 the customer is responsible for pipes and fixtures beyond the meter and for water lost through them. Leak adjustments are governed by Policy 6040 and Policy 6050.

11. CHARGES

11.1 Where the District corrects an Obstruction under Section 7, takes additional measures under Section 6.4, or repairs damage under Section 8, the customer is charged the District's actual cost — labor at the rate set by the Board by resolution, equipment time, and materials at actual cost.

11.2 Where a customer reports an Obstruction corrected and the facility is found still inaccessible on a return visit made in response, the District may charge for the return trip at actual cost.

11.3 These charges are cost recovery. They are not fines or penalties and are not intended to produce revenue beyond the District's actual cost.

11.4 Charges are billed to the account and are subject to the dispute procedure in CPUD Code §5-2.5.4.

12. EMPLOYEE SAFETY

12.1 District personnel are not required to enter an area, open a box, or attempt a reading where it would be unsafe — ice, unstable footing, an unrestrained animal, an open excavation, a vehicle that cannot be safely worked around, or unknown contents in a buried box.

12.2 Where personnel decline a site, the location is documented and the service is billed under Section 9.7. Declining an unsafe site is not a failure of the District to provide the winter reading.

13. PUBLIC NOTICE

13.1 One-time public notice. Following adoption, the General Manager shall give public notice of this Policy once — by posting it at the District office, a bill message or bill insert, a news release to local media, posting on the District website, or any combination of those. The notice shall explain that the Winter Read List exists, that any customer may join at any time by contacting the office at no charge, that the District does not remove snow, how billing works when a meter is not read, and the year-round access requirement.

13.2 Continuing availability. This Policy shall be available for review at the District office for as long as it is in effect, and a copy shall be provided in writing on request at no charge. The Policy will also be posted on the District website at such time as the District publishes its policies there. No further or recurring notice is required.

13.3 Additional notice is discretionary. The General Manager may give further notice at any time, by bill message, bill insert, mailed notice, news release, or the District website, but is not required to do so.

14. ADMINISTRATION

14.1 The General Manager is responsible for administering this Policy and may delegate any function under it to District staff. The authorization of a Temporary Shutoff under Section 7.6 is reserved to the General Manager and may not be delegated.

14.2 The General Manager may adopt forms, notices, door tags, and internal procedures to carry out this Policy.

14.3 This Policy shall be reviewed annually at the January Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors.

15. RELATED AUTHORITIES AND DOCUMENTS

- CPUD Code Articles 5-2.3, 5-2.5, 5-2.6, 5-2.12, 5-3.1, and 6-5.1
- California Public Utilities Code §15501 et seq.
- Policy 3055 — Cross-Connection Control
- Policy 6040 — Leak Adjustments
- Policy 6050 — Billing Adjustments
- The Board's current water and sewer rate resolution

16. EFFECTIVE DATE

16.1 This Policy takes effect October 1, 2026, the first day of the Winter Period.

16.2 The one-time notice required by Section 13.1 shall be issued as soon as practicable following adoption, and in any event before the 2026–2027 Winter Period begins.

Chester Public Utility District
Adoption of Policy Number 6075

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Directors of the Chester Public Utility District at a duly noticed public meeting held September 22, 2026.

Board Chair: _____ Date: September 22, 2026
Stephen Graffweg, Board Chair

Attested: _____ Date: September 22, 2026
Kelly Sanders, Board Clerk