



BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES

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Vacant/Inactive Accounts

BPU_POL_2005-07

Latest Revision/Effective Date: January 27, 2026

Original Adoption Date: August 30, 2005

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent billing practices for vacant or inactive utility accounts at Brainerd Public Utilities (BPU). This policy ensures that fixed costs associated with maintaining utility infrastructure, service readiness, and account administration are equitably recovered regardless of customer usage status. It also provides clarity to customers regarding ongoing fixed charges during periods when utility services are inactive or vacant.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all customer accounts serviced by BPU that are vacant or inactive.

III. Definitions

Account: A customer record established by BPU for the provision and billing of utility services to a specific service address.

Active Account: An account for which utility services are available for use, regardless of whether actual consumption occurs.

Vacant Account: An account for which utility services remain connected and available, but where the premises is vacant or the customer has requested suspension of usage, resulting in no or minimal consumption.

Inactive Account: An account for which BPU utility owned equipment has been removed from the service address.

Customer: Any individual, business, property owner, tenant, or legal entity that has established an account with BPU and is responsible for payment of charges associated with that account.

Delinquent Account: An account with charges that remain unpaid after the established due date in accordance with BPU billing policies.

Fixed Charge: A recurring monthly charge assessed to recover costs associated with system infrastructure, service availability, meter ownership, billing, customer service, and administrative functions, independent of utility usage and is stated on the schedule of fees.

Usage Charges: Charges based on actual consumption of electricity or water, measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh) or gallons, respectively.

Service Availability: The condition in which BPU utility infrastructure and equipment remain installed and capable of providing service upon demand.

BPU-Owned Equipment: Any meters, service components, or related utility equipment installed or maintained by BPU and retained as BPU property, regardless of location.

IV. Policy Statement

BPU will charge all customers a monthly fixed charge for utility services, regardless of the length of time an account will remain vacant. Residential accounts will be billed the monthly fixed charge for electric, water, and wastewater each month, plus any kilowatt hours used and all gallons of water used that are not included in the fixed charge. Commercial accounts will be billed for the appropriate monthly fixed charge for electric and water utility services based on size of service. The wastewater charge is the same for both commercial and residential accounts.

Customers with an account that is inactive for a continuous period of twelve (12) months or longer shall be required to reapply for new utility service in accordance with BPU's current service application requirements, fees, and policies.

For any vacant account exceeding twelve (12) consecutive months, BPU reserves the right to remove, reclaim, or otherwise take possession of any BPU-owned equipment located on the premises, including but not limited to meters and associated service components making the account inactive.

V. Procedures

Utility Staff

1. Account Status Monitoring

Utility billing staff shall monitor account activity monthly to identify accounts classified as vacant.

2. Vacant Account Tracking

Staff will monitor and determine when equipment shall be removed and considered inactive.

3. Account Status Review

Accounts that remain vacant for ten (10) months shall be flagged for review. Staff shall verify account status, confirm contact information, and prepare advance notification to the customer regarding upcoming reapplication requirements.

4. Customer Notification

Prior to the account reaching twelve (12) consecutive months of inactivity, staff shall provide written notice informing the customer that:

- o Reapplication for new service will be required after twelve (12) months of inactivity; and
- o BPU may remove or reclaim BPU-owned equipment remaining on the premises.

5. Reapplication Requirement

Upon twelve (12) consecutive months of low or no consumption, following customer notification, BPU shall designate the vacant account as inactive and require the customer to submit a new application for service prior to restoration.

6. Equipment Assessment and Removal

Staff may evaluate the premises for BPU-owned equipment associated with vacant accounts exceeding twelve (12) months and may remove, reclaim, or secure such equipment in accordance with safety standards and operational procedures.

7. Documentation

All actions taken under this policy, including notifications, account closure, equipment removal, and customer communications, shall be documented in the customer account record.

Customers

1. Vacant Account Responsibility

Customers are responsible for notifying BPU when a property becomes vacant or when utility usage is expected to be vacant.

2. Billing During Vacancy

Customers with vacant accounts remain responsible for all applicable monthly fixed charges until the service is disconnected and BPU owned equipment is removed in accordance with BPU policies.

3. Duration of Vacancy

Customers may maintain a vacant account for up to twelve (12) consecutive months. A vacant account may continue beyond twelve (12) months if the customer acknowledges the vacancy and continues to pay all applicable charges. BPU reserves the right, at its discretion, to designate the account as inactive and remove or reclaim BPU-owned equipment at any time in accordance with policy.

4. Reapplication for Service

Customers seeking to restore service after an account has been designated inactive must submit a new service application and comply with all current requirements, including deposits, fees, and inspections.

5. Equipment on Premises

Customers acknowledge that meters and other utility equipment located on the premises are owned by BPU. BPU may remove such equipment from properties associated with vacant accounts exceeding twelve (12) months.

6. Customer Contact Information

Customers are responsible for maintaining current contact information with BPU to ensure receipt of notices related to account status and billing.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

This policy will be implemented by the Billing Specialist and overseen by the Business Office Supervisor.

VII. Compliance and References

None

VIII. Associated Forms and Attachments

None

IX. Review and Update Schedule

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Public Utilities Commission.

Revised: January 27, 2026

X. Approval and Authority

The Brainerd Public Utilities Commission approved this policy on January 27, 2026.