



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**No. 236 – May 27, 2020**

**For more information contact:**  
[EGLE-Assist@Michigan.gov](mailto:EGLE-Assist@Michigan.gov)  
517-284-9278

### **State leaders urge residents with water bill payment concerns to contact local water departments and state assistance programs**

**LANSING, MICH.** Today, state leaders urged those with recently reconnected residential water service to begin the process of working with local water departments to identify assistance programs and financial assistance to remain connected.

Nearly 2,000 homes have been reconnected since late March when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer ordered the restoration of water service under [Executive Order 2020-28](#) to ensure at-risk households have access to clean water for hand washing and other critical sanitation needs.

During the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, those who have lost jobs or are struggling to cover expenses, including water bills, are encouraged to reach out to their local water departments. Several counties across the state received Cares Act funding to support the pandemic response that could also be used to assist with water bills.

“No one should have to worry about having water during a pandemic,” said Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert Gordon. “Local water departments can help, and MDHHS is also prepared to help eligible residents access assistance to keep their water connected.”

State leaders encourage anyone facing financial distress because of COVID-19 to:

- Contact their local water department to learn about assistance programs. Detroit residents should reach out to Wayne Metro at 313-386-9727.
- Call 211 or go to [www.mi211.org](http://www.mi211.org) for information about getting help paying utility bills or to learn more about agencies that can provide assistance with paying for water bills.
- Apply for State Emergency Relief (SER) bill payment assistance directly online at [Michigan.gov/MIbridges](http://Michigan.gov/MIbridges) or call 855-275-6424.

“It is critical that those recently reconnected to water, as well as those struggling to keep water connected, continue to have access to the water needed to protect themselves from Covid-19,” said **EGLE Director Liesl Clark**. “Helping Michigan families understand how to access the support they need is important as we get through this unprecedented time.”

The order for reconnection remains in effect and upfront payment is not required for reconnection. All occupied residents are required to be reconnected under the governor’s order, which remains in effect for the duration of the Michigan State of Emergency. Residents are not required to provide a copy of their

deed or lease agreement to have water restored during the COVID-19 emergency. Although bills will continue to accrue during the emergency, residents can work with local water departments to arrange for payment moving out of the emergency.

Michigan residents without running water should take the following steps:

- Contact your local water department and tell them you are eligible for reconnection under the governor's executive order. If you are unsure how to reach your authority, contact your local city, village or township offices to find out. Detroiters can call Wayne Metro at 313-386-9727.
- If you are unable to reach your water provider or they are unwilling or unable to restore service, you may obtain assistance from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) at 1-800-662-9278. **Clean Water Public Advocate Ninah Sasy** monitors every request for assistance. She will work with local suppliers to resolve the concern and will elevate issues directly to the governor's office as necessary.
- Once service is reconnected, it is important to properly flush the pipes to clear stagnant water that may have collected contaminants. Guidance on flushing is available [in English](#), [in Spanish](#), and [in Arabic](#). Guidance on flushing appliances that use water – like refrigerator icemakers or water softeners, is also available [in English](#), [in Spanish](#), and [in Arabic](#). A video (in English) on how to properly flush systems is [available here](#).

For residents struggling with heat and electric bills during the COVID-19 pandemic, utilities across the state have suspended non-payment disconnections for low-income and senior customers for the duration of the emergency. Information and tips on managing utility bills are [available here](#) through the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://CDC.gov/Coronavirus).

###