

*The Water, Sewer & Gas Board of the Town of Wedowee*  
*11 W Broad Street, Wedowee AL 36278*  
*256-357-4716*

**Theft of Utility Services and Unauthorized Use Policy May 2026**

**Water, Sewer & Gas Board Utility Theft Policy**

The unauthorized use, theft, diversion, tampering, or destruction of utility services or utility infrastructure is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated by the Water, Sewer & Gas Board.

Utility theft increases operating costs, damages public infrastructure, creates public safety hazards, and unfairly shifts costs to paying customers. The Board is committed to protecting public utility systems and will aggressively pursue enforcement and recovery efforts against any individual, contractor, business, or entity engaged in unauthorized activity.

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**Prohibited Activities**

The following activities are strictly prohibited and may constitute theft of services, criminal tampering, criminal mischief, fraud, or other violations under Alabama law:

**Unauthorized Water Usage**

- Drawing water from fire hydrants without written authorization from the Board
- Using hydrant meters without Board approval
- Filling tanks, trucks, pools, ponds, or construction equipment without authorization
- Bypassing meters or service lines

**Meter Tampering**

- Cutting locks or removing locking devices placed by the Board
- Reconnecting service after disconnection or lockout by the Board
- Breaking meter seals
- Bypassing, altering, reversing, or interfering with meter operation
- Removing, relocating, or damaging utility meters

**Unauthorized Connections**

- Unauthorized hookups to water, sewer, or gas systems
- Connecting to another customer's service
- Illegal taps into utility mains or service lines
- Use of abandoned or disconnected services

**Damage to Utility Infrastructure**

- Damaging hydrants, valves, meters, regulator stations, pipelines, sewer systems, or related infrastructure

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- Interfering with utility equipment or Board operations
- Excavation or construction activities causing avoidable damage to utility facilities

### **Fraudulent Activity**

- Providing false information to obtain service
  - Using another person's account without authorization
  - Tampering with billing records or service information
  - Establishing fraudulent utility accounts
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### **Contractors and Commercial Users**

Contractors, construction companies, utility crews, and commercial users must obtain written authorization from the Board prior to using water from any hydrant, temporary service connection, or other Board infrastructure.

The unauthorized use of fire hydrants or other Board assets by contractors may result in:

- Immediate termination of access privileges,
- Billing for estimated unauthorized usage,
- Damage claims,
- Permit denial,
- Civil legal action,
- Criminal prosecution,
- And reporting to licensing or regulatory agencies where applicable.

Hydrant use may require:

- Approved hydrant meters,
  - Backflow prevention devices,
  - Deposits,
  - Usage agreements,
  - And inspection by Board personnel.
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### **Investigation and Enforcement**

The Board reserves the right to:

- Investigate suspected utility theft or tampering,
- Inspect meters and utility equipment,

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- Document violations through photographs, video surveillance, meter analysis, or witness statements,
- Estimate unauthorized usage,
- Assess damages and penalties,
- Disconnect service immediately,
- Refuse future service,
- And refer matters to law enforcement or prosecutors.

The Board may cooperate with local, county, state, and federal agencies in the investigation and prosecution of utility theft or related criminal activity.

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### **Financial Liability**

Any person or entity found responsible for unauthorized utility usage, tampering, or damage may be held financially responsible for:

- Estimated utility consumption,
- Repairs and replacement costs,
- Investigation expenses,
- Labor and equipment costs,
- Administrative fees,
- Attorney fees and court costs where permitted by law,
- Interest at the maximum rate allowable by Alabama law,
- And any other damages authorized by law.

The Board reserves the right to pursue collection actions, civil lawsuits, liens where authorized, and all other lawful remedies available.

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### **Repeat Violations and Permanent Service Disconnection**

In the event a customer, contractor, property owner, tenant, occupant, or other individual commits repeated violations involving utility theft, meter tampering, unauthorized reconnection, theft of water from a fire hydrant, or other unauthorized use of Board utilities or infrastructure, the Board reserves the right, to the fullest extent allowable under Alabama law, to permanently remove the utility tap and permanently deny future utility service to the property or responsible party.

Repeat violations may include, but are not limited to:

- Multiple unauthorized reconnections,
- Repeated cutting or removal of Board locks,

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- Continued theft of utility services,
- Repeated meter tampering,
- Repeated unauthorized hydrant usage,
- Or ongoing fraudulent utility activity.

The Board further reserves the right to:

- Remove meters and service connections,
- Physically disconnect service infrastructure,
- Refuse future applications for service,
- Seek injunctive relief,
- Recover all associated costs and damages,
- And pursue all civil and criminal remedies available under Alabama law.

Nothing contained herein shall limit the Board's authority to protect public infrastructure, ensure public safety, or prevent ongoing theft or unauthorized usage of utility services.

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### **Criminal Prosecution**

The Board considers utility theft and meter tampering to be serious offenses.

The Water, Sewer & Gas Board reserves the right to pursue criminal prosecution to the fullest extent permitted under Alabama law against any person or entity engaged in:

- Theft of utility services,
- Meter tampering,
- Unauthorized reconnection,
- Theft of water from fire hydrants,
- Fraudulent utility activity,
- Or destruction of utility infrastructure.

Nothing contained herein limits the Board's ability to seek criminal charges, civil damages, injunctive relief, or any other remedy available under law.

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### **Public Safety Notice**

Unauthorized use of hydrants, gas systems, meters, or utility infrastructure may create serious health and safety hazards, including:

- Water contamination,
- Fire protection impairment,

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- Gas leaks,
- Sewer backups,
- Property damage,
- Bodily injury,
- Or death.

Any person observing suspected utility theft or tampering is encouraged to report the matter to the Board immediately.

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**Effective Date**

This policy shall become effective upon publishing and remain effective until removed or amended.