

COVID-19 Affordability Response

Rate Fairness Board

October 9, 2020

Erin Franks, Rates Administrator

- Overall SFPUC Response
- Shutoffs & Collections Moratorium
- Emergency Discount Programs
 - Residential Water/Sewer and Hetch Hetchy Power
 - Commercial Water/Sewer
 - CleanPowerSF Bill Credit
- What's Next

Overall SFPUC Response to COVID



- Implemented major changes to keep employees and customers safe while maintaining 24/7 operations
 - Closed most in-person services
 - All office employees are working remotely full-time until at least June 2021
 - Onsite employees practicing daily health checks, social distancing, use of personal protective equipment, sanitation procedures
- Many SFPUC employees deployed as disaster service workers with City's overall response



Shutoff & Collections Moratorium

- The pandemic has underscored how access to public utilities is vital to public health
- Beginning in March, we implemented a full moratorium on power and water shutoffs for delinquent payments
 - Also stopped assessing late fees or property tax liens
 - Moratorium currently effective through January 2021, but is likely to be extended
- As of end of September 2020, 1,850 customers would be shut off if the moratorium was not in place



Emergency Discount Programs

- Our existing discount programs were not designed to support customers impacted by COVID-19
- Emergency programs targeted at customers who normally can pay their bills, but are faced with extraordinary financial crisis
 - Minimal documentation required
 - Online application
 - Income requirements *shifted focus to income loss* vs. maximum income amount
 - Programs to support small businesses and nonprofits required to shut down or reduce operations



Emergency Discount Programs

Program	Eligibility	Benefit	Effective Date
Residential Discount	Individually metered customers who have lost income due to COVID-19	Discount of 15% for water, 35% for wastewater, and 30% for Hetch Hetchy power bill	Launched in May with retroactive discounts to March; extended going-forward only through December
Small Business and Nonprofit Discount	Non-residential customers with fewer than 50 employees who have lost revenue due to COVID-19	6 months of 20% discount on water and wastewater bill	Launched in July; accepting applications through December
CleanPowerSF Bill Credit	Customers enrolled in PG&E's CARE and FERA low-income programs	One-time credit equal to the average monthly bill (\$50 for residential)	Credits issued in October to all customers enrolled at the end of September



Emergency Discount Programs: Outreach Efforts

- New branding to unite all of our discount programs
- Most comprehensive outreach campaign we've ever done. Some examples:
 - Advertisements and interviews in Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog newspapers, digital platforms, and/or radio
 - Partnership with the Citywide Emergency Operations Center to distribute SFPUC Bill Relief door hangers across the city
 - Bill Relief inserts in every SFPUC bill
- Collecting data on “how did you hear about us?” to gauge effectiveness of different outreach methods



If You Need Help Paying
Your Bill, Our Programs
Are Here To Help.



Emergency Discount Programs: Enrollment Status

Program	Applications	Enrolled	Avg Monthly Benefit
Residential Discount (Water/Sewer)	6,935	4,612	\$58
Residential Discount (Hetch Hetchy Power)	422	347	\$23
Small Business and Nonprofit Discount	567	402	\$180
CleanPowerSF Bill Credit	N/A	50,660	\$50

Numbers shown include some estimates and out-of-date information. Comprehensive reports are under development.



Emergency Discount Programs: Customer Profile

Average Program Enrollee	Residential Water/Sewer Discount	Small Business & Nonprofit Discount
Household Size / Number of Employees	4	7
Pre-COVID Monthly Income	\$7,400 (60% of SF AMI)	\$74,000
Post-COVID Monthly Income	\$4,000 (30% SF AMI)	\$25,000
Income Loss	\$3,400	\$49,000

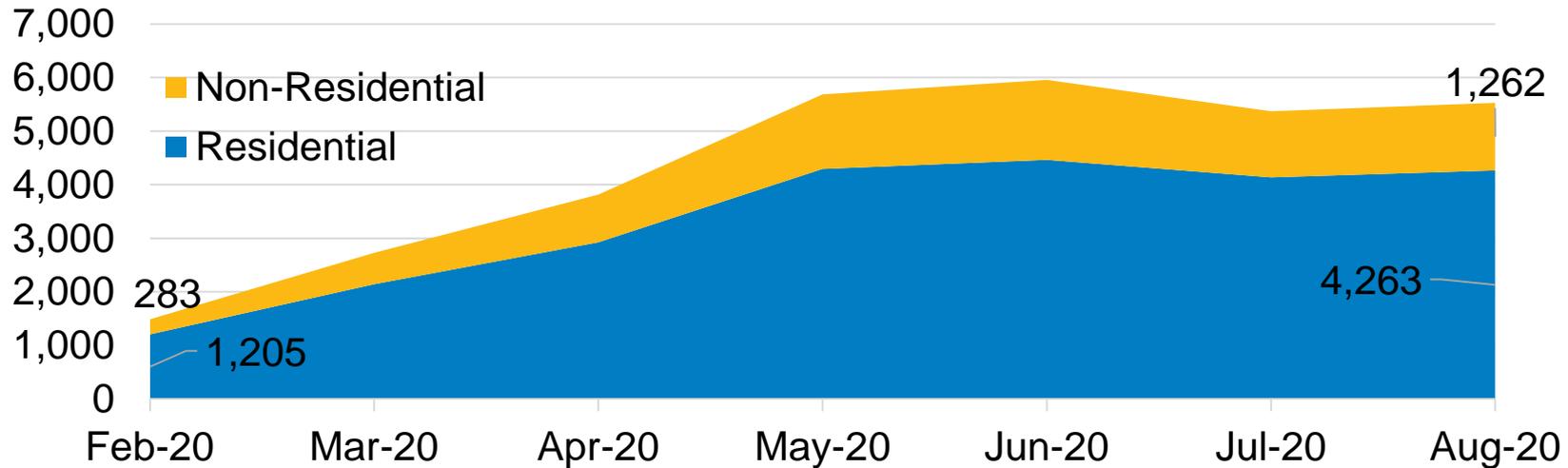
“I am a single mom with two sons. My job has been furloughed with no return to work date”

“I have exhausted all savings paying rent and buying food. All credit cards are maxed.”

“Receiving a temporary reduction in my SF water bill would relieve an immense amount of stress. We are extremely grateful for the offer.”

What's Next: Delinquencies and Shutoffs

Water/Sewer Accounts with Delinquent Balances



- Need a strategy to help customers whose debts are piling up that isn't mass shutoffs
 - Leading sessions with group of utilities across the country to share strategies
 - Working on a pilot program with Office of Financial Empowerment to test debt forgiveness and payment plan models



What's Next: Revamp Discount Programs

- The emergency has given us a chance to pilot improvements to our discount programs
- Evaluating changes to existing programs so that when the emergency program ends, the existing programs can provide support to people still experiencing hardship
 - Online application
 - Changes to income thresholds
 - Tiered discount percentages based on ability to pay analysis
- Seeking sustainable funding options