



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 7, 2020

**SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE CITY OF SAPULPA
REGARDING CITY UTILITIES DURING STATE OF EMERGENCY**

Late last night, April 6, 2020, an article regarding fines for violations of emergency orders issued by the Governor or Mayor during the COVID:19 crisis was published with the following tag;

You will not be forced to wear a mask, but refusal to comply with city's emergency ordinance could lead to a fine or having your utilities cut off.

By referring incompletely to different items discussed at the City Council meeting, the tag and article are inaccurate and left an incorrect impression and misunderstanding among citizens that is obvious from comments being circulated on social media.

TO BE CLEAR --- UTILITIES WILL NOT BE CUTOFF TO RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF AN EMERGENCY ORDER DURING THE COVID:19 CRISIS.

In fact, the penalty provision which could allow utility cutoff first requires a full hearing in Municipal Court after due process with special notice of an election to seek this penalty. This enhanced penalty is in place only to be used as a measure of last resort to obtain compliance from a business that continues to operate in violation of an emergency order and whose continuing violation creates an unreasonable risk to the public health and safety.

At the City, we know that journalists try to get everything correct, but given the large amount of writing and editing that occurs with sometimes unforgiving deadlines, it is possible for a distorted headline and consequent misunderstanding to happen as it did in this situation.

In order to correct any other incorrect impressions regarding city utilities during the COVID:19 emergency, the City would like to remind all citizens of the following:

- Our priority is keeping Sapulpa safe and healthy by preventing further spread of COVID-19. We encourage all citizens to follow CDC guidelines and to comply with the stay-at-home and business restriction orders issued by both the Governor and Mayor during this time.
- To help keep citizens safe, the City has taken the following action to help keep utility accounts active during the emergency:
 - The City has removed all credit card convenience fees and other processor fees from online payments.
 - The City has suspended penalties and late fees and will not disconnect service for non-payment that occurs during the state emergency.
 - For businesses closed during April 2020 with no water use, the City is will reimburse and credit back the base sewer fee to those commercial accounts.

Please be assured that the City of Sapulpa has been, and continues to be, working hard to protect our community during these difficult times. We will continue to update you regularly via social media, so please check the City webpage regularly and continue to follow us on Facebook for updates.

Joan Riley, City Manager

and

David R. Widdoes, City Attorney