

Why 25,000 Detroit Residents Will Soon Have their Water Turned Off

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The city of Detroit may be bankrupt financially, but moral bankruptcy abounds as well as city officials began handing out notices to [as many as 25,000 residents](#) to tell them that they have ten days to pay or their taps will be turned off.

“We want the water shut-offs to end. Period. End of story,” says DeMeeko Williams of the Detroit Water Brigade.

Some of Detroit’s poorest citizens are losing their water in the second round of water cut-offs even though they live right next to a body of water that carry’s one-fifth of the world’s water supply.

[Child welfare authorities](#) even moved into homes to take children from their parents in abodes that had their water cut off earlier in 2014. The cut-offs are nothing more than a demonstration of greed.

Water rates have risen more than 119% in the last decade in Detroit, affecting primarily the poor. Every winter, aging pipes spew water into the street, and while the city ‘has no money to repair this crumbling infrastructure,’ they continue to tap the poorest for resources to pay for water.

What’s worse – as a “cost cutting measure,” the water department stopped sending bills, expecting residents to just figure out what they owed. The department then installed “smart meters” that read backwards, causing may families to receive bills saying they owed thousands of dollars.



Photo credit: (Reuters / Rebecca Cook

The new '[water warnings](#)' will be hung on the doors of households that owe more than \$150 to the city or are more than 60 days behind on their water bills. They have only ten days to pay up or apply for assistance to pay their bills.

Williams of the Detroit Water Brigade [told Detroit News](#):

"They can send out the notices, but really are not reaching out to the people."

The United Nations has even accused Detroit of violating the human right to water.

Maureen Taylor, of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, reminds us that if people can't pay their water bills now, how are they going to pay them suddenly when the city starts sending them past-due statements?

The city has created a new 'payment plan' called the "10-30-50" where overdue households enter a two year agreement, but they first have to pay a 10 percent 'down-payment' of their past due balance.

If the residents miss a payment, they then have to pay 30 percent of their balance. Another missed payment - 50 percent of their balance, and after that, the water is shut off. It's like issuing mortgage payments for the right to drink water.

Perhaps not any big surprise, but a recent survey by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan found that nearly all of the customers who signed up for the "10-30-50" plan are now 60 days overdue - that's more than 24,450 Detroit citizens about to have their water cut off. Only 300 residents have been able to keep up with their water payments.

MWRO has started a petition calling on U.S. President Barack Obama to intervene against

the renewed shut-offs, which the group says target “low-income families and have affected the homes of children, the disabled, and our honorable veterans.”

For some families, the water payment amount to as much as 30 percent of their income, and the crisis is growing. It isn't due to a lack of water though. You can count on crooked corporations like Nestle, which sells water [back to the people at high prices](#).

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