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Water and Sewer Debt Assistance Program Still Available

Homeowners Urged to Take Advantage Before Lien Sale List Closes on Friday

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today reminded homeowners on the lien sale list to take advantage of the Water Debt Assistance Program before the lien sale list is finalized this Friday, May 7. The program to help distressed homeowners was launched in February by Mayor Bloomberg as part of his State of the City pledge to enact the most ambitious foreclosure prevention effort in the country. Homeowners still on the lien sale list can sign up for the program by calling 311.

"We want to help relieve the economic burden that many homeowners are facing until they can get back on their feet," said Commissioner Holloway. "In his 2010 State of the City Address, Mayor Bloomberg pledged to launch the most ambitious foreclosure prevention effort in the country. The Water Debt Assistance Program is part of that effort, and it has already given relief to many hardworking New York families. There are still many homeowners facing economic hardship that are eligible for the program. But time is running out. I urge them to take advantage of it. Our staff is ready to work with them to find a way to address their outstanding debt."

The Water Debt Assistance Program was launched to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure for past-due water and sewer debt. DEP will remove eligible two- or three-family homeowners at risk of foreclosure from the lien sale list and defer their outstanding debt until the property is sold, refinanced or the owner has the ability to pay the debt. The program was expanded to include owners of single-family homes who are at risk of foreclosure and who would be eligible for water service termination because of past-due water and sewer debt. Single-family homeowners who qualify and enroll in the Water Debt Assistance Program will be removed from a list of those eligible for service termination due to unpaid water and sewer debts. In exchange, homeowners in both categories are required to pay all subsequent water bills on time to remain in the program and enter a binding agreement that the water and sewer debt will be paid in full when the property is sold,

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transferred, or refinanced.

Eligibility criteria for two- or three-family homeowners are as follows: Properties must have more than \$1,000 in overdue water bills, outstanding for at least a year, to be placed on the lien sale list; and the owner has received formal notice of serious delinquency from their mortgage lender. Eligibility criteria for single-family homeowners are as follows: Homeowner must have more than \$500 in past water dues, outstanding for more than six months; and the homeowner has received formal notice of serious delinquency from their mortgage lender.

The City was granted the authority to sell liens for outstanding water and sewer charges through the enactment of Local Law 68 in 2007. The lien sale is an essential collection tool that serves as a powerful incentive for property owners to settle outstanding debt. Since 2008, of the delinquent accounts that were placed on the 90-day lien sale list, liens were sold on only 14 percent of properties, with the remainder paying off their outstanding debt, or entering payment agreements to do so before the lien sale takes place.

Two- and three-family homeowners have until Friday to enroll in the Water Debt Assistance Program. The single-family homeowner component of the program will continue throughout the year. Homeowners interested in applying can schedule a pre-qualification appointment or learn more about the program by calling 311 or visiting nyc.gov/dep.

DEP manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. New York City's water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the City, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines take wastewater to 14 in-City treatment plants.

Related Links

On May 6, 2010 Commissioner Cas Holloway gave testimony on Intro 26, a bill that would amend Local Law 68, the water and sewer debt lien-sale authority created in 2007, before New York City Council Committees on Finance and Community Development.

- ▶ [Read the testimony](#)
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