

# Renters vs. Landlords-

## Who should be responsible for the utility account?



### **If you are a landlord that allows your renters to use power or water services on an account registered in your name, there are a few points for you to consider:**

- Under PUD's policies, any late fees, shut-off fees for non-payment, meter tampering fees and collections charges are **your financial responsibility**, even if you are not the one living at the residence. Often, landlords are unaware that services have been disconnected for non-payment and if the renter turns the service back on by themselves, the landlord is responsible for paying the tampering fees and other associated charges, which can add up to over \$250.00 each time.
- **If your renter is late with the rent or refuses to pay, you may not terminate utilities**, even if the service is in your name. The Washington's Landlord-Tenant Act states that it is, "unlawful for a landlord to intentionally cause termination of any of his or her tenant's utility services, including water, heat, electricity, or gas, except for an interruption of utility services for a reasonable time in order to make necessary repairs" (RCW 59.18.300).
- Due to privacy protection laws, we are unable to discuss the utility account, including the balance due, with your renter unless you give us permission for them to access the account information, and vice versa if the account is in their name. We provide **Rental Standby Agreements** that allows renters to set up service in their own name and then the service defers back to the property owner/manager's name when the renter's account closes.

### **Renters should also inquire about the residence's utility costs prior to signing any kind of rental agreement.**

- **Your deposit to sign up for service is not only based on a credit check, but also the two highest bills in a 12 month period at that address.** If your landlord or the tenants before you had high electric bills, your deposit amount is impacted by their history of usage at that residence. (The same goes for purchasing a house that has had existing service with the prior owners.)
- Services that have been disconnected in the past may require reconnection fees to continue service at the residence.
- Setting up service under your own account ensures that you are able to monitor utility usage and expenses and that your bill is paid on time every month.
- Water rates and basic charges for water vary depending on what system you are on. To find out what your basic monthly water charge is or a historic average of the electric bills, you can always call our office. Stop/Start Service information is also available on our website at [www.mason-pud1.org](http://www.mason-pud1.org).

**For more questions on setting up a Rental Standby Agreement or service at your new rental residence, please call our office at (360) 877-5249 or stop by and visit with one of our Customer Service Representatives.**