



# A Helping Hand for Paying your Utility Bills

*By Cassie McClure and Suzanne Michaels*

If you look at your current utility bill and know you will have problems paying – please don't wait until it's "past due". Come talk to Las Cruces Utilities (LCU) Customer Service – two locations – NOW to see what help is available. LCU has several options that can help you manage your bills before they come due.



“Customers may be pleasantly surprised at the type of help we can offer. Getting a conversation started now on payment options before the weather turns cold, when the bills get higher, is helpful for us and to customers,” explained Jose Provencio, LCU

business services administrator.

There are several options available that depend on your situation:

- **Payment Plan Agreement** - This is useful when you might owe several months of utility bills but need a plan to get back on schedule.
- **Preferred Payment Date** - This is a monthly extension for disabled and/or elderly customers, so the LCU bill due date coincides with the arrival of Social Security or Disability checks.
- **Budget Plan** - Bill “leveling” evens out your monthly bills keeping them at a constant rate throughout the year.

- Casa De Peregrinos (CDP) administers funds provided by the City of Las Cruces for all Utility Customers who might be in a financial hardship. This assistance begins with a visit with the Collections Representative who will provide a referral form; the customer takes the referral form to CDP and brings back a completed voucher from CDP to a Collections Representative.
- Charitable funding sources - Local organizations have agreements with the City of Las Cruces to help you if you are in need or have medical issues.
- Promise to pay - Know that money is coming in, but it'll take some extra time? Get a two-week extension on the billing due date.
- LIHEAP (Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program) - This is a federal program coordinated by the State of NM to assist citizens with heating resources.

For any of these options, call Customer Service for assistance at (575) 541-2111 or email [Collections@las-cruces.org](mailto:Collections@las-cruces.org) and include your name and street address. If you want to come in in person, there are two locations to make it convenient for everyone:

- Customer Service at City Hall, 700 N. Main St., open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or
- East Mesa Customer Service Center just off Hwy 70, at 5195 Bataan Memorial West, open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

“A quick conversation – be it by phone or in person and even with an email – starts the process for us to best help you and your situation to make sure your services don’t stop and that you are able to stay current on your bills,” said Provencio. “We want to see all of our customers be able to continue their services during the upcoming winter.”

*You can reach Las Cruces Utilities at 528-3500 from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Las Cruces Utilities provides GAS – WATER – WASTEWATER – SOLID WASTE services to approximately 100,000 Las Cruces residents and businesses.*

#### CAPTIONS:

PHOTO 1: Joe Padilla, LCU senior customer service representative, explains to Lucy Melendez options for bill paying. The most important step is for customers having payment problems to come in to speak to Customer Service staff who will work hard to find the best solution.