

# Federal COVID-19 Funds Tapped for Local Utility Bill Relief

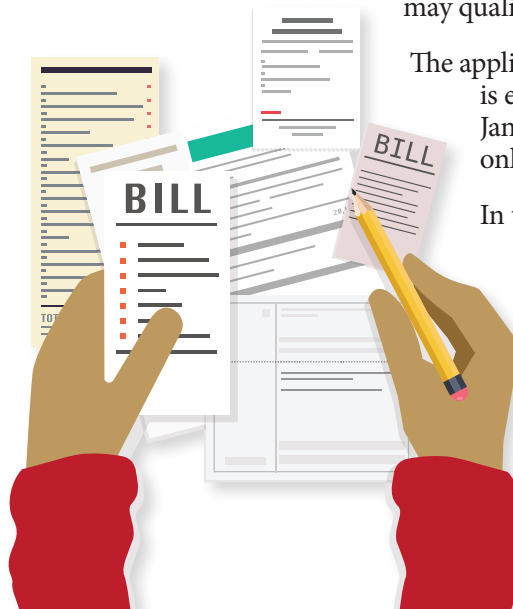
Still feeling the financial pinch from the coronavirus pandemic? Thanks to a new federal funding program, more help is on the way.

The American Rescue Plan Act, or ARPA, earmarked \$1.9 trillion in federal COVID-19 relief, including \$326.9 million for San Antonio. Signed into law in March 2021, the act aims to help families, small businesses, industries and local governments recover from financial setbacks caused by the pandemic.

In November, San Antonio City Council voted to set aside a portion of local ARPA funds for utility bill relief, making up to \$10 million available to SAWS customers who qualify.

To receive this assistance, you must:

- Be a SAWS residential customer.
- Reside inside San Antonio city limits.



- Have an unpaid past-due balance on your SAWS account related to charges between March 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2021.
- Provide documentation of a COVID-19-related financial hardship.
- Be enrolled in a SAWS payment plan.

Most customers who qualify can receive up to \$700 in bill assistance. Those who meet certain federal income guidelines may qualify for more.

The application process for this funding is expected to be available before Jan. 1. To learn more and apply online, visit [saws.org/covid19](https://saws.org/covid19).

In the meantime, if you have an unpaid balance on your SAWS bill, you can keep your water service from being disconnected by setting up a payment plan.

Visit [saws.org/getcurrent](https://saws.org/getcurrent) and choose the “payment plan” option. Or call us at 210-704-SAWS (7297).

## More Help Is Available

If you're still having trouble paying your bill, you may qualify for one or more need-based assistance programs from SAWS or our partner agencies. Visit [saws.org/getcurrent](https://saws.org/getcurrent) and select the “financial assistance” option or call 210-233-CARE (2273).

## Are You Ready To Weather An Emergency?

Following last February's record-breaking winter storm, it seemed clear that San Antonians simply weren't ready — for the temperatures, the power outages and the resulting loss of water service. It was a catastrophe that affected all of us and it's something we don't want to experience ever again.

Emergencies happen. So SAWS has been working hard to make sure they don't affect your water service in the future.

We're building up resiliency in our power sources and work systems. And we're

providing you with tips and tools to help you “Be Ready” for a winter freeze or other emergencies.

From how to prepare water during a boil water notice to which emergency supplies to keep on hand, our resources will help you be ready for the unexpected. It's all available in English and Spanish at [saws.org/BeReady](https://saws.org/BeReady).

Need extra help prepping your home for wintery weather? Call a licensed plumber to complete our winterizing checklist and qualify for our Be Ready rebate. Learn more and apply at [GardenStyleSA.com/plumbing](https://GardenStyleSA.com/plumbing).

Save your pipes and #CanTheGrease! Don't let greasy leftovers from your holiday feast spoil your holidays. Scrape all grease and food bits off of plates, pots and pans right into the trash.

## Event Calendar

### Lightscape

Through Jan. 2

San Antonio Botanical Garden  
555 Funston Place  
[sabot.org](http://sabot.org)

### Martin Luther King Jr. March

Jan. 17

MLK Academy  
3501 MLK Drive  
[sanantonio.gov/MLK](http://sanantonio.gov/MLK)

### Pop-Up Culinary Demo

Jan. 23

San Antonio Botanical Garden  
555 Funston Place  
[sabot.org](http://sabot.org)

### Visit Mitchell Lake

Every weekend in January

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center  
10750 Pleasanton Road  
[mitchelllake.audubon.org](http://mitchelllake.audubon.org)



**Customer Service and 24-hour Emergency**  
**210-704-SAWS (7297)**  
[saws.org/waternews](http://saws.org/waternews)

## SAWS Is Always Planning for Your Water Future

Bexar County's population is constantly growing, and the demand for water is growing with it. That's why San Antonio Water System is always working to ensure the community has plentiful water supplies for generations to come.

SAWS' Water Management Plan, the organization's guiding document to project water demands and identify firm water sources, includes details about population projections, conservation goals, development and



timing of new water sources, as well as other important water-related topics that influence San Antonio's water supply.

The plan is updated about every five years and that means the new year will bring an opportunity for you to get involved in the conversation for the development of the 2022 plan.

Expect to see more information on this exciting opportunity in the months ahead.

In the meantime, you can read the 2017 Water Management Plan at [WaterCitySA.com](http://WaterCitySA.com).

## Welcome Winter Wildlife

It's no secret that birds fly south for the winter. For a wide variety of species, mild-wintered San Antonio is south enough.

Roving flocks of warblers, vireos, sparrows, waxwings, wrens, kinglets and more join our year-round residents like cardinals, jays, chickadees and titmice.

And while seed and suet do a fine job of attracting birds to your landscape, fresh, sparkling H<sub>2</sub>O will fascinate the flocks of feathered friends that flew in for winter.



- Add a simple bird bath or shallow water feature to your garden.
- Drop in textured rocks or a bit of gravel to provide footing for the birds.
- Place it where the water can be warmed by the winter sun, but close enough to vegetation should the birds need a quick escape.

Most importantly, keep it clean. Scrubbing and refilling regularly will help keep your birds healthy, happy and coming back for more.

## A Safe Tree = A Safe Holiday

Before you trim the tree — either fresh or artificial — make sure to take precautions to avoid a fire.

Electrical malfunctions don't discriminate. Both fresh and fake trees can quickly go up in smoke. So take the same safety measures either way.

- Look for a fresh tree with vibrant green needles that don't break easily. The tree shouldn't be shedding its needles readily.
- Give it a fresh cut — about two inches off the trunk — before you put it



in the base.

- Fill the base about 2/3 full with water and refill it daily.
- Place your tree away from heat sources such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure light cords are not frayed and toss damaged strands.
- Bedtime (or time away from home) means lights out for the tree too.

When your tree begins to drop its needles, it's time to bid farewell till next year.