

Around Town

For Release 12 noon Wednesday, Sept. 19, 2007

**By Billy Ray McKelvy**

**De Queen Mayor**

Automating the payment of your monthly utility bill from the city can save the trouble of writing a check, avoid penalties and save the price of a first class stamp.

About 10 percent of the city's 2,200 utility customers pay their bills with bank drafts.

Water meters are read beginning at the first of the month and bills are mailed around the 21st or 22nd of the month. Utility bills are due by the 10th of the following month so customers have almost three weeks to make payments.

If bills are not paid by the 10th of the month, a 10 percent penalty will be added to the bill. If payment is not received by the 15th day of the month service will be discontinued and a \$25 delinquent fee will be added to the bill.

Each month, city employees shut off water for about 50 customers for non-payment. It's an unpleasant surprise for water customers and a chore that city employees do not enjoy.

If you choose to have your monthly utility bill paid by bank draft it's a simple process to start. You must complete a form at city hall and provide a canceled check or deposit slip. Payments will be drafted as close as possible to the due date on the 10th so there are no penalties for overdue bills. Customers will still receive a postcard bill so they may record the amount in their checkbook.