



Official Publication of the  
National League of Cities

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# Nation's Cities

WEEKLY

Newspaper Handling:

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 41 | NOVEMBER 8, 2010

## New NLC Program Reduces Service Line Repair Costs

by Denise Belser and Cathy Spain

Cities can now help their residents cope with the high cost of external water and sewer line repairs by participating in a new NLC Service Line Warranty Program.

Homeowners in participating cities are eligible to purchase these low-cost warranties, which provide repairs for broken or leaking utility lines up to \$4,000 for each occurrence. These repairs may range from \$1,200 to over \$3,500 and can create a significant financial hardship for the unprepared. Warranties provide peace of mind for homeowners by transferring the risk of costly repairs.

Many residents become frustrated when they are told that the city is not responsible for a service line repair. The homeowner must contract with a plumber and pay the repair costs if the damage occurs between the city's main pipe and the water meter or the connection to the home. Cities that participate in the warranty program can enhance the city's image by reducing the homeowner cost and making reputable plumbers readily available.

The service line repair work is performed by local, professional plumbers chosen by Utility Service Partners Inc., (USP), the company that administers the program. Once USP receives a call about a service line problem from a resident who has purchased a warranty, a plumber is assigned to the claim and is required to contact the customer

*"This program has been available to Clarksburg's residents for 18 months, and it is a real winner. Resident satisfaction is high and it's a lot easier to tell citizens about this great new service rather than explain why they are on the hook for costly repairs."*

— James C. Hunt, councilmember, Clarksburg, W.Va., and NLC immediate past president

within one hour of receiving the job assignment from USP. Typically, repairs are completed within 24 hours.

The national program is modeled after existing programs in Oklahoma and West Virginia and sponsored by the state municipal leagues. Cities in these states may continue to contact their state league or NLC for information about the program.

"This program has been available to Clarksburg's residents for 18 months, and it is a real winner," said James C. Hunt, councilmember, Clarksburg, W.Va., and NLC immediate past president. "Resident satisfaction is high and it's a lot easier to tell citizens about this great new service rather than explain why they are on the hook for costly repairs."

Starting up the program is easy and there is no cost for the city. Once the decision is made to move forward, the city agrees to co-brand the program by signing a one-page marketing service agreement with USP. This permits USP to use the city's name and logo in mailings sent to residents and in advertising. Then the city approves a press release and a solicitation letter and sends the city logo artwork and

other information to USP for the letters that are mailed to residents promoting the program.

Several marketing campaigns are undertaken to promote the service in the city. The city has the right to prior review and approval of any materials prepared by USP. Participation increases with subsequent campaigns and word-of-mouth communications from trusted friends and neighbors.

NLC and USP will roll out the program over an 18-month period at six-month intervals as various state regulatory requirements are met and contractor networks are established and vetted by USP in the 48 contiguous states. (See the map to determine the program's availability in your state.)

The benefits of this program are shared throughout the community. It is extremely affordable — between \$4 and \$6 for each warranty a month. Citizen frustration is reduced, city officials have fewer complaints to handle from residents, there is no cost to the city for this value-added program and the city even receives a share of the revenues collected. All repairs are performed to code and the money stays in the community because

local plumbers are engaged.

Furthermore, USP monitors contractor performance to ensure quality work and a customer repair hotline is available 24/7. The program also contributes to a city's "green" initiatives. Leaking water pipes waste millions of gallons of treated water and leaking sewer lines pollute groundwater and land.

This NLC Service Line Warranty Program is a home protection solution for city residents arranged by NLC Enterprise Programs, an initiative bringing solutions and savings to cities. When cities participate in an NLC-endorsed program, they have the satisfaction of knowing that the NLC staff is working with the program administrator to offer superior service.

**Details:** For more information about this program, visit [www.nlc.org/enterpriseprograms](http://www.nlc.org/enterpriseprograms) or contact Denise Belser, NLC program director, at [belser@nlc.org](mailto:belser@nlc.org) or (202) 626-3028.

If you are attending the Congress of Cities in Denver, stop by the USP/NLC Service Line Warranty booth in the NLC Pavilion to begin the process of bringing this program to your city residents.

To strengthen  
and promote  
cities as centers  
of opportunity,  
leadership, and  
governance.



National League of Cities

1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004-1763  
202-626-3000  
Fax: 202-626-3043  
www.nlc.org

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Dear City Official:

The National League of Cities (NLC) is pleased to partner with Utility Service Partners, Inc. (USP) in offering the **NLC Service Line Warranty Program**. Our Service Line Warranty Program is an affordable home protection solution for your residents to help them deal with the financial burden of unanticipated utility line repair and replacement costs that are not the city's responsibility to repair. Some additional program benefits are:

- No cost for cities to participate
- Affordable rates for residents
- Repairs made by trusted local contractors
- Reduces local officials' frustration
- Increases citizen satisfaction

We selected this program because of two outstanding features. First, by endorsing the NLC Service Line Warranty Program, the city generates extra revenue. USP will pay the city a royalty on every dollar collected. The Program generates an on-going, sustainable source of revenue for the city. Second, the program helps stimulate the local economy. USP uses local contractors to complete the repairs, which helps keep money in the local economy.

Some other things to consider in evaluating our Service Line Warranty Program are: 1) USP pays for the repairs, not your residents, 2) all repairs are performed to local code, 3) customers are provided with a 24/7 customer service repair hotline, and 4) USP is responsible for all aspects of the program including marketing, billing, customer service, and performing all repairs.

The Warranty Program came to the attention of the NLC through a grass roots effort that began in West Virginia, Illinois, Oklahoma and Texas. Participating cities have been delighted with the program and eagerly endorsed it to the NLC.

When you participate in an NLC-endorsed program, you have the satisfaction of knowing that the NLC staff is working with the service provider to offer superior service. We are here to help cities participate in the program and make sure the program works for you. I strongly encourage you to consider NLC for *solutions, service and savings*.

For more information about the NLC Service Line Warranty Program, contact Denise Belser, NLC Program Director, at [belser@nlc.org](mailto:belser@nlc.org) or (202) 626-3028. I also invite you to visit the Enterprise Programs section of NLC's website at [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org).

Sincerely,

Donald J. Borut  
Executive Director

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**For Immediate Release**

November 10, 2010

**Contact:**

Utility Service Partners  
Brad Carmichael  
724-749-1003  
bcarmichael@utilitysp.net

National League of Cities  
Gregory Minchak  
202-626-3003  
Minchak@nlc.org

**National League of Cities Teams with Utility Service Partners  
Will Offer Utility Service Line Warranties to City Residents Across the Nation**

Canonsburg, PA - Utility Service Partners, Inc. ("USP") and the National League of Cities ("NLC") announce the creation of the NLC Service Line Warranty Program to assist cities in providing their residents with protection against the high cost of broken or leaking utility lines.

The NLC Service Line Warranty Program will provide affordable utility service line warranties to homeowners covering expensive repairs to external water and sewer lines on homeowners' property. The program offers 24 hour/7 day a week utility service line protection.

"We believe that the NLC Service Line Warranty Program provides a unique service to cities and their residents, combining an efficient solution for homeowners while providing a source of additional income for cities. USP has a strong, proven track record of customer satisfaction and we are delighted to be working with them," added Donald J. Borut, Executive Director of the National League of Cities.

The NLC program, which will be offered to cities in the 48 contiguous states, will be rolled out over an 18-month period in six-month intervals.

"We are delighted to be working with the National League of Cities, which builds on the track record USP has developed of successfully managing warranty programs for cities and utilities. We look forward to partnering with cities across the United States" said Phil Riley, the President and CEO of USP.

Cities interested in participating in the NLC Service Line Warranty Program should contact Brad Carmichael, Vice President of Business Development at Utility Service Partners, [partnerships@utilitysp.net](mailto:partnerships@utilitysp.net) or (866) 974-4801. Further information is available at [www.utilitysp.net/nlc](http://www.utilitysp.net/nlc) and [www.nlc.org/enterpriseprograms](http://www.nlc.org/enterpriseprograms).

**About Utility Service Partners**

Headquartered in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, Utility Service Partners, Inc. is a leading independent provider of service line warranties and water heater rentals in the United States. USP is a portfolio company of Macquarie Capital, part of Macquarie Group Limited, one of the world's largest owners and managers of infrastructure assets and a manager of over \$36 billion in infrastructure equity around the world.

**About the National League of Cities**

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

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