



DATE: 01/15/2025 TIME: 10:00 a.m. LOCATION: Executive Boardroom

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Janet Howard, Chair | Tamika Duplessis, Ph.D. | Joseph Peychaud |
| Maurice Sholas, M.D., Ph.D. | Chadrick Kennedy |

Operations Committee Meeting Agenda

PUBLIC MEETING

All meetings are open to the public, and we encourage your attendance.
Those interested can join in person or virtually.

Join In-Person: Executive Board Room, Second Floor
625 St. Joseph St., New Orleans, LA 70165

Join Virtually: <https://www.swbno.org/BoardMeetings>

E-Public comments will be accepted via <https://www.swbno.org/BoardMeetings>.
All e-public comments must be received at least 2 hours prior to the meeting. Comments
will be read verbatim into the record.

I. Roll Call

II. Presentation Items

- A. People Plan Update – Executive Director, Ghassan Korban and Jamie Parker, Director of Planning & Strategy
- B. Smart Metering Billing/Delinquencies Update – Susannah Kirby, Interim Chief of Customer Service Officer
- C. 2025 SWBNO Holiday Calendar Schedule - Admiral Dave Callahan, CAO

III. Action Item

- A. Resolution (R-033-2025) 2025 SWBNO Holiday Schedule

IV. Public Comment

V. Adjournment

The People Plan

A Better Workplace, A Stronger Workforce

Presentation for SWBNO Employees





Presentation Outline

- I. Overview of the People Plan
- II. Development of People Plan
- III. People Plan Findings
- IV. Implementation Process
- V. Approval Process
- VI. Proposed Transition Process



Overview of the People Plan

- The People Plan is an effort that seeks to determine the best workforce policies and practices for the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO).
- Feedback and insights from SWBNO employees are the driving force of the People Plan.
- It provides SWBNO with a roadmap to create a better workplace for employees and develop a stronger workforce for the utility.



Development of the People Plan



Evaluate Current Policies and Practices

- Assessed current workforce policies and practices
 - SWBNO Human Resources, City Civil Service Department, Civil Service Commission
- Conducted focus group sessions (more than 130 participants)
- Conducted online survey (more than 370 responses)
- Met regularly with a Steering Committee comprised of a cross-section of employees
- Identified focus areas for the People Plan and their workforce challenges



Focus Areas of the People Plan

- **Compensation & Benefits**
- **Employee Protections**
- **Career Pathways & Professional Development**
- **Recruitment**
- **Retention**



Research Other Utilities

- Analyzed how other utilities manage workforce challenges in the focus areas of the People Plan
- Evaluated whether policies or practices used by other utilities could be adapted to improve SWBNO operations and processes

Other utilities include Fairfax Water, Northern, VA; Houston Public Works, Houston, TX; JEA, Jacksonville, FL; Philadelphia Water, Philadelphia, PA; WaterOne, Johnson County, KS; WSSC Water, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, MD.



Identify Improvements Supported by Employees

- Held a second round of focus group sessions with employees
- More than 70 participants with diverse representation from SWBNO departments
- Feedback helped SWBNO identify potential changes and improvements in key workforce areas supported by employees



People Plan Findings



People Plan Findings | Benefits

- **Employees want to keep their health and pension benefits. The People Plan would not change these benefits.**
- Health benefits are managed by SWBNO's executive leadership team and the Board of Directors. The People Plan would not change this.
- Pension benefits are managed by the Board of Trustees, which includes utility employees, retirees, and the Board of Directors. The People Plan would not change this.



People Plan Findings | Employee Protections

- **Employees want policies that support workforce protections. The People Plan supports a system that provides these protections.**
- The People Plan would support a system with multi-step processes to file grievances and take disciplinary action.
- The People Plan would also support having an independent appeal process for grievance and disciplinary actions.



People Plan Findings | Compensation

- **Employees support improving compensation and other forms of pay (e.g., incentive pay, raises). However, SWBNO has limited or no flexibility to make changes in these areas.**
- City Civil Service sets compensation for SWBNO employees.
- The utility cannot make changes or improvements regarding compensation or other forms of pay without Civil Service approval.



People Plan Findings | Compensation

If SWBNO had more independence and flexibility, the utility could consider:

- Pursuing a compensation study to develop fair and competitive pay for job positions without being tied to City Hall counterparts
- Developing cost-of-living adjustments (COLA)
- Re-evaluating longevity raises
- Expanding qualifications and certifications for incentive pay
- Reviewing accrual and rollover of annual leave (with usage rules)



People Plan Findings | Career Pathways & Development

- **Employees support improving career pathways and professional development opportunities. However, SWBNO has limited flexibility to make changes in these areas.**
- City Civil Service charts the promotional path for SWBNO positions.
- City Civil Service also controls professional development training, materials, and courses needed for promotion. While SWBNO has limited authority to conduct in-house training for some departments, all training must first be approved by City Civil Service.



People Plan Findings | Career Pathways & Development

If SWBNO had more independence and flexibility, the utility could consider:

- Creating more SWBNO-specific training courses and materials
- Increasing promotional opportunities within the utility

Currently, SWBNO has the authority to:

- Improve the administration of performance reviews
- Enhance training and accountability for mid-level managers
- Strengthen the administration of the deferred retirement option program (DROP)



People Plan Findings | Recruitment

- **Employees support improving and streamlining the recruitment process to hire new talent. However, SWBNO has limited or no flexibility to make changes in this area.**
- City Civil Service controls the recruitment process, from developing job positions, posting vacancies, and vetting potential candidates. In addition, most SWBNO positions are not specific to the utility but tied to their City Hall counterparts.
- For those job positions that are SWBNO-specific, the ability to develop those positions still requires approval from City Civil Service.



People Plan Findings | Recruitment

If SWBNO had more independence and flexibility over recruitment, the utility could consider:

- Creating more SWBNO-specific job positions and descriptions
- Giving hiring managers more flexibility to comprehensively consider a candidate's education, experience, and skill set
- Advocating for the removal of the domicile requirement
- Establishing a Human Resources division focused solely on recruitment



People Plan Findings | Retention

- **Employees support improving retention programs.**
- Currently, SWBNO could pursue:
 - Developing programs to boost employee morale
 - Conducting periodic employee surveys to gather feedback
 - Improve onboarding for new hires
 - Increasing communication between employees and SWBNO executive leadership (Executive Director's Employee Advisory Committee)



Overview of People Plan Findings

- Employees want to keep their **health and pension benefits**. The People Plan would not change these benefits.
- Employees want policies that support **workforce protections**. The People Plan supports a system that would provide these protections.
- Employees support improving **compensation** and other forms of pay. However, SWBNO has limited or no flexibility to make changes in these areas.



Overview of People Plan Findings

- Employees support improving **career pathways** and **professional development opportunities**. However, SWBNO has limited flexibility to make changes in these areas.
- Employees support improving and streamlining the **recruitment process**. However, SWBNO has limited or no flexibility to make changes in this area.
- Employees support improving **retention** programs. SWBNO could pursue making changes in this area.



Implementation Process



Focus on Improvements within SWBNO's Control

- SWBNO's Human Resources Department would largely be responsible for making these changes and improvements.
- SWBNO would need to build up and strengthen the HR Department.
 - Increase staff capacity to improve the administration of HR functions
 - Review and streamline internal policies and processes
 - Implement new technology to improve efficiencies (in process)
- SWBNO is committed to strengthening its HR Department to better serve employees.



Workforce Policies Controlled by SWBNO

WORKFORCE POLICY OR ISSUE	CURRENT RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT
Retain health benefits	Executive Leadership & Board of Directors
Retain pension benefits	Board of Trustees
Increase access to HR staff across utility locations	Human Resources
Create training materials and courses for promotion	SWBNO Training Dept. with City Civil Service Approval
Improve communications about promotion opportunities	Human Resources
Improve administration of performance reviews & DROP	Human Resources
Enhance mid-level management training and accountability	Human Resources (in process)
Develop programs to boost employee morale	Human Resources
Re-start Executive Director's Advisory Committee	Executive Director & Employees
Conduct periodic employee survey	Human Resources
Improve onboarding for new hires	Human Resources (in process)



Transition to a New System with Greater Flexibility

- SWBNO has limited or no flexibility to make many of the changes desired by employees. Control over these areas is currently held by City Civil Service.
- To gain greater independence and flexibility in these areas, SWBNO could transition to a new system. The new system would be developed by SWBNO based on the analysis of the People Plan and feedback from employees.
- The new system would be specifically tailored to meet the needs of SWBNO and its workforce. It would give the utility the flexibility to make changes where employees want improvement, while still balancing budgetary considerations.
- Under this new system, SWBNO's Human Resources Department would administer all workforce-related functions. A strong and robust HR Department would take the place of City Civil Service.

Workforce Policies Controlled by City Civil Service



WORKFORCE POLICY OR ISSUE	CURRENT RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT
Develop fair and competitive pay for all employees	Civil Service
Implement cost-of-living adjustments	Civil Service
Improve longevity raises	Civil Service
Expand qualifications to earn incentive pay	Civil Service
Enhance annual leave policies	Civil Service
Create training materials and courses for promotions	Civil Service
Increase promotional opportunities	Civil Service
Create more SWBNO-specific job positions	Civil Service
Give hiring managers more flexibility	Civil Service
Create HR division focused on recruitment	Civil Service
Fully remove the domicile requirement	New Orleans City Council



Approval Process



People Plan approval needed by:

- SWBNO employees (utility-wide, non-binding survey)
- SWBNO Board of Directors
- Louisiana Legislature
 - Amend or repeal existing law
 - Adopt new legislation to authorize and enable transition period
 - Approve putting constitutional amendment on the ballot
- Voters statewide to approve constitutional amendment



Proposed Transition Process



Proposed Transition Process

- **Create a transition plan.**
 - Develop a detailed, multi-year plan to transition SWBNO to a new workforce system administered by the Human Resources Department.
 - Include milestones, action items, and a firm date to complete the transition.
 - Consider including the development of a transition plan in legislation.
- **Create an Advisory Committee to help develop the transition plan.**
 - Committee composition could include a cross-section of stakeholders, including representatives from SWBNO, the City Council, the City's Administration, and the Legislature.
 - Consider making the Committee subject to Louisiana open meetings and public records laws.



Proposed Transition Process

- **Consider requiring the transition plan to be approved by SWBNO's Board of Directors.**
- **Consider requiring written progress reports.**
 - Written reports provided on a regular basis to stakeholders and the public could promote information sharing, transparency, and accountability.
- **Complete administrative steps required to finalize the transition once the transition plan has been fully implemented.**

The People Plan Q&A Session

Presentation for SWBNO Employees



Smart Meter Delinquency

Comparison to other utilities

Best Practices

Current Processes

Pending Items (Status)

2022 EPA Study of 1,882 Water Utilities: With more than 100,000 accounts, SWBNO is categorized as “Very Large” (N – 115). Since most govt estimates indicate that 80% of “very large” American water utilities have AMI in some fashion, these numbers mostly represent utilities with programs like ours. **Note that some utilities use 30 days as delinquent, so the below numbers represent varying delinquent day rules.*

Variable	Very Small	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
Moratorium on Disconnections in 2022	16.27%	15.53%	13.73%	18.80%	43.75%
Disconnections					
Average percent of households that received notice of disconnection	11.98%	16.79%	16.20%	18.72%	19.72%
Average percent of households that were disconnected	3.22%	5.28%	4.82%	4.73%	4.61%
Percent households disconnected out of percent notified of disconnection	26.88%	31.45%	29.75%	25.27%	23.38%
Arrears					
Average number of households in arrears per utility	17.37%	19.18%	20.57%	21.91%	21.43%
Average arrears per household in arrears	\$339.81	\$251.32	\$263.99	\$221.23	\$508.79
Average total dollar amount of arrears per utility	\$12,616.43	\$31,763.18	\$101,033.68	\$472,697.09	\$14,948,643.79

Industry Findings

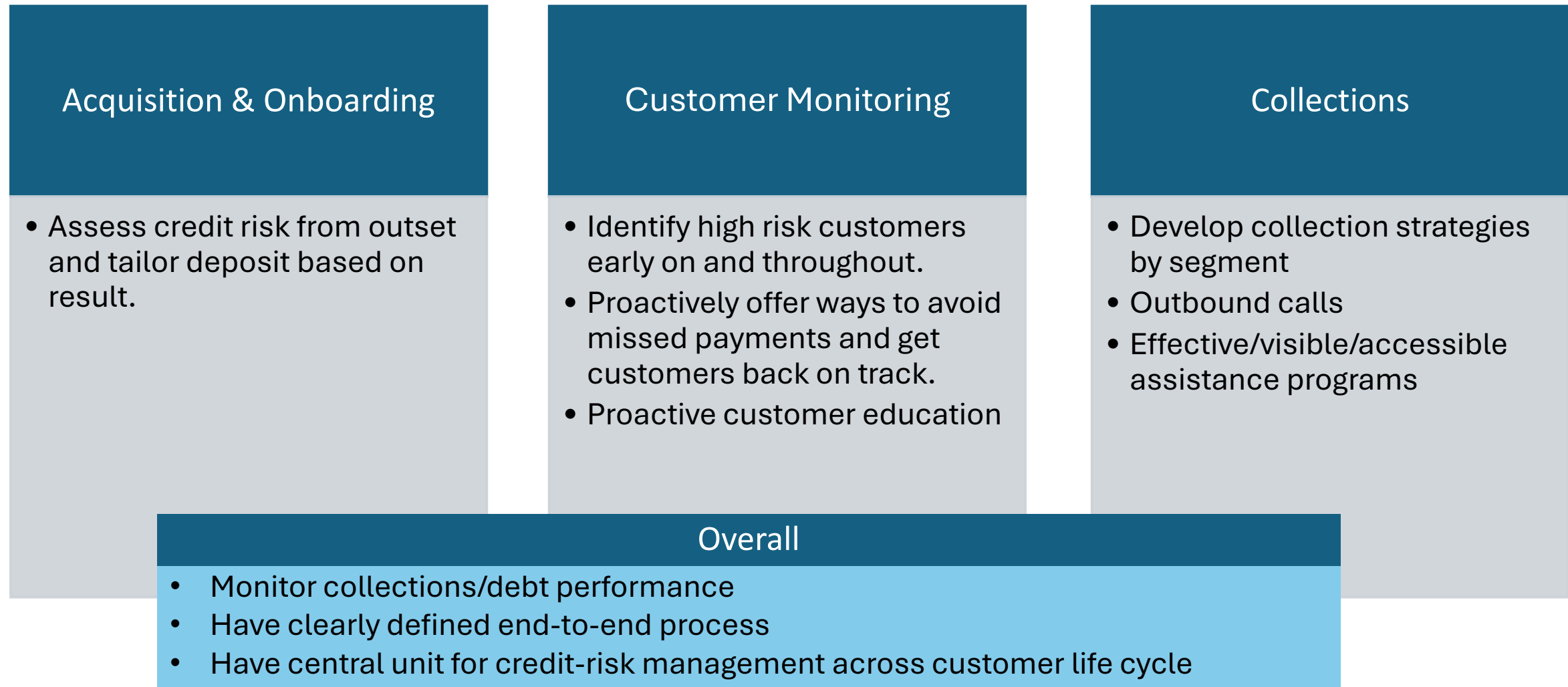
AWWA:

- Shut offs should be the final step, after sufficient notification, payment plans and assistance programs are offered

SWBNO has the longest past-due allowance of utilities with highest shutoff rate--may indicate process rather than policy issue

Utility	Days Late	Notification Parameters	Shut Off Rate
Phoenix Water	30	Written notification prior to suspension of service	9%
Oklahoma City, OK	31	Mailed notice 10 days prior; door hanger 2 days prior	14%
Honolulu Board of Water Supply	35	Mailed notice 10 business days prior	0%
Jackson, MS	35		0%
Tulsa, OK	40	Notice provided on next bill; disconnection notice 10 days prior	20%
Detroit, MI	42	First mailed notice 11 days after past due; second notice 10 days prior	13%
Mobile, AL	42		13%
Champlain Water District, VT	44	Written notice 14 days to 20 days prior	0%
Jacksonville, FL	44	Mailed notice 7 days prior, phone call 2 days prior	16%
Rapid City, SD	45	Mailed notice 10 days prior	16%
Denver Water	50	Written notification to the Licensed Premises; to the person normally billed for water service at the premises; and to a third party as on record.	3%
Philadelphia Water	52	1. Due balance warning on water bill 2 & 3. Two more notifications: set up a payment plan or water will be turned off	5%
Des Moines, IA	55	Mailed notice 10 days prior	15%
Columbia Water	60	Mailed notice 15 days prior	12%
Kansas City	60	The utility will give the customer 10 days written notice before discontinuing service. The utility will attempt to notify, customers by phone at least two (2) days before they are to be disconnected. Posts a notice of discontinuance in a common area of a multi-residential building five (5) days prior.	11%
New Orleans	70	Mailed notice 10 days prior	17%
Bismarck, ND	75	Mailed notice 5 days prior	0%
Lincoln, NE	97	Mailed or hand delivered notice 7 days prior	0%
Eugene, OR	144	Written notice	0%
Springdale, AR	21 (6 days past due)	Penalty exempt program	19%
Seattle Public Utilities		1) Auto-generated phone calls 2) Urgent Notice is generated. 3) Shutoff Notice is generated	1%

Credit & Collections Best Practices/Some SWBNO is meeting, others we look to achieve in the next 1-2 years as we bring on new systems



	Total Sum of Amount Due	Total Sum of Outstanding Amount
Row Labels		
COMMERCIAL	\$119,538.94	\$17,707.11
INDUSTRIAL	\$64,647.88	\$19,138.12
LG COMMERCIAL	\$4,530,719.45	\$785,928.74
MEDICAL	\$14,805.32	\$1,878.11
MULTI FAMILY	\$5,871,839.99	\$2,324,007.73
RESIDENTIAL	\$40,815,927.04	\$12,012,470.81
SCHOOL	\$7,356.63	\$8,580.00
SM COMMERCIAL	\$10,433,742.94	\$2,064,711.27
Grand Total	\$61,858,578.19	\$17,234,421.89

28% Delinquent Amount

Unique Delinquent Customers: 29,441

Customers on Promise Pay: 10,205

Exemptions: Work in Progress: Does put collection Process on hold.

Eligible for Shutoff: 19,236 (pending exemption #)

Shutoffs: 4,294

Complete: 3,414

Pending: 880

Turn Ons: 1,444

*Please note that several of the SM Comm and LG Comm include the large apartment complexes that we have historically not disconnected.

AMI Process

- Collection Policy & Thresholds
 - 1st delinquent notice at 30 days past due
 - 2nd notice is 20 days later and provides the customer an additional 10 days prior to disconnect service order
 - 3rd contact is a phone call/email to engage customer again prior to issuing service order
 - Final step is issuing service order for disconnection
 - Prioritize shut-offs by most overdue
 - Monitor for erroneous shutoffs: If customer comes in to make payment prior to service order completion, service order is cancelled at that time
 - Monitor for inactive with consumption. This is currently being monitored by the Meter Shop and acted upon as a potential tamper event. This is still in progress as far as placing locking lids and placing tamper fees on customer accounts.
- Increase awareness and participation in payment plans
 - Continue expanded outreach about Promise Pay/payment assistance
 - Work with communications on public outreach/communication around smart meters and accuracy

AMI Metrics and Tracking

- Create End-to-End Process Oversight and Proactive Intervention
 - Analyze collections data to identify segmented accounts likely to pose payment issue- Working with Jacobs team to help with the tracking on smart meters specifically.
 - Establish KPIs to track effectiveness of the collection program and make course corrections
 - Use Sensus Analytics and CSM to drive proactive communication with “repeat” customers and “at risk” *

Needs and Timetable

- Staffing: Effective end of December we now have an assigned analyst that will work with department to prioritize collections process.
 - The analyst will provide regular updates on metrics and establish priorities for the collections team to work on
- QA/QC: We are building a new group (2-3) people that will track all service orders including shut offs to ensure: Training to be completed by Feb.
 - Accuracy
 - Timely completion
- Outreach: We have mailed 1 round of letters to smart meter customers that are delinquent. We will continue our targeted outreach to offer assistance. SWBNO will also work to engage in more public outreach to educated customers on the accuracy of smart meters and importance to stay on track with payments.

HOLIDAY CALENDAR - 2025

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans that the Sewerage and Water Board does hereby adopt the Holiday calendar for the year 2025, as set forth below:

New Year's Day 2024: Wednesday, January 1, 2025, Family Holiday
MLK Day: Monday January 20, 2025, Normal Holiday
Mardi Gras: Tuesday, March 4, 2025, Family Holiday
Good Friday: Friday April 18, 2025, Normal Holiday
Memorial Day: Monday, May 26, 2025, Normal Holiday
Juneteenth Day: Thursday June 19, 2025, Normal Holiday
Independence Day: Friday July 4, 2025, Family Holiday
Labor Day: Monday, September 1, 2025, Family Holiday
Indigenous Peoples Day, Monday October 13, 2025, Normal Holiday
Thanksgiving Day: Thursday, November 27, 2025, Family Holiday
Veterans Day: (displaced) Friday November 28, 2025, Normal Holiday
Christmas Eve: Wednesday December 24, 2025, Normal Holiday
Christmas Day: Thursday, December 25, 2025, Family Holiday
New Year's Eve: Wednesday December 31, 2025, Normal Holiday **Flexible Holiday

I, Ghassan Korban, Executive Director of the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at the Regular Monthly Meeting of said Board duly called and held, according to law, on January 22, 2025.

GHASSAN KORBAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SEWERAGE AND WATER BOARD