

Adjustments to Water Bills

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It is generally accepted utility practice in the United States that the customer is responsible for utility service on the customer side of the meter. This includes responsibility for leakage. A customer seeking a leak adjustment should realize that the water he or she doesn't pay for will be paid for by other customers.

The utility is run for the benefit of all present and future customers, and while no customer shall intentionally be treated unfairly, no customer shall be treated in a way that compromises the interests of other customers.

LIMITATIONS

The utility is subject to various state and federal regulations and has no discretion to adjust bills in a manner which would violate these regulations.

RECORD KEEPING DURATION

All records of billing adjustments shall be kept for a minimum of ten years.

OMISSIONS

In the absence of specific rules or policies, the disposition of billing adjustments shall be made by the Utility Adjustment Committee in accordance with its usual and customary practices.

POLICY STATEMENT

1 ... It is the policy of virtually all electric, natural gas and many water utilities, and it shall be the policy of this utility to have adjust the bill of any one customer only when there is an inaccurate meter or utility equipment failure and an accurate volume used can not be determined. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- a) damaged meters;

***Adjustments
only for utility
equipment
failure***

- b) meter reading/billing errors;
- c) leakage on the customer's side of the meter that is a direct cause of the utility.

No adjustments for causes on customer side of meter

2 ... The customers of the utility shall NOT subsidize the extraordinary water use of any one customer if it is caused by other reasons. Examples include, but are not limited to, leaky plumbing fixtures, filling of swimming pools, lawn and garden watering or freezing of pipe or fixtures.

Testing of customer meter

3 ... Any customer questioning the accuracy of his/her meter may pay a meter testing fee of \$50 (residential meters) and \$350 (commercial and industrial meters). The utility will remove the meter and ship it to the manufacturer or have a recognized meter testing company test the meter on-site. The utility will pay all costs associated with the testing of the meter.

If the meter proves to be accurate within guidelines established for used meters by the American Water Works Association (AWWA), it is deemed to be accurate. If the meter tests accurate, the customer forfeits the meter testing fee. If the meter does not meet AWWA accuracy standards, the utility shall refund the meter testing fee to the customer and repair or replace the meter.

Calculation of billing adjustment

4 ... If an adjustment of the customer's bill is warranted due to an inaccurate meter or due to the failure of equipment that is the responsibility of the utility, the amount of the bill will be determined based on an average for the billing period for the last twelve months.

Amount of time for adjustment

5 ... The utility shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not contested after sixty (60) days from the billing date.

No extension of penalty date

6 ... The utility shall be under no obligation to extend the discount date or the time for paying any bills because the customer disputes the amount of the bill or liability for the bill.

ServLine Leak Protection Program

7... The utility shall warranty any work it performs on the customer's side of the meter for a period of 12 months. Employees of the utility are to make every effort to avoid working on the customer side.

8... Work on the customers side performed by contractors or plumbers is warranted only through the plumber or contractor that performed the work.

9... The utility will adjust commercial accounts that triple their average 12 month bill. The water will be adjusted to the customer retail rate for the gallons used above their average bill.

Effective May 1, 2016 City of Blue Ridge will implement a ServLine leak protection service for our single family residential customers. This service will be at a cost established from time to time and will be billed monthly to the customer on their water bill. Customers are automatically enrolled for this service unless they decide to opt out of it. If the Customer chooses not to participate in the program, and they have a leak, they will be responsible for the entire leak. If the customer has declined and decides they want back in the program, there will be a 30 day waiting period, and they are responsible for any leak that may occur during that 30 days.

GUIDELINES FOR THE LEAK PROTECTION PLAN

1. It is the customer's responsibly to keep their plumbing system in good working order.
2. In order to qualify for a leak adjustment, the eligible plumbing leak must cause the customer's bill to be more than triple their average bill.
3. No customer shall receive more than one leak adjustment during any twelve(12) month period. However the utility does recognize that the leakage may occur over 2 consectutive billing periods and will adjust for both.
4. Adjustments on water bills will not be made on the following:
 - a. Residential customers who do not have their own meter.
 - b. Commerical or Industrial Customers
 - c. Premises left or abandoned without reasonable care for the plumbing system.
 - d. Leaks on irrigation systems or irrigation lines, leaks on any water lines coming off the primary water service line, plumbing leaks in any structure other than the primary residence.
 - e. Excess water charges not directly resulting from a qualifying plumbing leak.

- f. Filling of swimming pools or leaks in swimming pools, and
- g. Watering of lawns or gardens.

5. The Utility through our ServLine Program shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not submitted within (60) days from the billing date.

a. All requests for billing adjustments must be made through our ServLine Program. Customers who decline to participate in ServLine will not be eligible for a leak adjustment. Customers who qualify for leak adjustments through our ServLine Program will be responsible for paying their 12 month average bill. ServLine will pay up to \$2,500 of an excess water bill resulting from a qualifying leak. Amounts in excess of \$2,500 will be reduced to customer retail cost (cost to get water to the tap), this cost will be updated on March 1 of each year. Adjustments are limited to one leak adjustment per twelve (12) month period.

6. Customers must present proof that a leak has been repaired before an adjustment will be made. (ie, copy of invoice for materials or bill from plumber)

7. In any case where a customer might incur a leak before there is three months of average usage, an adjustment will not be made until they have established three months of average usage.

ServLine Line Protection

City of Blue Ridge will also provide a ServLine “Line Protection” for single family residential customers. This service will be at a cost established from time to time and will be billed monthly to the customer on their water bill. Customers are not automatically enrolled for this service and must contact ServLine Customer Service to enroll. Eligible repairs are covered up to \$10,000 with no deductible.

POLICY:

ADOPTION DATE: _____

EFFECTIVE DATE: _____