

LCBPU Policies and Procedures Manual

Subject: Customer Leak Adjustment
Area: Customer Policies
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Policy Number:
Effective Date: 07/01/93, 10/1/15, 12/3/15
Amendments: 1/01/95, 8/1/13, 9/3/15, 12/3/15

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Any customer seeking a billing adjustment shall be treated courteously and fairly by the utility board, manager and staff.

It is accepted utility practice in the United States that the customer is responsible for his utility service on the customer side of the meter. This includes leakage. A customer seeking a leak adjustment should also realize that the water he doesn't pay for will be paid for by the rest of the 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 interest 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.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A copy of this policy shall be available in the business office of the utility for customer inspection during regular business hours or official meetings of the utility. This policy may also be viewed on our web site at lincolncountybopu.com.

POLICY:

Determination of Need for Adjustment

The need to adjust a utility bill may be evident by a customer complaint of excessive billing, or evidence of leakage on the customer side of the meter.

Notice of Possible leakage

It is the customer's responsibility to keep their plumbing system in good working order. If, however, utility meter readers or other utility employees suspect leakage on the customer's side of the meter they will notify our billing department personnel and the appropriate steps will be taken to notify the customer.

Frequency of Adjustments

No customer shall receive more than one adjustment during any 12 month period.

Improper Meter Reading

The utility will first determine that the meter was properly read. If an investigation of the meter and meter records establishes that the meter was misread or that there was a failure of utility equipment, a new bill will be issued using an estimated reading based on an average of the past 12 months billing for this period. There will be no penalty assessed in the event the adjustment procedure delays payment past the penalty date.

Proper Meter Reading

If an investigation of the meter and meter record establishes that the meter was properly read and that there was no failure of utility equipment, the bill will remain valid and payable.

Testing of Customer Meter

If the customer questions the accuracy of the meter, he may pay the utility bill in questions plus a meter testing deposit of \$50 for residences and \$350 for commercial or industrial accounts. The utility will remove the meter and ship it to the manufacturer or recognized meter testing facility (other than its own shop) for testing. The utility will pay all cost associated with testing of the meter. If the meter proves to have accuracy 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 deposit. If the meter does not meet AWWA accuracy standards, the utility shall refund the meter testing deposit to the customer and repair or replace the meter.

Calculation of Billing Adjustment

If an adjustment of the customer's bill is warranted, the amount of the adjustment will be determined based on \$1.50 per 1,000 gallons of the leak. The leak is defined as the gallons left after the average consumption for the last 12 months billing has been subtracted. This adjustment is done by computer and based on the numbers stated above. The amount of adjustment will be applied to the customer's account and will not be reimbursed in cash.

Types of Leaks Allowable for Adjustments

It is the intent of this policy to only cover the service line between the water meter/backflow preventer and the terminus of the line(s). To be adjusted, the leak must not be readily evident to a reasonable person (such as leaks that are underground, within walls or under floors) or the leak must occur while occupants are away from the premises. To be adjusted, the amount of the bill must be at least \$100.00 over the customer's average monthly bill.

Adjustments on Water bills will not be made for the following:

1. Industrial, Commercial, Multi-users and customers with 2" meters will not be eligible due to the high volume that could potentially be lost
2. Faucets, yard spigots, outside faucets, commodes, automatic trough watering units, supply lines, appliances such as a refrigerator/freezer, dishwasher, washer or any other appliance with a connection to the plumbing system
3. Premises left or abandoned without reasonable care for the plumbing system
4. More than one occurrence per 12 month period
5. Filling of swimming pools
6. Watering of lawns or gardens

Amount of Time for Adjustment

The utility shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not contested after thirty (30) days from the billing date. The utility shall be under no obligation to extend the penalty date or the time for paying any bills because the customer disputes the amount of the bill.

RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

When leak has been repaired a Certification of Repair form must be completed and submitted to our office for consideration. All requests for billing adjustments must be received at the business office of the utility during regular business hours or official meetings of the utility.

The manager or his designee shall file a written report of the customer billing adjustment and the action of the staff regarding the adjustment.

RECORD KEEPING DURATION

All records of billing adjustments shall be kept for a minimum of ten (10) years.

REVIEW BY MANAGER AND STAFF

The Board of Utilities is the sole policy making body for the utility. The Board authorizes the manager to handle routine billing adjustments that amount to no more than \$500. The manager may designate appropriate office personnel to handle routine adjustments. Any unusual billing adjustment shall be referred to the Board.

If the nature of the adjustment is one which the manager is not empowered to settle or if the action of the manager is unacceptable to the customer, the customer shall have the right to take such complaint to the Board, as outlined in the COMPLAINT POLICY.

The manager or his designee shall inform the customer of his right to have the billing adjustment reviewed by the Board of Utilities, and shall schedule the customer for consideration at the Board's next regularly scheduled meeting and shall inform the customer of the time and place of the meeting. If the information regarding the billing adjustment has not previously been reduced to writing, the manager shall make and file a written notice of the substance of the request for billing adjustment and of his action and decision of the adjustment.

REVIEW BY THE BOARD

When a customer or other complaining party appears at a Board meeting regarding a billing adjustment without previously submitting the facts regarding the adjustment to the manager or office staff, the Board may delay hearing or ruling on the case until the next regular meeting to allow the Manager, staff, attorney or others to locate and prepare materials concerning the adjustment.

NOTICE TO CUSTOMER

All notices, statements, requests and other communications from the utility to the customer shall be by phone. It is the customer's responsibility to provide a correct phone number with their application. Customer's refusal to accept any notice or communication shall be deemed receipt.

OMISSIONS

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