



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Director's Office

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Effective 10/30/2019

Memorandum

Date: November 1, 2019

From: Greg Emanuel, Director, DES

Subject: Customer Service Office - Utility Account Back Billing Policy

Policy Purpose

The Department of Environmental Services ("DES") desires to provide our utility customers with a transparent and consistent procedure for the processing of back-bills.

As detailed below, both the County's operational employees and customers play important roles in mitigating the occurrence of back-bills and the resulting potential for disruption.

Back-Bills Defined

Back-bills are issued when the County discovers that utility service has gone unbilled for a period that ended before the start of the current billing period. Back-bills are not issued for a customer's failure to pay a previously issued utility bill.

Back-bills generally result from unusual circumstances, such as clerical errors, meter-setting issues, meter tampering or illegitimate connections to the public utility system.

Back-Billing Process

When DES becomes aware of the need to back-bill for previously unbilled services, all account adjustments will be processed in accordance with this policy to ensure consistent treatment of like circumstances.

Customers may contact the DES Director or his designee if they believe that this policy has been misapplied or that the County's construction of the facts and circumstances of the back-bill was incorrect, and the DES Director or his designee will review the account. The request for review must be in writing, should detail the customer's position and must include all supporting information and documentation. The DES Director or his designee will issue a written response within 30 calendar days from receipt of the customer's request for review.

Back-Billing Limits and Calculations

County Error - If the County determines that the failure to bill for services used was due to an error on the part of the County, the County will back-bill the customer for all services used, dating back no more than three years from the date of the back-bill. Examples of such errors include scrivener's errors during the account set-up process or inaccurate consumption estimates when County staff was unable to obtain accurate metered consumption data. If the back-bill has

not been referred for collection, the Utility Billing Manager may, at his or her discretion, waive late fees and any other fees that would ordinarily be applied to unpaid account balances.

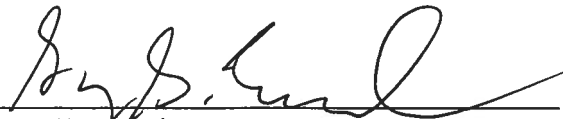
Errors by Others - If the County determines that the failure to bill for services used was not the result of a County error and instead resulted from an illegitimate connection to the public utility system, the County will back-bill the customer for all unbilled utility services that have been provided. The back-bill will be attributed to an illegitimate connection any time the customer did not obtain the necessary permits for the connection or it is determined by the County that the meter was bypassed. The customer's payment of a back-bill does not preclude the levying of other appropriate fees and penalties or the prosecution for theft of utility services.

Estimated Back-bills - Sometimes the County is required to estimate the customer's use in order to produce a back-bill. In most cases, the estimated back-bill will be based on the subject property's normalized average daily consumption, but the County may also consider any available information to determine a reasonable estimate.

Payment Plans - The Utility Billing Manager will use the following procedure for establishing a written payment plan for each back-billed customer:

1. A schedule of payments, including the amount due and the date payments are due, will be established on the customer's account. The customer will receive a copy of this detail.
2. The duration of the payment plan may not exceed the period for which the customer was back-billed, and in no case will a payment plan exceed three years in duration.
3. The written payment plan will remain in effect as long as the payments are made on schedule. If a scheduled payment becomes more than 90 days past due, the payment plan will automatically default, and the account will be eligible for service termination, without an additional notice to the customer.
4. Any customer notifying the Customer Services Office of difficulty meeting scheduled payments may be considered for a revised written payment plan with the approval of the DES Director or his designee.

Non-Payment of Back-Bill - If the customer does not pay the back-bill upon receipt or accept the offered payment plan, the outstanding amount will be designated as delinquent and will be transferred to the Arlington County Treasurer's Office for collection. Additional penalties and fees will be applied to the outstanding amount, per the requirements of the Arlington County Code.



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