

# **WSSC CODE OF REGULATIONS 2019**

## **Title 3. Customer Management**

### **Subtitle 3. Customer Service**

#### **Chapter 3.45. Customer Assistance Program Administration**

##### **3.45.010 Definitions.**

In this chapter, the following words have the meanings indicated:

- (a) “Account maintenance fee” or “AMF” means the fee that covers the cost to bring water and sewer service to every home and business including meters, meter readers, and billing.
- (b) “Chesapeake Bay restoration fund fee” or “BRF” is a fee levied by the State of Maryland, collected and remitted to the Comptroller of Maryland by WSSC.
- (c) “Commission” or “WSSC” means the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.
- (d) “Customer assistance program” or “CAP” means a financial assistance program for eligible, low-income residential households served by WSSC.
- (e) “Customer assistance program participant, ratepayer or eligible customer” means a household deemed eligible for financial assistance based on eligibility criteria as established by the WSSC or any associated partner agency.
- (f) “Infrastructure investment fee” or “IIF” is a fee that funds a portion of the debt service associated with the replacement and rehabilitation of system infrastructure.
- (g) “Partner agency” means an agency that provides assistance to income eligible residents in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties using income guidelines and a certification process that is uniformly applied in both jurisdictions.
- (h) “Ready-to-serve fee” means the fee charged to WSSC customers that has two components, the:
  - (1) Account maintenance fee; and

- (2) Infrastructure investment fee.

**3.45.020 Purpose and intent.**

- (a) The purpose of this chapter is to establish criteria for the administration of the Commission's customer assistance program.
- (b) The intent of the customer assistance program is to help defray the cost of WSSC charges for customers who meet certain eligibility criteria.

**3.45.030 Authority.**

Public Utilities Article, § 25-501(c), Annotated Code of Maryland, authorizes the Commission to establish a customer assistance program to provide financial assistance to eligible ratepayers.

**3.45.040 Scope.**

This chapter is applicable to eligible residential households.

**3.45.050 Administration.**

- (a) The Commission will administer a customer assistance program for eligible, low-income participants.
- (b) Ratepayers determined to be eligible for CAP by [WSSC or] a partner agency will receive [credit for the ready-to-serve charge]. **CERTAIN CREDITS AS SET FORTH HEREIN**
- (c) A memorandum of understanding or MOU will stipulate the terms of a partnership agreement with the partner agency, including:
  - (1) Use of enrollee data for identifying CAP eligible participants;
  - (2) Data sharing;
  - (3) Monitoring;
  - (4) Storage procedures; and
  - (5) Security and confidentiality requirements.

**3.45.060 Program eligibility.**

(a) Administration of CAP including program promotions, outreach, and marketing materials may be coordinated with the partner agency or agencies.

(b)

(1) A partner agency will certify the WSSC ratepayer using criteria outlined in its operations manual or equivalent standard policy or procedure document and systems.

(2) Ratepayers will apply using the partner agency or partner's delegated agency enrollment and certification process, such as Montgomery County Health and Human Services Department and Prince George's County Department of Social Services.

(3) For those ratepayers who are already certified with the partner agency as eligible for another assistance program, such as energy assistance, the partner agency will provide an electronic file of those participants within the WSSC service area on a regular basis as provided in the MOU.

(4) Ratepayers identified by the partner agency as eligible, identifiable WSSC customer accounts will automatically be enrolled in the customer assistance program.

(c) Notification of CAP enrollment will be provided by WSSC to the CAP participant.

(d) Participants must recertify annually to participate in CAP in accordance with the partner agency's annual renewal procedures.

**3.45.070 Financial assistance FOR READY-TO-SERVE CHARGES.**

(a) WSSC will provide financial assistance to CAP participants in the form of a credit that will appear on the water and sewer bill.

(b) The amount of the assistance will be equivalent to the ready-to-serve fee portion of the water bill.

**(C) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION, THE CREDIT WILL APPEAR ON THE FIRST BILL THAT THE CUSTOMER RECEIVES IN THE FISCAL YEAR AFTER THE DATE THAT THE CUSTOMER IS CERTIFIED AS A CAP PARTICIPANT.**

[(c)] **(D)** [Regardless of the date upon which a ratepayer is certified as CAP eligible by the partner agency,] **IF A CUSTOMER IS CERTIFIED AS CAP ELIGIBLE AFTER ONE OR MORE BILLS HAVE ALREADY BEEN ISSUED IN A GIVEN FISCAL YEAR, WSSC** [may] **SHALL** award credits retroactively to:

(1) [July 1st of the fiscal year in which the customer was certified;] **THE FIRST BILL ISSUED IN THE FISCAL YEAR IN WHICH THE CUSTOMER WAS CERTIFIED AS CAP ELIGIBLE; or**

(2) If the ratepayer did not yet live in the property [on July 1st of the current fiscal year, to the] **WHEN THE PREVIOUS BILLS WERE ISSUED, TO THE FIRST BILL THAT WAS ISSUED AFTER THE** date of occupancy at the property.

(d) The Director of Customer Service, at the Director's sole discretion, may terminate participation in the CAP by a household for:

(1) Fraud;

(2) Failure to notify WSSC of relocation of residence; or

(3) Other failure to meet obligations to WSSC and its ratepayers as set forth in WSSC regulations and the laws of the State of Maryland.

### **3.45.080 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HIGH BILLS.**

**(A) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, CAP CUSTOMERS WHO RECEIVE A BILL THAT QUALIFIES FOR A HIGH BILL ADJUSTMENT UNDER CHAPTER 3.20.030(A) OF THIS CODE SHALL RECEIVE AN ADJUSTED BILL THAT EXCLUDES 100 PERCENT OF THE EXCESS WATER AND SEWER USAGE.**

**(B) THE ADJUSTED BILL SHALL BE CALCULATED BASED ON THE CUSTOMER'S AVERAGE DAILY CONSUMPTION AS SET FORTH IN CHAPTER 3.20.030(A) OF THIS CODE.**

**(C) CAP CUSTOMERS MAY ONLY RECEIVE THE ADJUSTMENT IN SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION IF WSSC HAS CONFIRMED, THROUGH A METER CHECK READING, THAT WATER USAGE FOLLOWING THE HIGH BILLING PERIOD HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL.**

**(D) A CAP CUSTOMER MAY ONLY RECEIVE THIS ADJUSTMENT FOR ONE BILLING PERIOD WITHIN ANY THREE YEAR PERIOD.**

**3.45.090 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROPERTY INSPECTIONS.**

**A CAP CUSTOMER WHO IS EXPERIENCING HIGHER THAN NORMAL WATER USAGE MAY RECEIVE ONE FREE PROPERTY INSPECTION PER CALENDAR YEAR.**

**3.45.100 EXTENDED PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS.**

**A CAP CUSTOMER WHO QUALIFIES FOR PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS UNDER CHAPTER 3.25.140 OF THIS CODE MAY ENTER INTO PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO 48 MONTHS.**

3.45.[080]110 Chesapeake Bay restoration fund exemption program.

(a) WSSC administers the Chesapeake Bay restoration fund program on behalf of the State of Maryland.

(b) Ratepayers approved for the CAP **PROGRAM** will be automatically eligible for exemption from the Chesapeake Bay restoration fund fee.

**(C) RATEPAYERS WHO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE CAP PROGRAM, OR WHO DO NOT WISH TO APPLY, MAY APPLY DIRECTLY TO WSSC FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE CHESAPEAKE BAY RESTORATION FUND FEE.**

**(D) TO QUALIFY FOR AN EXEMPTION, A RATEPAYER SHALL MEET TWO OF THE FOLLOWING FOUR CRITERIA:**

**(1) RECEIPT OF ENERGY ASSISTANCE OR WSSC WATER FUND ASSISTANCE WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS;**

**(2) RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OR FOOD STAMPS WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS;**

**(3) RECEIPT OF VETERANS OR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS; OR**

**(4) MEET THE INCOME CRITERIA AS DEFINED BY THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT.**

**(E) RATEPAYERS SHALL REAPPLY ANNUALLY FOR THE EXEMPTION.**

**3.45.[090]120 Annual program year and source of funds.**

- (a) The CAP program year will begin July 1st and end June 30th of each fiscal year.
- (b) The source of funds for the CAP financial assistance program is from revenue generated by WSSC.

**3.45.[100]130 Dispute resolution.**

Any disputes that arise concerning eligibility for program participation must be addressed directly to the partner agency.

**3.45.[110]140 Program measurement and reporting.**

- (a) The customer assistance program will be reviewed on an annual basis for utilization and effectiveness.
- (b) The Commission will produce an annual report summarizing the program's performance for the prior year including:
  - (1) Number of recipients approved for financial assistance;
  - (2) Resources and total level of support provided by the Commission; and
  - (3) Other information that will ensure transparency and cost-effective service and administration.

# WSSC CODE OF REGULATIONS 2019

## Title 3. Customer Management

### Subtitle 3. Customer Account Management

#### Chapter 3.20 Adjustment and Correction of Water/Sewer Bills

##### 3.20.030 Adjustment type.

(a) *High Bill Adjustment (Single-Unit Residential Properties)*. An owner is responsible for maintaining his/her property's plumbing system, including identifying and repairing all leaks to that system. An owner is, therefore, responsible for paying all billed water and sewer charges including water passing through the meter as a result of plumbing system leaks. However, if a single-unit residential customer receives a bill with an ADC at least three times the comparable ADC (or current ADC if comparable is unavailable) and the customer is not eligible for any other adjustment set forth in this chapter, WSSC will adjust the one high bill at the customer's request. **EXCEPT FOR CAP CUSTOMERS, AS SET FORTH IN CHAPTER 3.45.090 OF THIS CODE, THE** [The] new adjusted bill will exclude water and sewer use charges attributable to 50 percent of the water use in excess of the property's comparable ADC, or current ADC if the comparable is unavailable. Eligible customers may receive such an adjustment only once for one billing period in any three-year period.

# WSSC CODE OF REGULATIONS 2019

## **Title 3, Customer Management**

### **Subtitle II, Customer Account Management**

#### **Chapter 3.25 Billing and Collecting Water and Sewer Use Charges and Related Fees**

##### **3.25.140 Payment and bill arrangements.**

- (a) (1) WSSC may offer payment arrangements to customers.
- (2) **EXCEPT FOR CAP CUSTOMERS, AS SET FORTH IN CHAPTER 3.45.100 OF THIS CODE**, payment arrangements may not exceed 24 months.
- (3) If a customer fails to make the scheduled payments under a payment arrangement, the payment arrangement shall be automatically canceled and the full delinquent amount shall be due.
- (4) Payment arrangements may not be offered to tenants unless the property owner submits written authorization allowing payment arrangements.
- (5) When extending payment arrangements, WSSC may consider:
  - (i) Payment history;
  - (ii) Prior payment arrangements;
  - (iii) The account's history of turnoffs; and
  - (iv) Any other relevant account or customer information.
- (b) (1) WSSC offers bill arrangements through its automated interactive voice response system to customers that may include:
  - (2) A seven-day hold for the current bill; or
  - (3) Splitting the current bill into two payments.



- (c) Customers may also receive assistance through:
  - (1) Referral to the administrator for the WSSC water fund; and
  - (2) Application to the customer assistance program.