

**STANDARD PROCEDURES
OF THE
WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION**

Sponsor Crystal Knight-Lee, Director, Customer Service 	SP or Regulation Number REG-CUM-CC- 2018-002 Supersedes CUS 10-01	Approve By/Date Commissioners/ January 17, 2018 	Recurring Review Period Every three (3) years	Effective Date March 5, 2018	Page 1 of 6
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Title: ADJUSTMENT AND CORRECTION OF WATER/SEWER BILLS

I. Purpose

- 1.0 To describe when and how WSSC will "adjust" bills that have been rendered correctly.
- 1.1 To describe when and how WSSC will "correct" bills that have been rendered incorrectly.

II. Definitions

- 2.0 **Average Daily Consumption (ADC)** - The average number of gallons of water utilized at a property per day, as determined by dividing:
 - (a) the total gallons of water passing through a meter between one meter reading and another;
 - (b) by the number of calendar days that have elapsed since the last meter reading.
- 2.1 **Comparable Average Daily Consumption** - A property's ADC one year earlier during the same or roughly the same period as the bill for which correction or adjustment is requested, as long as the current customer and the same number of occupants resided at the property during the earlier period.
- 2.2 **Current ADC** - The ADC of a property, measured for a minimum 10-day period following a repair or following a high billing period.
- 2.3 **Multi-Unit Commercial Property** - Any multi-unit, non-residential property that is directly billed by WSSC and utilized as a business.
- 2.4 **Multi-Unit Residential Property** - A multi-unit (two or more) residential housing property directly billed by WSSC. A multi-unit residential property includes a mixed unit Residential/Commercial Unit Property.

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- 2.5 **Over-registering Meter** - A meter that is:
- (a) 2" or smaller tested by WSSC according to the American Water Works Association (AWWA) standards and found to be registering more than 101.5% of the water passing through the meter; or
 - (b) a similarly tested meter that is larger than 2" found to be registering more than 103% of the water passing through the meter.
- 2.6 **Single Unit Commercial Property** - A single unit, non-residential property that is directly billed by WSSC and utilized as a business.
- 2.7 **Single Unit Residential Property** - A single unit property exclusively used as a residence and directly billed by WSSC.
- 2.8 **Under-registering Meter** - A meter that is:
- (a) 2" or smaller tested by WSSC according to the AWWA standards and found to be registering less than 98.5% of the water passing through it; or
 - (b) a similarly tested meter that is larger than 2" found to be registering less than 97% of the water passing through it.
- 2.9 **Vandalism** - Willful or malicious destruction or damage of property.

III. Adjustment Type

- 3.0 **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 Regulation. WSSC will adjust the one high bill at the customer's request. The new adjusted bill will exclude water and sewer use charges attributable to 50% 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.
- 3.1 **One-Time High Bill Adjustment (Single Unit Commercial Properties)** - A single-unit commercial property may be eligible for a one time, one-bill reduction due to unexplained reasons and for which no other applicable WSSC policy exists. The high bill must be at least three times higher than the comparable ADC or the current ADC if the comparable is unavailable. At the customer's request, WSSC will adjust the high bill. The new adjusted bill will exclude water and sewer use charges attributable to 25% of the water and sewer use in excess of the comparable ADC, or the current ADC if the comparable is unavailable. Eligible customers may receive such an adjustment

only once, for one billing period.

- 3.2 **Leaks On-Property - Underground Leaks (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit)** If WSSC verifies that:
- (a) a customer has been billed for water lost due to an underground leak; and
 - (b) that the leak has been repaired by a plumber registered with WSSC, then WSSC will issue an adjusted bill to exclude up to six months of excess water and sewer use charges based on the property's comparable ADC, or if there is no comparable ADC, the current ADC.
- 3.3 **Underground Leaks, Off Property (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi Unit)** - Most meters are located at the property line. However, in unusual cases, meters are located off the customer's property. In such cases, if an underground leak occurs on the service line before the property line but after the water has passed through the meter, all bills reflecting excess water lost due to the leak will be adjusted. The adjusted bill(s) will exclude all excess water and sewer use charges based on the comparable ADC, or if there is no comparable ADC, the current ADC.
- 3.4 **Delayed Collection Action (Single Unit Residential & Single Unit Commercial)** -A bill rendered to an account in the name of a tenant in a single unit residential property or single unit commercial property that is left unpaid after the tenant vacates the property is ultimately the responsibility of the property owner pursuant to Maryland Annotated Code, Public Utilities Article, § 25-504(e). However, if WSSC failed to disconnect service to the property for non-payment of the delinquent balance on the date that the property was eligible for disconnection, all charges that accrued after that date and up to the tenant's move-out date will be excluded from the bill. The property owner shall be responsible for the unpaid charges up to the date the water should have been turned off.
- 3.5 **Charitable Institutions** - Pursuant to the Maryland Annotated Code, Public Utilities Article, § 25-506, WSSC provides charitable institutions with up to 100 gallons of water a day per resident without cost. To qualify for the WSSC charitable credit, the institution must be one which provides residential 24-hour care for indigent persons without regard to ability to pay and without regard to whether the person is a resident of Montgomery or Prince George's County. From time to time, but not more frequently than once per year, WSSC may require a charitable customer to certify that it continues to meet the criteria required by Public Utilities Article § 25-506 and this Regulation. Failure to return the certification within the time period specified shall result in discontinuation of the charitable credit until such certification is restored. During the time of no certification, the institution shall be liable for all charges as billed, unless there can be established a basis for restoring the charitable credit during the non-certification period. The charitable credit is determined by calculating an average per-resident ADC by dividing the property's total water usage by the number of calendar days in the billing period by the total average number of persons residing at the charitable property for that billing period. If the average per-resident ADC is

below 100 gallons per day, then the water/sewer charges will be zero. If the per-resident ADC is 100 gallons or above, then the property will be billed based upon the actual ADC, with a credit of 100 gallons per day per resident.

- 3.6 **Credits for Customers with Physical or Mental Impairment (Single Unit Residential)** - When all adult residents occupying a property are either hearing/visually impaired or otherwise physically or mentally challenged, bills that include excess usage charges arising from a leak that was not apparent to the occupants due to the impairment(s) will be adjusted. Both excess water and sewer charges will be reduced to the level of the comparable period, or if there is no comparable ADC, to the current ADC. To qualify for the adjustment, the customer must provide a repair receipt and a physician's letter certifying a physical and/or mental impairment for all adult occupants. This adjustment will cover all billing periods affected by the leak.
- 3.7 **Fire or Vandalism (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit)** - A bill resulting from water lost during a fire or as a result of an act of vandalism will be adjusted. The bill and water use must coincide with a period during which the fire or act of vandalism occurred. Additionally, the customer shall not be responsible for payment for damage to any meter during a fire or act of vandalism, or for fees to turn the water off or on due to such act of fire or vandalism. To qualify for an adjustment in either case, the customer shall submit documentation in the form of a timely filed police report or fire department report. The adjusted bill will exclude all excess water and sewer charges based on the comparable ADC, or if there is no comparable, the current ADC.
- 3.8 **Public Fountain Use** - Bills including charges for water used at public drinking fountains located at parks owned by the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission shall be adjusted each quarter to exclude 5,000 gallons of water and sewer charges for each fountain. The adjusted charges shall not exceed the total water usage for that period. If the adjusted charges would exceed the total water usage for the period, the charges will be based on zero consumption.
- 3.9 **Discolored Water or Sod Restoration (Single/Multi Unit Residential)** - A bill shall be adjusted when a customer has experienced a high bill due to having to run the water in the home to clear discoloration, or due to watering of sod replaced or restored by a WSSC contractor. Confirmation of the discolored water or sod restoration shall be provided by maintenance records, or be otherwise verified by WSSC staff. The adjusted bill will exclude both water and sewer charges in excess of the comparable ADC or, if unavailable, the current ADC.
- 3.10 **Unpaid Previous Owner Charges (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi Unit)** - Upon notification that a property has been transferred, WSSC will adjust the bill provided to the new property owner to exclude unpaid charges that were incurred by the previous owner prior to the date that title to the property was transferred. In the case of a foreclosure sale, upon receipt of a certified copy of the Court order ratifying the foreclosure sale, WSSC will adjust the bill provided to the foreclosure sale purchases to exclude unpaid charges incurred prior to the date of the Court Order.

- 3.11 **Gasket Leak on Meter (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit) -** An account shall be adjusted for all excess water and sewer charges when a gasket leaking on a meter registers on the meter (that is, the leaking gasket is on the "house side" of the meter.) The comparable ADC or, if unavailable, the current ADC will be used as the basis of the adjustment.
- 3.12 **Illegal Consumption (Single Unit Residential) -** Charges rendered to a property owner that resulted from the illegal water/sewer usage of a tenant who has vacated the property will be removed up to the date the tenant moved out.
- 3.13 **Lining Project (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit) -** Charges resulting from water used during cleaning and lining of a water main, or due to the switching of meters in a dual meter pit will be adjusted based on the comparable ADC or, if unavailable, the current ADC.

IV. Correction Types

- 4.0 **Theft of Service (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit) -** A corrected bill will be rendered for illegal water/sewer usage (including, but not limited to straight pipe connections, stolen or damaged meters, and meter bypasses left open), during the period for which WSSC can reasonably determine the charges. The corrected bill will be based on the property's comparable ADC or, if unavailable, the current ADC immediately after the illegal connection has been removed.
- 4.1 **Incorrect Service - (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit)** A bill or bills rendered on the basis of a service other than that actually provided the property will be corrected for no more than the previous 12 months, if the correction results in a bill increase. If the correction results in a bill decrease, WSSC will adjust incorrect charges for a period of not to exceed three years from the date that WSSC discovered the incorrect service. For example, bills rendered for water use only to a property receiving both water and sewer service will be corrected to include sewer use charges calculated on the basis of the property's billed water use, for a period not to exceed 12 months. However, bills rendered for water and sewer service to a property actually receiving only water service will be corrected to exclude sewer charges for up to three years.
- 4.2 **Over-registering Meter (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit) -** A bill or bills rendered on the basis of a reading from a meter which is subsequently found to be over registering the property's actual water consumption will be corrected for a period not to exceed three years. The corrected bills(s) will be rendered on the basis of the property's ADC immediately following the meter's repair or replacement.
- 4.3 **Under-registering Sub-Meter (Residential or Commercial; Single or Multi-Unit) -** A bill rendered on the basis of a reading from an under-registering sub-meter or its remote reading device will be corrected for a period of no more than three years. The corrected bill(s) will be based on the average daily sewer use before the sub-meter or its remote reading device began to malfunction or, if

unavailable, the current average daily sewer uses immediately following the sub-meter's repair or replacement.

V. Approval of Bill Adjustments and Corrections

- 5.0 The General Manager/CEO is delegated authority to approve any bill adjustments and corrections made under this regulation.
- 5.1 The General Counsel certifies that the statutory authority for the adoption of this Standard Procedure is Title 25, Subtitle 5 and § 17-403 of the Maryland Annotated Code, Public Utilities Article. Any conflict between this regulation and the Maryland Annotated Code will be resolved in favor of the latter.

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