



Utility Billing Adjustment Policy

I. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy, the following terms shall have the meanings specified below:

- a. “Customer” means the person or entity under whose name a water account is created and who is ultimately responsible for payment of all charges incurred on the account.
- b. “Property-side leak” means any loss of water due to deterioration of pipes, fittings, or equipment, the existence of which is known or unknown to the property owner or tenant (customer), and said loss emanates from the coupling on the customer’s side of the water meter, serving the customer’s property.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish a written policy on extending billing adjustments for property-side leaks to water and sewer customers in the City of Arcata.

III. POLICY

A. **Property Side Leaks**

Customers are responsible for the service and fittings attached to the Water Utility system beginning at the coupling on the customer’s side of the meter. Any leaks in the line which are the responsibility of the customer must be maintained and repaired by the customer solely at his/her expense.

No adjustment or credit will be applied to the utility bill for the property-side leaks, damage, deterioration or other factors beyond the control of the City, except as defined under Section A.1 – Property-Side Leaks – Billing Adjustments.

The customer’s service line, including the fittings on the customer’s side of the meter, is to be maintained in a state of repair sufficient to allow the removal and replacement of the meter for maintenance. No adjustment or credits will be given for leaks which develop as a result of changing or maintaining the water meter, unless it can be shown that the City was negligent in performing the meter change or maintenance.

The customer is responsible for monitoring higher than expected usage as reflected on the customer’s bill. Customers must investigate higher than expected usage to determine if the usage was caused by a property-side leak. A customer who has observed or has actual knowledge of a property-side leak is required to promptly repair the leak.

Billing Adjustment Criteria

The City may adjust the water and/or the sewer usage portion (excluding service charges) on a customer’s bill when all of the following requirements are met:

1. Customer shall notify City, in writing, of water loss and repair of a property-side leak within 60 days from the bill issuance date for the period in which the loss occurred.
2. The written request shall be accompanied by either a plumber's invoice for services rendered or a letter from the customer certifying:
 - a. The name, address and telephone number of the person discovering the leak;
 - b. The date the leak was discovered;
 - c. The nature and location of the leak;
 - d. The date the leak was repaired;
 - e. The name, address and telephone number of the person repairing the leak;
 - f. A description of the repair work performed.
3. The customer has not received a property-side leak billing adjustment at any one service address in the past 24 months. The 24-month period begins the first month of the billing period following the last billing period for which a property-side leak billing adjustment was received.
4. The City shall not extend the due date of a water or sewer bill as a result of the customer submitting a request for an adjustment of a bill for a property side leak. Customer shall pay at least the uncontested portion of the bill in order to prevent discontinuation of service.
5. There must be evidence that excessive use of water was not due to the customer, his/her agents or tenants' willful or neglectful acts.
6. The City shall require repair bills or other appropriate documentation substantiating the repair of the property-side leak prior to approving a claim for adjustment.
7. If the excess usage is due to a property-side leak, the City must be satisfied that the problem that resulted in a request for a billing adjustment has been properly repaired or resolved.
8. The City will NOT extend any adjustments for excess water use due to left-on hoses, excessive irrigation (in time or frequency) or the neglect of wear-and-tear items such as toilet flappers, leaking faucets, water softening systems and any other related water distributing devices.

Property-Side Leaks – Billing Adjustment

The following billing adjustments will be made once a customer satisfies the billing adjustment criteria:

1. The property-side leak billing adjustment shall be limited to one adjustment per 24-month period. The 24-month period begins the first month of the billing period following the last billing period for which a property-side leak billing adjustment was received.
2. The property-side leak billing adjustment shall be limited to two consecutive billing periods.
3. The property-side leak billing adjustment will be calculated on the following criteria:

- a. Customer's water usage, as a result of a property-side leak, must be at least 50% higher than usage compared to the previous billing cycle to qualify for a property-side leak adjustment. If the City grants a leak adjustment, the water usage will be adjusted to match the usage of the same month during the previous year. If the past year's history is unavailable, the water usage will be adjusted to match the most recent three month average.
- b. If the excess usage is due to an inside leak, no sewer usage adjustment will be given. If the excess usage is due to an outside leak, a sewer usage adjustment may be considered. The sewer usage adjustment (based on the excess usage) shall be limited to two billing periods and to one adjustment every 24 months.
- c. Customers can apply for one "unexplained" usage billing adjustment per the life of the account. "Unexplained" usage must be at least 50% higher than normal usage compared to the same billing period in previous years to qualify for a billing adjustment. The billing adjustment will be calculated as described under Section A.2.3 above.

B. Variance Procedures

Variances will be granted, on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the City. The following conditions are among those that may be given consideration in the variance process:

1. Granting a leak adjustment more often than once every 24 months;
2. Granting a credit for more than two billing periods.