

CITY OF GULFPORT
WATER/SEWER ADMINISTRATIVE
ADJUSTMENT POLICY

OBJECTIVE:

To provide an administrative policy to allow the City Manager or his designee the ability to adjust a resident's utility bill that meets the policy guidelines.

SEWER ADJUSTMENT POLICY:

The City Manager or their designee is authorized to make the adjustments to the sewer component of the utility bill for residents serviced by the City of Gulfport sewer utility under the following circumstances where the water consumption does not enter the sewer system.

1. There is a substantiated crack or break in an underground service line (pipe) from the meter connection to the dwelling being serviced
2. There is a substantiated crack or break in an underground sprinkler system line (pipe) that is connected to potable water
3. There is a substantiated crack or break in an aboveground service line (pipe) to a hot water heater, washing machine, water softener, kitchen, or bathroom
4. The resident is filling a new swimming pool or refilling an existing swimming pool after repairs or maintenance have been completed

Additional consideration will be made if it can be proven by the subscriber that water was released outside the perimeter of a building, that the subscriber was absent from the property at that time, and that the release of water was not caused by a lack of maintenance or negligence on the part of the subscriber

A minimum of one of the following items must be provided to substantiate evidence of repair for a crack or break in underground or aboveground service line.

1. Plumber's dated invoice detailing repair.
2. Dated invoice for purchase of repair supplies if self-repaired. If the leak was self-repaired, a visual check of the repaired area must be performed by a City employee. If possible, photos should be provided.

Adjustments will not be made for the following circumstances:

1. Broken or leaking hoses or hose bibs
2. Hoses or hose connections left on or found running
3. Toilet leaks
4. Kitchen or bathroom faucet leaks
5. Washing machine connection leaks (or broken hoses)
6. Malfunction of in-ground sprinkler systems on timer connected to potable water

PROCEDURE:

a. Adjustment for cracks or breaks in underground and aboveground service lines

When a customer has a qualifying circumstance, and indicates that a repair has been made and the proper documentation has been provided (including photos, if possible) and has been visually verified by a city employee, a service order will be issued to check that the water meter does not indicate any leaks and a reading will be obtained. If a leak is still indicated, no adjustment will be made until the nature of the leak has been determined and repaired.

Adjustments to sewer charges will be made for charges incurred in the month the leak is repaired for qualifying circumstances. Consideration will be given for the prior month if consumption use evidences that the leak occurred in that month and was not evident until a bill for the large consumption was received. (i.e.: Leak occurred in July - when the consumption increased 10,000 gallons. The leak is repaired in August after the bill was received. Adjustment is made for sewer charges on the July bill and August bill.) No consideration is given for any other prior months.

ADJUSTMENT CALCULATION:

Calculation of the sewer adjustment will be done by averaging the three prior months of consumption before the qualifying circumstance and crediting the difference between the amount that was charged for sewer and the amount of the charges for the three-month average. (i.e.: Sewer charges were based on 13,000 gallons of water consumption on the July bill, prior three-month average is 3,000 gallons, therefore the adjustment would be a credit of 10,000 gallons at the appropriate rate.)

b. Adjustment for swimming pools

A customer must call customer service and inform them of his/her intent to fill a pool. A service order is prepared to obtain the reading on the meter before the pool is filled and another request must be made by the customer to obtain the reading on the meter after the pool is filled. A service charge of ~~\$7.50~~ in accordance with the respective city ordinance that governs these fees for each reading will be applied to the account ~~for a total of \$15.00~~. Adjustment to the sewer charges will be made for the consumption used as indicated by the readings.

An adjustment request made after a pool has been filled will require a statement from the pool company indicating the size of the pool and the gallon capacity. A service charge ~~\$15.00~~ in accordance with the respective city ordinance that governs these fees will be applied to the account in lieu of the reading charges.

Adjustment to the sewer charges will be made by subtracting the average of the previous three (3) months consumption from the consumption on the billing that includes the pool fill. If the difference between the average bill and current bill (with pool fill) is higher than the pool company statement, the gallons on the pool company statement will be used to calculate an adjustment. (i.e., prior month consumption 8,000 gallons, current consumption 20,000 gallons, pool statement is 10,000 gallons. Adjustment will be made on the 10,000 gallons pool statement ($20,000 - 8,000 = 12,000$)). If the difference is lower, the calculation of the adjustment will be made using the remaining consumption. (i.e., prior month consumption 8,000 gallons, current consumption 17,000 gallons, pool statement 10,000 gallons. Adjustment will be made on 9,000 gallons remaining consumption ($17,000 - 8,000 = 9,000$)). Many companies, ~~at best,~~ are giving an estimate of gallon capacity that does not reflect the true gallon consumption used.

WATER ADJUSTMENT POLICY

The City Manager or their designee is authorized to make the adjustments to the water component of the utility bill for residents serviced by City of Gulfport water utility who experience an involuntary use of water due to a leak in excess of 20,000 gallons.

An adjustment may be applied for by providing written request seeking the adjustment and submit documentation that a leak has occurred and has been repaired. A minimum of one of the following items must be provided to substantiate evidence of repair:

1. Plumber's dated invoice detailing repair.
2. Dated invoice for purchase of repair supplies if self-repaired. If the leak was self-repaired, a visual check of the repaired area must be performed by a City employee. If possible, photos should be provided.

Adjustments will not be made for:

1. Voluntary uses of water such as; lawn watering and pool filling.
2. Release of water that was caused by a lack of maintenance or negligence on the part of the subscriber.

PROCEDURE:

When a customer has a qualifying circumstance, and indicates that a repair has been made and the proper documentation has been provided (including photos, if possible) and has been visually verified by a City employee, a service order will be issued to check that the water meter does not indicate any leaks and obtain a reading. If a leak is still indicated, no adjustment will be made until the nature of the leak has been determined and repaired as well.

Adjustments to water charges will be made for charges incurred in the month the leak is repaired for qualifying circumstances. Consideration will be given for the prior month if consumption use evidences that the leak occurred in that month and was not evident until a bill for the large consumption was received. (i.e.: Leak occurred in July - when the consumption increased 10,000 gallons. The leak is repaired in August after the bill was received. Adjustment is made for water charges on the July bill and August bill.) No consideration is given for any other months.

ADJUSTMENT CALCULATION

The water adjustment is based on the difference between

- a. the number of gallons of water used; billed at the prevailing rate in accordance with the City of Gulfport inclining block rate structure
and
- b. the number of gallons of water used billed at the lowest rate on the inclining block rate structure.

PAYMENT AGREEMENTS:

A payment agreement requiring the account holder's signature may be offered to property owners only in an effort to assist the customer in paying the associated charges without imposing a financial hardship. Payment terms will be dependent on the outstanding balance and require the resident to pay the current utility bill plus the amount of the payment agreement. (i.e. monthly utility bill \$50 with a \$75 per month payment agreement would require the resident to pay \$125 per month until the balance of the agreement is paid in full). Payment agreements will be prepared using the City of Gulfport Payment Agreement form approved by the City. Payment agreements may not be longer than six (6) months, except in cases where the City Manager or his designee approve to extend the timeframe when financial hardship can be documented.

~~If the owner defaults on the terms of the payment agreement, Customer Service will notify them.~~ If the outstanding balance is not brought current, the resident will be considered in default and may be subject to termination of service or a lien will be placed on the property to ensure collection of the delinquent balance. ~~Non-property owners are not eligible for payment plans.~~

The City understands that accidents occur that may result in an unusually high bill that is not a qualifying event. If this event results in the water consumption being ten (10) times above the customer's prior three months average consumption, the City Manager or his designee may authorize a payment plan. This is designed to reduce the financial burden of the event and allows the resident to pay the outstanding balance over a ~~maximum~~ six (6) month period while still maintaining utility service. The City Manager or their designee may extend the timeframe where financial hardship can be documented. Non-property owners are not eligible for payment plans, unless approved by the City Manager or their designee.