

Office of the City Manager

City of Richland Hills, Texas

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor Bill Agan and members of the Richland Hills City Council.
From: Eric Strong, City Manager
Date: July 7, 2015
Subject: Update to Utility Billing Procedures and Policy

Council Action: Consider update to Utility Billing Procedures and Policy

Background Information:

A recurring issue that comes up every few months is that we will have a utility customer come into city hall and express that they feel their utility bill is incorrect. The general theme is that for some reason, there is occasionally a month with an abnormal spike in usage. Usually, this is rectified by discovering a leak that is promptly repaired. When a leak is discovered, we have the ability to provide a bill adjustment and reduce the amount charged to the customer. However, on occasion, there is no apparent explanation for the spike in usage. There is no leak found, there is no evidence that water was used, but the meter does register an abnormal reading. We test the meters, and they show to be working properly. As it stands now, we have no method to deal with this other than to force the customer to pay the bill.

In the time I have been City Manager (almost a year and a half), I can think of four or five situations like this. As I mentioned, the only current recourse is to force payment. The attached updated rules and procedures would allow for the possibility of adjusting a bill if a situation like this occurs.

I would like to discuss this issue with council and get your feedback on whether or not the attached document appropriately addresses this issue in a way that the council finds suitable.

The proposed changes are highlighted in yellow on the attached document (the rest is an existing policy already approved by the Council).

Board/Citizen Input: N/A

Financial Impact; N/A

Staff Contacts:

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Attachments: Proposed Utility Billing Procedures



Utility Customer Service Policy and Procedures Leak Adjustments

Purpose: City of Richland Hills policy and procedures regarding adjustments to customer account due to high water usage caused by an underground leak or anomaly.

Definition: Normal usage - Determined by averaging six months prior to the leak occurring, or same time last year.

Leaks that qualify for an adjustment:

Underground pipes or hidden leaks - Leak adjustments will apply up to two consecutive months billing that is affected by the leak. The time lapse between when the meter is read to when the customer receives their bill may cause the billing to be affected for two months. This does not include toilet or faucet leaks.

Procedure:

- 1) The adjustment will be calculated on the excess usage above normal usage times the charge per 1,000 gallons for the range 2001-4000 gallons.
- 2) Adjustments will be issued only after receipt of plumbing repair bills or receipts for parts purchased for repair. The account could be subject to inspection to verify that the leak was repaired.
- 3) If water customer has verified with a plumber that no leak exists, but there is an abnormal reading, the City Manager may apply an adjustment to the account. Under an abnormal reading adjustment, only one month may be adjusted in any 24 month period. Adjustments will only be considered if the following circumstances exist:
 - a. The City tests the meter and finds it to be functioning properly.
 - b. There have been no late payments on the account for the previous 12 months.
 - c. There have been no billing adjustments to the account for the previous 24 months.