

CHAPTER 12
CITY OF WASECA
WASECA UTILITIES (UTILITY) BILLING
POLICY & PROCEDURES
EFFECTIVE October 20, 2020

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CITY OF WASECA

WASECA UTILITIES (UTILITY) BILLING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Section 1. Utility Billing Policy

The following policy shall govern the provision of billing municipal utilities of the City of Waseca. The purpose of this policy is to provide consistent customer rules and guidelines. Based on unique circumstances, City of Waseca Utilities staff may authorize exceptions to this policy. Individuals who have questions regarding service provided by the City of Waseca Utilities are encouraged to contact the Utility Billing staff.

Section 2. Utility Billing Information

Hours

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|-----------------------|---|
| The office hours are: | Monday through Friday (excluding City of Waseca observed holidays or for City designated reasons) 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. |
|-----------------------|---|

Address

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Mailing address for business office: | 508 State St South, Waseca, MN 56093 |
| Customer Service phone number: | 507-835-9718 |
| Website address: | www.ci.waseca.mn.us |

Emergency Service

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Emergency service phone number: | 507-835-9718 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|

Section 3. Utility Billing

The City of Waseca Utilities billing office shall be responsible for the calculation and generation of all municipal utility bills. Utility Billing shall maintain account records for each customer that includes the customer's legal name, billing address, account number, service address, current charges and account history including consumption, past due charges, penalties and fees. Utility Billing policies and operation are under the responsible charge of the Director of Utilities and Public Works.

Section 4. Rate Ordinance, Policy or Resolution

All municipal utility charges shall be calculated in accordance with the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution as adopted by the City Council and applicable to each municipal utility or service provided to a customer.

a) Rate Classifications

1) Residential Services

- a. Available to a single family private residence or farm as 60 cycle, single-phase service at a nominal voltage of 120/240 volts, furnished through one meter for domestic purposes including lighting, domestic appliances, heating, refrigeration, cooling and domestic power.
- b. **Electric Water Heater Credit.** Water heater credit applies to the monthly bills of those customers with electric water heaters that have separate meters and the water heater is controlled under the Utility Load Control Program. The consumption from the water heater and residential meters will be added together and billed under the residential rate. The credit shall not reduce the bill below the customer charge. Customers who use water heaters on the electric water heater credit rate shall include contactors or control circuits so Utility-furnished load control equipment can control the water heater(s) in the facility. Utility Load Control equipment that is disconnected or inoperable renders the credit invalid for the entire calendar year in which the disconnection is identified.
- c. **Residential Service** to a multiple dwelling or apartment house through a single meter is not allowed except for common spaces. Meter sockets shall be located in a central location and shall be furnished by the building owner. Meter sockets shall comply with Electric Utility requirements.
- d. **Electric service to a multiple dwelling or apartment house** for common use spaces shall be billed under the appropriate General Service rate schedule. Common space service shall be single-phase or three-phase, depending on the size of the multiple dwelling and the common load. Three-phase service is available only on multiple dwellings larger than 10 units.
- e. **Service for residential and commercial purposes** on the same property, under a common ownership, and with the same electrical characteristics may be combined through a single meter, but the service shall be billed under the General Service Rate Schedule.
- f. **Electric central air conditioning** under Utility Load Control Program. The credit for each customer shall be as established by the City Council for the months of June through September. Air conditioning that is part of the Utility Load Control program shall have control contactors so the load(s) can be controlled by a Utility-furnished controller. Utility Load Control equipment that is disconnected or inoperable renders the credit invalid for the entire air conditioning season.

2) General Service Rate

- a. Available to any customer for general service at one location as 60 cycles, single-phase and/or three-phase service through one meter at the secondary voltage available at the customer's location. This rate applies to loads with a demand NOT in excess of 50 kW. Three-phase services must be balanced as determined by the City.
- b. **Electric Central Air Conditioning** under Utility Load Control Program. The credit for each customer shall be as established by the City Council for the months of June through September. Air conditioning that is part of the Utility Load Control program shall have control contactors so the load(s) can be controlled by a Utility furnished controller. Utility Load Control equipment that is disconnected or inoperable renders the credit invalid for the entire air conditioning season.

3) Power Service

- a. Available to any customer for service at one location as 60 cycle, three-phase service through one meter at the secondary voltage available at the customer's location. The customer's load must be balanced per Electric Utility requirements to qualify for this rate. The availability of this service is dependent on the site and the load, but must have a demand in excess of 50 kW to qualify for this rate. Waseca Utilities will consider service under other special circumstances, but the owner shall pay for the costs associated with the installation of the primary service and transformer. The secondary voltage will be 120/208 volts, three-phase, four-wire; or 277/480 volts, three-phase, four-wire.
- b. **Primary Voltage Service.** If the customer agrees to take service at the primary voltage available and to pay all costs incurred in the ownership, operation and maintenance of transformer, primary switchgear with circuit breaker, protective relaying, revenue VT and CT provisions, and substation equipment (except meters), a discount of 5% will be allowed on the amount of the monthly bill upon resolution of the City Council.
- c. **Primary Metering.** At the option of the Electric Utility, secondary service hereunder may be metered at the primary voltage, in which case a 0.5% discount will be allowed on the amount of the monthly bill upon resolution of the City Council. The customer shall pay all costs for primary metering. The metering VTs and CTs will be furnished by Waseca Utilities and shall be housed in a metering enclosure.
- d. **Power Factor Clause.** The customer must maintain an average power factor as close to 100% as possible, but in no event less than 90% lagging for secondary services per Electric Utility requirements.
- e. **Electric Central Air Conditioning.** Under Utility Load Control Program, the credit for each customer shall be as established by the City Council for

the months of June through September. Air conditioning that is part of the Utility Load Control Program shall have control contactors so the load(s) can be controlled by a Utility furnished controller. Utility Load Control equipment that is disconnected or inoperable renders the credit invalid for the entire air conditioning season.

Section 5. Monthly Utility Bill Calculation

Waseca Utilities shall provide each municipal utility customer a combined monthly municipal utility bill which shall include the fixed monthly charges as well as charges incurred by the customer for regular monthly water, sewer (wastewater), storm water, street light and electric services or any combination thereof, plus any fees, taxes, penalties or previous balances. Each municipal utility shall be designated as a separate entry on the billing statement. Bills for municipal utility services provided shall be issued monthly by Waseca Utilities. By the due date, bills are required to be paid monthly in full by the customer.

- a) Billing for electric consumption is based on actual meter readings, kilowatt hour (kWh) consumption, kilowatt (kW) demand or combination thereof.
- b) Water usage is billed in units. One (1) unit is equal to 100 cubic feet, or 748 gallons. Water usage will be billed based on actual meter readings.
- c) The non-residential sewer billing is calculated as follows:
 - 1) Billed based on actual monthly water consumption, as registered by the customer's water meter(s), year round.
- d) A sanitary sewer meter may be required by the City.
- e) Special billing accounts may be established by the City.
- f) The residential customer sewer billing is calculated as follows:
 - 1) For bills due January 15 through May 15, the sewer (wastewater) billing is based on the actual water meter reading each month. This period of time includes usage from mid-November through mid-April, which is winter water usage.
 - 2) For bills due June 15 through December 15, the sewer (wastewater) billing is based on the five (5) month average of winter water usage or actual monthly water usage, whichever is less.
 - 3) Winter average of water usage is calculated using "standard rounding".
- g) Storm water fees are based on how a property is used. In general, charges are calculated on the amount of storm water runoff contributed from each lot to the City's storm water system.

- 1) The storm water fee will be invoiced every month with water, sewer (wastewater) or electric utility bills. In the absence of existing water, sewer (wastewater) or electric utility account, the storm water fee will be billed on an annual basis. The fee shall be due and payable on the same terms as water, sewer (wastewater) and electric bills. If a bill is not paid in full on or before the due date, a late fee equal to ten percent (10%) of the current billed amount shall be added to the charges. Any prepayment or overpayment of charges shall be retained by the City and applied against subsequent fees. All fees are approved by the City Council.
 - 2) In the situation that the property does not have a City water, City sewer, or City electric account, the account shall be the responsibility of the property owner. The property owner shall be liable for the storm water management fee for the property, whether or not the property owner is occupying the property. The City of Waseca reserves the right to certify unpaid storm water charges incurred by the property owner against the property with Waseca County through the approved legal process, according to state and local laws.
- h) Unless otherwise provided herein, all applicable monthly charges will continue for each municipal utility customer until such time as the following may occur:
- 1) The electric meter is removed from the meter socket by City staff, per customer request, for the purposes of discontinuing electric service to the property.
 - 2) The water and sewer services are disconnected in accordance with City Council Policy Chapter 7–Utilities. The City owned water or sewer meter must be disconnected from the private plumbing and returned to Waseca Utilities billing office by the property owner.

Section 6. Extra Service Bills

Billings for any extra services, installation charges or other special charges shall be billed in accordance with the applicable utility policy or service rate resolution and shall be included on the appropriate monthly billing statement or as a separate bill.

The customer shall be responsible for the cost of repairs for damage to the electric meter, water meter or sewer meter at their service address. Billing for the cost of the repairs shall be in accordance with the specific fee schedule, rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City Council.

Section 7. Billing Cycle

a) Meter Reading Date

- 1) Typically, meters shall be read between the 12th and 17th day of the month.

- 2) Most utility meter readings are obtained once a month.
- 3) In the event that the Utility is unable to obtain a meter reading, the consumption will be estimated by staff. Any required adjustment due to an estimated bill will be made during a subsequent billing period.
- 4) Monthly meter readings are billed as a whole number.

b) Billing Period

- 1) Monthly billings shall be mailed within thirty (30) calendar days following the dates of service in which municipal utility service is provided.
- 2) Utility bills are mailed by first class U.S. mail at the end of each month. Failure to receive the bill shall not release a customer from the obligation to pay in full by the due date.
- 3) The date the bill is created shall be known as the billing date.
- 4) The bill shall be due and payable in full by the fifteenth (15th) day of the next month after the billing date.
- 5) If the due date falls on a City of Waseca observed holiday, Saturday, or Sunday, the due date shall be on the first business day following the holiday or weekend.

c) Delinquent Date

- 1) If a regular monthly bill is not paid in full on or before the due date, a late fee equal to ten percent (10%) of the current billed amount, less sales tax, shall be added to the customer's account.
- 2) The first business day following the due date shall be known as the delinquent date.
- 3) Late fees will be removed from the account as a one-time courtesy per customer if a customer agrees to sign up for the automatic bank payment program. This sign up must occur prior to the due date of the next monthly utility bill following the month in which the late fees were incurred.
- 4) In the event of a billing error, late fees will be removed from the account as determined by staff.

Section 8. Delinquent Accounts and Disconnection of Service and Installation of Electric Meter Service Limiting Device

- a) Any customer whose utility bill remains unpaid in full by the fifth (5th) day of the month following the due date, shall receive by first class U.S. mail a combined Notice of Past Due Balance and Final Notice Before Disconnection or

Installation of Electric Meter Service Limiting Device. The notice will require full payment of the past due balance within twenty (20) calendar days of the date of the combined notice. Electric service limiting will be accomplished by the installation of a service limiting device on the Utility's electric meter servicing the property.

- b) Failure to make full payment of the past due balance or arrange and sign a mutually agreed upon payment plan, as outlined in the notice, will result in disconnection of the customer's utility service or installation of a service limiting device on or after the disconnect date listed in the notice. A written guarantee from an assistance agency will be accepted as payment on the account to prevent disconnection or installation of a service limiting device, provided the amount of the guarantee covers the past due balance as outlined in the notice. Utilities will be disconnected as provided in City Code 50.04 and in accordance with applicable state statutes.
- c) Disconnection or installation of a service limiting device will not occur on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays or on the day before a City observed holiday.
- d) From October 15th through April 15th the City of Waseca acknowledges and complies with guidelines as outlined in Minnesota Statute 216B.097, Cold Weather Rule for Municipal Utilities. The most current version of the Cold Weather Rule shall prevail.
- e) Any customer subject to disconnection or installation of a service limiting device for non-payment shall not be reconnected until payment of all charges, fees, and deposit as outlined in the combined Notice of Past Due Balance and Final Notice Before Disconnection or Installation of Electric Meter Service Limiting Device.
- f) Reconnection will typically occur between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding City observed holidays. Reconnection occurs based on staff work schedules and as authorized by the Director or designee.
- g) Payment must be received in the Utility Billing office before 3:00 p.m. for a same-day reconnection. If payment for reconnection is made after 3:00 p.m., reconnection will occur on the next business day. The Director or designee may adjust the 3:00 p.m. payment deadline past 3:00 p.m.
- h) The City of Waseca does not accept personal or business checks for reconnection payment. Checks from an assistance agency or organization paying on behalf of a customer who has been disconnected or who has had a service limiting device installed may be accepted at the discretion of staff.
- i) If payment for reconnection does not occur within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of disconnection, the account will be closed and a final bill issued. Any currently held deposit will then be applied to the outstanding balance on the final bill.
- j) Failure to pay the final bill by the due date of the final notice will result in referral of the account to a collection agency or attorney for collection on a case-by-case basis.

- k) Reestablishment of service by the disconnected customer at the same or another service address shall be treated as a new account and will be subject to the deposit requirements as outlined in Section Ten (10) of this policy.
- l) The City of Waseca reserves the right to certify delinquent water, sewer (wastewater), storm water, and electric charges incurred by the property owner against the property with Waseca County through the approved legal process for assessment, according to all state and local laws.
- m) The City of Waseca reserves the right to pursue collection of unpaid utility bills using any and all legal means, as deemed appropriate by the Director or designee, on a case by case basis.
- n) An after-hours reconnection may be granted by the City at the landlord's request upon discovery that the City utility service has been disconnected or has had a service limiting device installed due to non-payment of a tenant's utility bill. Based on the good faith knowledge of the landlord property owner, the tenant will have vacated the rental property. City staff will reconnect the property utility through the call back process at no charge. This reconnection will occur if the landlord agrees to assume responsibility for payment of the utility bill from the date of reconnection. The landlord shall establish the utility account through the Utility Billing office within three (3) business days after reconnection. If service is not established by the landlord, the property utility service will be subject to disconnection according to the policy notification process.
- o) Upon discovery and verification that the service was disconnected or a service limiting device was installed in error, the service will be reconnected after hours. The customer will not be charged a disconnection/reconnection fee, additional deposit or callback fee.
- p) The City of Waseca has the right to enter in and upon private property, including buildings and dwelling houses, upon which a municipal utility is installed or connected to, at all times reasonable under the circumstances, for the purpose(s) of: reading utility meters; inspection/repair/upgrade of meters, utility systems, or any part thereof; or to disconnect utility service.

Section 9. Municipal Utility Service Application

- a) Any person or legal entity desiring to establish any municipal utility service or combination thereof shall make application for said service(s).
- b) Applicants must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- c) The application shall be on such form(s) as may now or hereinafter be prescribed by the appropriate utility.
- d) The application shall include the applicant's name, names of other adults living in the residence, service address, landlord's name, telephone numbers, personal identification number (e.g., social security number, driver's license number or date of birth) or federal identification number (businesses), employment information and signature of the authorized party responsible for

payment.

- e) Persons applying on behalf of others or acting as an agent for others may provide the required information provided such agent agrees to assume responsibility as provided on the application for utility service.
- f) Two (2) forms of identification are required at the time of application for utility service. At least one form of identification must include a personal photograph. Acceptable forms of identification include, but are not limited to: driver's license, passport, state issued identification card, social security card, work badge or other photo identification card, insurance card, and bank credit/debit card.
- g) If more than one electric, water or sewer connection to City infrastructure exists at a single service address, each service connection shall be subject to separate base charges, consumption charges and applicable utility charges.
- h) In the event of death or divorce requiring a name change on the account, a new application is required by the property occupant. Disconnection or installation of a service limiting device policy rules will apply for non-compliance.
- i) A utility service applicant for a rental property must be listed on the lease and must reside at the rental property. Reasonable allowance will be made in the case of a customer occupying a property of a deceased account holder, subject to approval, but shall be required to comply with Section 9(h).

Section 10. Utility Deposit

a) Account Deposit

- 1) Any customer who establishes water, sewer (wastewater) and/or electric service shall be required to pay an initial utility deposit at the time of the application or set up and sign a mutually agreed upon payment plan for the initial utility deposit to be paid within the timeframe of ten (10) business days after moving in. Default of deposit payment or failure to set up and sign a mutually agreed upon payment plan will be subject to utility service disconnection or installation of a service limiting device as outlined in Section Eight (8) of this policy.
- 2) In the event of the death of a spouse or legal partner, a requested change of name will be allowed with no additional deposit required for the remaining spouse or legal partner at the time the account name change is made.
- 3) Residential deposits shall be collected in accordance with the deposit amount established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City.
- 4) Commercial deposits are based on the full intended use of the property. If no previous representative billing history exists for the full intended use of the property, City staff will determine the amount of the required deposit based on billing history for a similar business receiving City utility service.

- 5) Utility deposits shall be maintained in a separate City account and held as security for the payment of municipal utility bills. Any deposit monies held in a customer's name may be applied to any outstanding unpaid utility bills left in that customer's name.
- 6) The utility deposit shall be considered a combined deposit for the benefits of any and all municipal utilities received by the customer.
- 7) Utility deposits shall not be required for federal, state or local government agencies.
- 8) Credit references or a letter of credit will not be accepted as a deposit.
- 9) City Staff reserves the right to require a deposit for existing customers without an existing deposit when moving to a new service address if the customer has not established a satisfactory payment history by paying twelve (12) consecutive monthly bills on time.
- 10) City Staff reserves the right to require a larger initial deposit at the City's discretion when a customer has been identified as a credit risk, defined as failing to pay off a previous utility account with the City of Waseca or failing to pay twelve (12) consecutive monthly bills on time on a utility account with the City of Waseca. The deposit amount will be determined based on the customer's previous account(s) history.
- 11) The customer must pay all delinquent accounts in their name in full for service to be provided or continued at another location. A mutually agreeable payment plan must be signed by the customer and approved by staff. The City of Waseca may refuse utility service to a customer until all delinquent accounts in their name and the required utility deposit are paid in full or a mutually agreeable payment plan has been signed by the customer and approved by staff.
- 12) The City of Waseca reserves the right to require a deposit when a customer returns to the Utility Billing system if the time elapsed between service dates for that customer exceeds six (6) months. If the time elapsed between service dates is less than six (6) months and the customer has been identified as a credit risk as outlined above in Section 10(a)(10), City staff reserves the right to require a deposit.
- 13) In the event of accountholder divorce, a requested change of accountholder will be treated as a request to terminate service for the existing accountholder. The individual that will remain at the service address shall be subject to all application and deposit requirements for the establishment of utility service as outlined in this policy.

b) Deposit Interest

- 1) All deposits will earn interest at the rate established by the State of Minnesota, Statute 325E.02 (b), published annually on the Minnesota Department of Commerce website. This rate will be adjusted annually on the first day of each year. Accrued deposit interest shall be paid to the

customer annually, on the last day of each year, as a credit to the customer's utility account.

c) Deposit Application: Service Termination

- 1) When a customer terminates their existing service and no longer needs utility service from the City of Waseca, the utility deposit plus accrued interest shall be credited against the final bill. Any credit balance over \$5.00 remaining on the account after the final bill has been satisfied will be refunded to the customer in the form of a check from the City of Waseca.

d) Reconnect Deposit

- 1) Prior to restoration of municipal utility service, any residential customer whose service has been disconnected or has had a service limiting device installed shall be subject to an increased service deposit equal to one half of the current deposit amount, until the deposit held on the account reaches the maximum established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City.
- 2) In the event an account has no deposit on record, the residential customer is required to pay an initial deposit, as established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City, before utility service will be restored.
- 3) Prior to the restoration of municipal utility service, any commercial customer whose service has been disconnected or has had a service limiting device installed due to non-payment shall be subject to an increased service deposit equal to the current deposit amount until the deposit held on the account reaches the maximum of three (3) times the current deposit amount.
- 4) In the event a commercial account has no deposit on record, the commercial customer is required to pay a deposit equal to an average of twelve (12) months prior monthly utility bills before utility service will be reconnected.

e) Deposit Transfers: Customer to Customer

- 1) Utility deposits may be transferred from one customer to another upon both the transferor (former account holder) and transferee (new account holder) signing the Waseca Utilities Deposit Waiver.
- 2) The City must receive full payment of any amounts due as of the due date of the final bill.
- 3) If the original final bill is not satisfied by the transferor, the transferee will be responsible for payment of the deposit as outlined in Section Ten (10) of this policy.

f) Deposit Transfers: Service Address to Service Address

- 1) In the event that a customer moves to a new service address, the deposit will be transferred from the previous service address to the new service address.
- 2) The City must receive full payment of any amounts due as of the due date of the final bill for the previous address.
- 3) If the final bill for the previous address is not satisfied, the customer will be subject to disconnection of the utilities or installation of a service limiting device at the new address until the final bill for the previous address is paid in full, and the City of Waseca reserves the right to charge a higher deposit for that customer. The customer is responsible for payment of the difference needed to bring the deposit to the required amount. Any unpaid balance for the previous address must be satisfied and the new deposit amount paid for continued utility service at the new address.

Section 11. Utility Deposit Credit

The municipal utility deposit will be credited to the customer's utility account in accordance with the following provisions:

- a) Upon completion of twelve (12) consecutive monthly bill payments by the due date with no penalties or late charges, said deposit, plus accrued interest, shall be credited to the customer's utility account.
- b) Upon termination of municipal utility service, said deposit plus the accrued interest, shall be applied in the same manner as the deposit application for service termination as outlined in Section Ten (10) of this policy.

Section 12. Credit Refunds and Balance Write-offs

- a) Any credit amount in excess of \$5.00 remaining on a customer's utility account after the final bill has been created shall be refunded to the customer in the form of a check issued by the City of Waseca.
- b) Any credit amount of \$5.00 or less remaining on a customer's utility account after the final bill has been created shall be retained by the City to cover administrative expenses.
- c) Account balances in excess of \$50.00 that remain on a customer's utility account for more than thirty (30) days after the final bill has been created may be referred to a collection agency for collection.
- d) An account balance of \$50.00 or less that remains unpaid for more than thirty (30) days after the final bill has been created shall be written off as uncollectible with the approval of the Director.

- e) Previously written off account balances must be paid in full if said customer should apply to obtain utility service from the City of Waseca in the future.

Section 13. Disputed Utility Bills and Billing Errors

Any dispute regarding a customer's utility bill shall be directed to staff for resolution, as outlined below, within thirty (30) calendar days of the mailing date of the bill or notice in question.

- a) Customers may obtain a Utility Bill Appeal Form at the Utility Billing office or online from the City of Waseca's website. The customer's written request for appeal, along with any supporting documentation, will be submitted to the Utilities Office Manager for review and investigation.
- b) Reduction of utility charges based on consumption will generally not be granted when the meter has been tested as accurate. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain private property equipment and facilities to the benefit of the private property customer so that the customer is not charged for inadvertent consumption. Meter calibration may be required to resolve a disputed utility bill. A disputed utility bill shall be routed through the approved review process as provided in this section. A one-time account credit may be granted in the case of inadvertent consumption caused by malfunctioning customer equipment, as determined by the City through the Utility Bill Appeal process.
- c) A customer's request for a meter calibration test is subject to an account charge as provided by the City Council. The account charge will not be applied if the meter does not comply with industry calibration standards. The account charge will be applied when the meter complies with industry calibration standards.
- d) The performance of all watthour meters is considered to be acceptable when the percent registration is not less than 98% or more than 102% as determined by testing for average accuracy.
- e) If the period of inaccuracy cannot be determined, it will be assumed that the metering equipment has become inaccurate at a uniform rate since it was installed or last tested unless there is valid reason to use another method. Recalculation of bills is based on a uniform rate of inaccuracy as determined by staff.
- f) Whenever a water meter is found upon test to be out of compliance with the accuracy and capacity requirements of American Water Works Association standards, a recalculation of bills for service will be made on the basis that the meter should comply with applicable standards.
- g) Whenever a sewer (wastewater) meter is found upon test to be out of compliance with the accuracy and capacity requirements of the metering system manufacturer, a recalculation of bills for service will be made on the basis that the meter should comply with the standard of the metering system

manufacturer.

- h) The Utilities Office Manager's written decision will be mailed by USPS first class mail to the customer at the mailing address supplied by the customer on the Utility Bill Appeal Form.
- i) If the customer still believes the bill is incorrect, the customer must submit a request for further review in writing to the Utility Billing office no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after the postmark of the Utilities Office Manager's written decision.
- j) The Director will review the initial appeal, any supporting documentation, and the Utilities Office Manager's written decision. Upon completion of this review, a written decision from the Director will be mailed by USPS first class mail to the customer at the mailing address supplied by the customer on the Utility Bill Appeal Form.
- k) All decisions of the Director will be final.
- l) Billing errors shall be remedied in accordance with Minnesota Administrative Rules 7820.3800.

Section 14. Payment Plans

- a) Customers that are unable to pay their utility bill by the due date are encouraged to contact the Utility Billing office to arrange and sign a mutually agreed-upon payment plan, with the goal of the payment plan to bring a customer's account current in a timely manner. Staff has the right to reject a proposed payment plan if it is determined not to achieve the goal of bringing a customer's account current. All payment plans must be in writing, signed by the utility account holder, and approved by staff to be valid.
- b) If a customer fails to comply with any term and/or condition contained within the signed payment plan, the customer shall be removed from the payment plan, flagged as "No Payment Plans Allowed", and will be subject to disconnection of utility service or installation of service limiting device.
- c) Customers that have been flagged as "No Payment Plans Allowed" will be given two opportunities per year to again be allowed to set up payment plans: at the beginning and end of the Cold Weather Protection period as defined by Minnesota Statute 216B.097.

Section 15. Payments

a) Automatic Bank Withdrawal

- 1) Waseca Utilities offers an automatic bank withdrawal payment program. After enrollment in this program, monthly utility payments will be deducted on the due date each month from the customer's designated

checking or savings account, subject to banking regulations.

- 2) If the due date falls on a weekend or a City observed holiday, then the deduction shall be taken on the first business day following the holiday or weekend. After two returned Automated Clearing House payments, the customer shall be removed from the automatic bank withdrawal payment program at the City of Waseca's discretion. Reinstatement may be requested after twelve (12) consecutive on time full payments.
- 3) Staff may or may not approve the request to sign up for the automatic bank withdrawal payment program based on specific customer account history. This includes, but is not limited to, customers who have been removed from the program due to insufficient funds and customers who have used the sign up option in the past to have late fees removed.

b) By Mail

Mail payments to the City of Waseca, 508 S. State Street, Waseca, MN 56093. Payments must be received by the City of Waseca on or before the due date. The City of Waseca does not accept or hold post-dated checks.

c) In Person

Make a payment at the Utility Billing office in City Hall by cash, check, money order or debit/credit card as approved by the City of Waseca. The City of Waseca accepts Visa, MasterCard and Discover. The card service fee will be paid by Waseca Utilities, as determined by the City of Waseca.

d) By Phone

Debit or credit card payments (Visa, MasterCard and Discover) are accepted over the phone during regular business hours. The card service fee will be paid by Waseca Utilities, as determined by the City of Waseca.

e) Drop Box

Drop box locations may be changed by the Director. The current location is the drive through on the north side of City Hall at 508 State Street South.

f) Online Bill Pay

The City of Waseca offers online bill viewing and payment via a secure, third-party website. Online bill payments can be made using a debit/credit card or the customer's checking or savings account.

g) Budget Billing

Budget Billing is available to any residential customer that has twelve (12) months of billing history and is current, no past due balance on the account. Budget Billing payments are based on the customer's actual consumption history and recalculated two times per year, in May and November. Budget Billing accounts are not subject to late fees.

All customers enrolled in Budget Billing will also be required to sign up for the Automatic Bank Payment program. After two insufficient funds payments, the account will be removed from both Budget Billing and Automatic Bank Pay programs. Future utility payments must be made by cash, debit/credit card, or money order. Reinstatement may be requested after twelve (12) consecutive on time full payments. The account will be charged a returned item fee, as established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City, for each returned item. The disconnection process or installation of a service limiting device for collection of unpaid bills will also apply.

h) Personal Check

The City of Waseca's acceptance of a personal check for payment is a conditional payment of the amount due pending the check clearing the customer's bank. If the check is returned for non-payment to the City by the customer's bank, it will be treated as if no attempt at payment had been made, and the account will be subject to disconnection of utility services or installation of a service limiting device as outlined in any previous notice of disconnection.

Section 16. Service Charges

The following additional fees shall be charged for services provided by the municipal utility:

- a) Utility fee for disconnection or installation of a service limiting device and reconnection of service due to nonpayment of bill and/or deposit, as established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City.
- b) Returned item fee for all checks and/or Automated Clearing House payments, as established by the specific rate ordinance, policy or resolution adopted by the City.
 - 1) The customer shall pay by cash, debit/credit card, cashier's check, or money order the amount of the returned item(s) plus the corresponding returned item fee.
 - 2) After two returned checks and/or Automated Clearing House payments, the customer shall pay all current and future payments by cash, debit/credit card, or money order.

Section 17. Landlord/Tenant Policy

- a) The City of Waseca recognizes the rights and duties of landlords and tenants as outlined in federal law, state statutes, local ordinances, safety and housing codes, common law, contract law and a number of court decisions.
- b) Information can be obtained from the Minnesota Attorney General's web site or from the handbook Landlords and Tenants: Rights and Responsibilities, written and published by the Minnesota Attorney General's office.

- c) Owners of rental property shall be responsible for the utility service and bills for all units and services on their property at all times unless occupied by a tenant who has made the required application for the service to Waseca Utilities. Services shall continue until the owner of the property or the tenant makes a request for termination of the service. Once a tenant requests cancellation of their service, the property owner shall be responsible for subsequent utility bills for that service.
- d) Notification for the establishment of utility service at a rental service address may be made by either the landlord or tenant to the Utility Billing office.
- e) Scheduling of a meter reading for termination of service can also be made by either landlord or tenant to the Utility Billing office.
- f) If an account holder fails to notify the Utility Billing office of a request to discontinue service, the account holder will continue to be responsible for any and all charges incurred while the account is in account holder's name, even if no longer residing at the service address, until such time as the account holder notifies the Utility Billing office to discontinue service.
- g) Billing of the utilities at a rental property shall revert back to the landlord between tenant occupancy based on the notification guidelines.
- h) Utility charges incurred by the account holder remain the responsibility of the account holder after termination of service, and do not transfer with the property.
- i) Staff will not mediate disputes regarding billing issues between a landlord and tenant.
- j) The lease or rental agreement between the landlord and tenant does not represent an agreement for utility service between the City of Waseca and the tenant.
- k) Per Minnesota Statute 504B.215, Subdivision 2, "the landlord of a single metered residential building shall be the bill payer responsible"; the statute defines "single metered residential building" as a multiunit rental building with more than one separate residential living unit where the utility service is measured through a single meter. The most current version of this statute will apply.
- l) Waseca Utilities will not mediate or investigate disputes between a landlord and tenant relating to privately owned electrical wiring and plumbing.

Section 18. Requests for Information

- a) In accordance with Minnesota Statute 13.685, municipal electric customer utility data, and all other utility data associated with an electric account, is considered private and will only be released to the current account holder at a property, unless said account holder has signed a written consent for release authorizing the City of Waseca to share that information.

- b) Consent to release utility information forms are available from the Utility Billing office or from the City of Waseca's website.
- c) The request for information must be made in writing and the customer making the request may be billed, based on the City of Waseca Data Charges policy, if the request is not routine in nature, as determined by staff.

Section 19. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning as defined by this section.

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| Bill | The statement of account for municipal utility services provided by the City to a customer and due and payable by the due date of the bill to the City by the customer. |
| | |
| City | The municipality known as the City of Waseca, and any designated agent authorized to act on behalf of the City, including Utility Billing staff. |
| | |
| Customer | Any person or legal entity to which the municipal utility services are provided. |
| | |
| Day | Calendar day unless otherwise specified in this policy. |
| | |
| Delinquent Customer | Any person or legal entity who fails to pay any current charges or portion thereof for any municipal utility by the due date of the bill. |
| | |
| Disconnect | The utility services shall be made unavailable to any person or legal entity due to non-payment or shall be limited through the use of an electric meter service limiting device, as determined by Waseca Utilities. Disconnection includes installation of a service limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way, as referenced in MN Statute 216B.097. |
| | |
| Final Bill Due Date | The due date disclosed on the final bill. |
| | |
| Late Fee | Ten (10) percent of the billed amount less sales tax. |
| | |
| Municipal Utilities | Water, sewer (wastewater), storm water and/or electric services, departments or systems of the City of Waseca or any combination thereof. |
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| Past Due Amount | Any current charges or portion thereof for any municipal utility which remain unpaid past the due date of the bill on which such current charges first appear. |
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| Payment Plan | A signed written agreement between customer and the City allowing the customer to make payments to the City to pay any current or past due charges or portion thereof for any municipal utility by a mutually agreed upon date. |
| | |
| Storm Water Utility | The dedicated utility fund established by the City Council to control and treat runoff from rain and melting snow. Purposes of the utility include State permit compliance, water quality improvements, storm sewer maintenance, and new infrastructure and system upgrades in order to alleviate localized flooding problems of the City's storm water system. |
| | |
| Uniform Rate | Linear rate of decline, that is, of accuracy. |
| | |
| Winter Water Usage | Residential metered water usage from mid-November through mid-April, for bills due January 15 th through May 15 th . |