

RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE

A. Rendering of Bills

Bills for service will be rendered to each customer on a monthly basis, unless otherwise approved by the Commission.

1. Bills for Service

Each bill for service issued by the utility is based on a reading of the meter of the customer or the applicable flat rate. Each meter on a customer's premises will be considered separately and the readings of two or more meters will not be combined except where utility's operating convenience or necessity may require the use of more than one meter.

2. Each bill for service includes:

- a. Any previous balance.
- b. The amount due for service provided during the current billing period with the date upon which this amount is past due.
- c. Any late charge, with the date upon which that charge begins to accrue.
- d. The Basic Service charge;
- e. The fuel adjustment cost;
- f. Any other authorized fee, charge or tax;
- g. Any unregulated charge;
- h. The total of the preceeding amounts;
- i. The meter readings for the first and last day of the billing period;
- j. The quantity of gas energy consumed;
- k. The date the meter was read;
- l. The next date the meter will be read;
- m. A summary of the billing dispute procedures as listed in Rule No. 14 Section I, A through C.
- n. The telephone number and address of the office of the utility where a customer may obtain information concerning their bill or the service provided.

3. Estimated Bills:

- a. Except as otherwise provided in Section 3C, if the Utility is unable, because of circumstances beyond its control, to read the meter of a customer on the date scheduled, the utility may bill the customer based upon their estimated usage for the billing period.

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RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

A. Rendering of Bills (Continued)

3. Estimated Bills (Continued)

a. (Continued)

Circumstances beyond the Utility's control include:

1. Severe weather.
2. The presence of an animal on the premises of the Customer which prevents an employee of the Utility from reading the meter without risk of injury, or
3. Any other circumstance which makes it unreasonably difficult to read the meter including, but not limited to, remote service locations, difficult or no access to the meter, etc.

b. The following factors are considered in calculating a bill based upon estimated usage:

1. The usage of the Customer during the same month of the preceding year,
2. Any change in temperature from the preceding month
3. The usage during the preceding month, and
4. Seasonal load factors.

c. A Utility which issues three consecutive bills to a Customer based upon estimated usage, or five such bills for a Customer in the areas that are prone to heavy snow or remote, shall either notify the Customer of its right of access to the premises of the Customer or of the specific circumstance which makes it unreasonably difficult to read the meter. Thereafter, any additional and consecutive bill based upon estimated usage may be issued only if the circumstances causing such estimated bill cannot be reasonably remedied.

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RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

A. Rendering of Bills (Continued)

3. Estimated Bills (Continued)

d. The Utility shall adjust the estimated usage upon the first reading of a meter after an estimated reading. In cases where the meter's location or other circumstances make it unreasonably difficult to access, the Utility will read the meter at least once a year and correspondingly adjust the bill.

e. If, for reasons beyond its control, the Utility is unable to read the Customer's meter on the scheduled reading date, the Utility may bill the Customer estimated consumption during the billing period, subject to adjustment at the time the meter is next read.

f. In circumstances where usage has been underestimated, the Utility will allow the Customer to pay off the under-estimate over a time period equivalent to the time period when the under-estimate occurred, if requested by the Customer.

g. Notify customers of its right to issue bills based upon estimated usage.

h. Print the word "estimate" on each bill which is based upon estimated usage.

4. Proration of Bills

The monthly customer charges applicable to opening periods, closing bills, and bills rendered for periods corresponding to less than 27 days or more than 34 days for monthly billing periods will be computed as follows: The amount of the charge will be prorated on the basis of the ratio of the number of days in the period to the number of days in an average billing period. Charges based on the measured quantity of usage shall then be added to such prorated amounts.

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BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

B. Payment of Bills

“Timely Payment” of bills for service are due and payable before the date the bill is past due.

1. A Customer may pay the bill:
 - a. By depositing payment with the United States Postal Service for delivery to the Utility by first class mail;
 - b. By making payment at the business office of the Utility; or
 - c. By making payment to any person authorized by the Utility to accept payment.
 - d. By making payment through a bank-by-phone system or, if authorized by the Utility, by making payment through a payment terminal, an automatic withdrawal system or another system that allows for electronic fund transfers.

2. The Utility shall authorize at least one system of payment that allows Customers to make payments to the Utility via the Internet.

3. If the Utility has the capability to allow a Customer to choose the payment date for each billing cycle, the Utility shall:
 - a. On an annual basis, notify Customers that they can chose a payment date once within a 12 month period; and
 - b. Upon the request of a Customer, allow the Customer to make such a choice.

4. If the Utility does not have the capability described in subsection 3, the Utility shall, upon the request of a Customer and to the extent practicable, work with the Customer to establish by mutual agreement the payment date for each billing cycle.

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RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

C. Due Date

1. Each bill issued by a Utility for service provided during the current billing period is due:
 - a. Upon deposit of the bill with the United States Postal Service for delivery to the Customer by first class mail; or
 - b. In case of delivery by other means, upon delivery of the bill to the billing address of the Customer.
 - c. In the case of delivery via the Internet, upon sending the electronic bill via the Internet to the electronic address of the Customer.

2. The date a bill is past due may not be earlier than 15 days after its issuance. If the last day for payment before the past due date falls on a Sunday, legal holiday or any other day on which the office of the Utility is closed, the last day for payment is the next business day. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 3, payment of a bill by first class mail is timely if the payment is received no more than 4 days after the past due date.

3. An arrearage contained in a bill for service is past due and should be made at the business office of the Utility.

4. The Utility may charge a fee, as set forth in the Utility's tariff, for:
 - a. The return of an unpaid check; or
 - b. The late payment of a bill; or
 - c. The use of a credit card to make a payment to the Utility. The Utility shall not charge the Customer a fee for the use of a credit card to make a payment to the Utility or enter into an agreement with a third-party credit card service which charges the Customer such a fee, unless the fee has been reviewed and approved by the Commission.

5. Should a check from a Customer used to pay a bill for service be returned to the Utility as uncollectible for any reason including a lack of sufficient funds, a returned check charge set forth in Schedule MC will be added to the Customer's account, to be paid at the time of tender by the Customer of repayment of outstanding balance.

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RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

D. Energy Assistance

1. The Utility shall provide a program for the payment of bills for Customers who have difficulty paying their bills because of financial hardship.
2. The Utility shall coordinate with governmental agencies and other entities that provide energy assistance to lower-income Customers and with governmental agencies and other entities that provide services for weatherization and energy efficiency to lower-income Customers to enable such agencies and entities to administer efficiently and effectively their assistance and services to lower-income Customers.
3. The Utility shall disclose to the agencies and entities described in subsection 2 information concerning the energy use of a Customer, if the Customer signs a release authorizing the Utility to disclose that information.
4. The Utility shall give written notice to:
 - a. Each new Customer at the time the Customer applies for service; and
 - b. Each Customer at least once annually by means of a notice enclosed with a bill that special assistance is available to elderly persons and to handicapped persons who are unable to pay their bills on a timely basis and that such a person must communicate with the Utility if the person wishes to benefit from that special assistance.

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E. Delinquent Bills

1. If the service of a Customer is being terminated for nonpayment of a delinquent bill or any installment due on such a bill, the Utility may postpone the termination regardless of whether the Customer is qualified to make deferred payments pursuant to Section F of this Rule, if the Utility determines that the Customer is able to pay the amount owed and the Customer agrees to a plan for payment.

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RULE NO. 5

BILLS FOR SERVICE
(Continued)

E. Delinquent Bills (Continued)

- 2. In determining whether a Customer is able to pay the amount owed, the Utility shall consider:
 - a. The amount owed;
 - b. The number of months the bill or installment is past due;
 - c. The date the account was established;
 - d. The history of payment maintained by the Customer with the Utility;
 - e. The credit history of the Customer;
 - f. The period for payment;
 - g. Any extraordinary circumstances of the case; and
 - h. Any information presented to the Utility by the Customer.

F. Deferred Payments

- 1. The Utility shall provide a program for deferred payment of a delinquent bill for any Customer who requests the program and agrees in writing to pay:
 - a. The arrearage within 90 days after the execution of the agreement, in four equal payments, with the first payment to be made upon the execution of the agreement; and
 - b. All future bills when due.
 - c. The 90-day period otherwise provided for payment of the arrearage may be extended at the discretion of the Utility.
- 2. If a Customer who enters into an agreement for the deferred payment of an arrearage is required to pay a deposit as a condition of continuing or resuming service and:
 - a. The Customer's service has not been terminated because of the failure to comply with an existing agreement for deferred payment; or
 - b. The Customer is entering into the agreement pursuant to subsection 3, the deposit and arrearage must be included in the agreement and must be paid within 120 days, in four equal payments, with the first payment to be made upon the execution of the agreement.

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BILLS FOR SERVICE
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F. Deferred Payments (Continued)

3. If a governmental agency or another entity that provides energy assistance to lower-income Customers pledges or pays money on behalf of a Customer who has an arrearage, the Utility shall allow the Customer to enter into an agreement for the deferred payment of the remaining arrearage and any deposit owed by the Customer, regardless of whether the Customer has entered into any other prior agreements for deferred payment pursuant to this section.
4. Unless the Utility otherwise agrees, a Customer shall not initiate a program for deferred payment to this section more than once during any consecutive 11 month period.
5. The services of a Customer who enters into an agreement pursuant to this section may be terminated for any failure to make payment as provided by this agreement, if the Utility sends written notice of its intended action to the Customer at least 48 hours before it terminates service. (D)
6. Each agreement entered into pursuant to this section must:
 - a. Specify the date on which each installment is due; and
 - b. Contain a statement, in bold face type, of the right of the Utility to terminate the service to the Customer, upon 48-hours' notice, for any failure by the Customer to make payment as provided by the agreement. (T)

G. Equal Payment Plan

Except as otherwise provided in this section, the Utility shall offer a program of equalized billing (also known as an "equal payment plan" or "budget billing") to any Customer whose Utility service is connected at the time the request is made.

1. The equal payment plan provides for twelve (12) equal payments of the Customer's estimated annual bill for service. The Customer's estimated annual bill is calculated based upon factors which include prior consumption and the rates in effect at the beginning of the payment year.

Equal payments will begin in the next billing period after application by the Customer. At the end of each payment year, the amount of the adjustment from the Customer's equal payment billing to actual billing will be calculated. A new equal payment amount will be computed, and any debit or credit balance remaining from the prior year will be spread over the new equal payment plan year. Accounts with a credit balance will have a message on the bill informing the Customer that they may request a refund check.

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G. Equal Payment Plan (Continued)

2. The plan is a voluntary program and will be in effect only for Customers who elect to apply. Both new and current plan Customers must apply annually. If a Customer requests to enter into the equal payment plan and the Customer has an arrearage when the request is made, the Customer may not enter into the program unless the Customer:
 - a. Pays at least 50 percent of the arrearage upon entering into the program; and
 - b. Agrees to pay, in amounts that are apportioned over the first year of participation in the program, the remaining arrearage.
3. The equal payment plan allows for prepayment at Customer's request.
4. Participation in the equal payment plan may be discontinued by the Customer at any time during the plan year. Upon termination, any debit balance in the Customer's account will be due and payable. Any credit balance will be applied by the Utility to the Customer's billing for the subsequent month unless a refund is requested.
5. If a Customer fails to make two or more consecutive timely payments while participating in the program of equalized billing, the Utility may, in addition to any other rights and remedies available to the Utility, remove the Customer from the program. If the Utility removes the Customer from the program, the Customer may not enter into the program again without the approval of the Utility.
6. The equal payment amount will include all Utility services requested by Customer.
7. The equal payment amount may be adjusted during the year for changes in rates due to Commission approved rate increases or decreases greater than 5%. A Utility may not adjust the amount of an equalized bill because of a change in rates before the rates become effective.
8. The equal payment amount may be adjusted during the last six months of the plan year whenever the consumption pattern changes will result in an overpayment or undercollection of \$100.00 or more by the end of the plan year unless the Customer prefers to make an extra payment to offset an undercollection, or receive a check for an overpayment at the end of the plan year.

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RULE NO. 5
BILLS FOR SERVICE
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H. Adjustment of Bills for Errors

1. Determinate Billing Period

When it is found that an error or omission exists in billing and such error or omission is due to causes, the date of which can be reliably established, billing adjustments shall be made according to the following:

a. Service under Residential tariffs:

i. Refunds for overpayment shall be computed back to but not beyond the established date on which the error or omission commenced. (N)
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ii. Payments for undercharge shall be computed back to but not beyond the established date, provided, however, that in no case where the error or omission is due to the fault of the Utility, shall a bill for undercharge be rendered for a period exceeding three (3) months. (T)

b. Service under Non-Residential tariffs:

i. Refunds for overpayment shall be computed back to but not beyond the established date provided, however, that in no case shall a refund for overpayment be rendered for a period exceeding three (3) years. (N)

ii. Payments for undercharge shall be computed back to but not beyond the established date, provided, however, that in no case shall a bill for undercharge be rendered for a period exceeding three (3) years. (N)

2. Indeterminate Billing Period

When it is found that an error or omission exists in billing and such error or omission is due to causes, the date of which cannot be reliably established, the Customer shall receive a refund for the overcharge, or shall pay Utility for the undercharge therefrom for a period not to exceed the preceding three (3) months.

3. Unauthorized Service

When it is found that an error or omission exists in billing and such error or omission is due to unmetered or unauthorized use of Utility service resulting from actions by other than an authorized Utility employee, billings for undercharge shall be computed back to the date on which the unauthorized use commenced.

4. Calculation of Billing Adjustments

Bills for this purpose shall be based upon: a) Customer's prior use; b) Customer's subsequent use correctly metered; c) Utility's experience with other Customers of the same class, and d) the general characteristics of Customer's operations.

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Shawn Elicegui
Senior Vice President