

TOWN OF BERRYVILLE

Water and Sewer Billing Adjustment Policy

Purpose:

This policy applies to the adjustment of unusually high water and sewer bills resulting from water leaks or other circumstances resulting in abnormally high-water usage. This policy enumerates the authority of the Town Manager, or designee, to grant adjustment of unusually high water and sewer bills upon request of the person or entity responsible for a water account.

Background:

Where properties are connected to the Town of Berryville's water and sewer systems, the customer is responsible for: 1) the proper provision, monitoring, operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement of all water lines and components of the system from the customer's side of the water meter and 2) the proper provision, monitoring, operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement of all sewer lines and components of the system from where it intersects the Town's main.

Procedure:

All requests for bill adjustment must be made within ten days of the billing date utilizing the Town of Berryville Water and Sewer Billing Adjustment Request Form. The customer must also provide a plumber's certification and, when the abnormal usage is greater than three-times the account's average usage, a letter from the property owner's insurance company verifying that a claim has been made in this matter and providing what portion of the water/sewer bill will be paid by the insurance company.

The Town Manager, or designee, will review the request and provide written notice of his/her decision. Most decisions will be rendered within ten days of receipt of the adjustment request.

Only one bill adjustment may be made for any account in any given twelve-month period.

Review Criteria:

The Town Manager, or designee, will review adjustment requests in accordance with the following criteria:

- For leaks occurring in the service line between the water meter and the building the meter serves, the Town may approve adjustment to the sewer usage if it is found that the leaking water did not enter the sewer system. Such adjustment may not exceed the difference between the account's average usage over the past twelve months and the high usage resulting from the leak. The Town may approve adjustment to the water usage if it finds that the leak was repaired in a timely fashion after discovery. Such adjustment may not exceed one-half of the difference between the account's average usage over the past twelve months and the high usage resulting from the leak.

- For leaks or unintended usage from exterior hose connections, the Town may approve adjustment to the sewer usage if it finds that the leaking water did not enter the sewer system. Such adjustment may not exceed the difference between the account's average usage over the past twelve months and the high usage resulting from the leak.
- For abnormal water usage attributable to usage in or by faucets, pipes, water heaters, furnaces or other interior plumbing facilities within the building the water meter serves, the Town may adjust the sewer usage if it finds that the leaking water did not enter the sewer system. Such adjustment may not exceed the difference between the account's average usage over the past twelve months and the high usage resulting from the leak.
- The Town will not approve adjustments for abnormal water usage attributable to filling of pools or watering of lawns or landscaping.
- The Town will not approve adjustments for abnormal water usage which has not or cannot be sufficiently explained.

When reviewing adjustment requests the Town will take into account, among other factors, whether any of the usage resulted from another party's negligence. Where negligence is found the Town may determine that no adjustment is warranted. As a part of request reviews the Town will also consider the insurance claim determination as a part of establishing an adjustment amount.

Meter Testing:

Customers may at any time request that their water meter be tested for accuracy. If a customer wants to have the water meter that serves their account to be tested, then they must contact the Town Business Office and request the test. At the time of the request the customer must pay a meter testing fee as established by the Town Council. The fee in question will be refunded if it is found that the meter in question does not meet American Water Works Association standards for accuracy. Further, if it is found that the meter does not meet American Water Works Association standards for accuracy then the Town will review the account for possible adjustment.

Appeals:

If the customer requesting the bill adjustment believes that the Town has erred in making the adjustment decision or has not made a determination on an adjustment request in a timely manner, then he/she may appeal the matter to the Town Council. This appeal must be made in writing within ten days of the date of the decision on the adjustment or within thirty days of the original request if the appeal is based on the Town's failure to render a decision on the review request. If the appeal is based on the belief that the Town erred in making its decision on the bill adjustment request, then the appeal request must specify the finding of fact or policy application the requester believes was made in error.

Adjustment determinations made because a meter has been found to be inaccurate (after testing) may be appealed to the Town Council if the customer believes that the adjustment is not sufficient.

The Town Council will review all adjustment appeals and will provide written notice of their decision to the customer.

Customer Responsible for Payment during Review:

While an adjustment request and/or appeal is being processed, the customer is responsible for payment of the entire amount due within the normal payment period or the customer may enter into a payment agreement with the Town. If the customer neither makes full payment during the normal payment period nor enters into a payment plan with the Town, then the customer is subject to all applicable collection activities and termination of service.

Burden of Proof:

The implicit burden of proof in the adjustment request pursuant to these policies rests with the customer, not the Town of Berryville. Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy will result in the denial of the adjustment request.

Effective Date:

March 12, 2015