

Utility Customer Service



NEW CHANGES TO CHAPTER 47 WATER & WASTEWATER ORDINANCE PROVISIONS

Revisions to Chapter 47 of the Code of Ordinances governing water and sewer services will be implemented beginning July 1, 2007. Some important changes include:

- The fee to restore water service after being turned off for non-payment increases to \$30. This fee is also applicable when a new customer at the address fails to make an application for service.

Be sure to pay your bill on time. If you need assistance paying your bill, call 713-371-1400 to avoid interruption in your water service.



[Click here](#) for more information.

- The number of billing adjustments for plumbing leaks that will be processed in a 12 month period has been limited to a maximum of two. Eligible adjustments are for loss of water in your water lines resulting from rupture or other defects and exclude faucet leaks.

To apply for an adjustment, a sworn written application must be filed with Utility Customer Service within six (6) months of the repair of the defect.

Remember to keep your plumbing, inside and out, in good repair.



[Click here](#) for **Application Form** and here  for more information on [Leak Adjustments](#).

- If you are a single family residential customer, and have an unusually high bill, you must contact us within 6 months of the high bill to see if you are entitled to an adjustment. The consumption must be in excess of twice your average usage to be eligible for an adjustment. Only one such adjustment will be processed in a 12 month period. If the applicant has not been a customer for a sufficient length of time to determine average usage, the adjustment will be delayed until the department can calculate the average usage.

To qualify for an adjustment, a sworn written application must be filed with Utility Customer Service within six (6) months of receipt of the water bill.



[Click here](#) for **Application Form** and here  for more information on [Unusually Large Bill Adjustments](#).

Click Here: for Utility Customer Service, [Chapter47.htm](#)

Remember, you can now pay your water bill online at www.houstonwaterbills.org



Sec. 47-70. Termination of service for failure to pay.

(a) If any customer fails to pay charges for water service furnished by the city when due, the department shall notify such customer about the delinquent bill, the amount the customer owes, and the right of the customer to an administrative review or hearing as provided by section 47-70.1 of this Code. The department shall give notice to single family residential customers concerning the availability of the W.A.T.E.R. Fund established pursuant to chapter 36 of this Code for assistance in paying water and sewer charges. Provided, an application for assistance from the W.A.T.E.R. Fund shall not delay or otherwise affect the responsibilities of the customer or the city under this chapter.

(b) If a customer does not choose to challenge a charge for water service, then, at the end of the ten-day period following notice to the customer, the water shall be immediately turned off and not turned on again, except by authorized representatives of the department.

(c) When the water supply to any property or premises of a customer has been disconnected or otherwise terminated by the department for failure of the customer to pay any water charges due and owing to the city, the water service to that customer at the affected property or premises shall not be resumed until and after all delinquent charges have been fully paid and satisfied, or satisfactory arrangements have been made with the director to pay such delinquent bills, and the delinquent customer has made any required deposit with the department. Whenever an umbrella account established under section 47-71 of this Code is delinquent, water service to each meter under that account may be terminated by the department in accordance with this subsection.

(d) The department shall charge the customer \$30 as the cost to restore water service after termination for nonpayment or, in case where there is a new tenant at the service address, the failure to make an application.

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Sec. 47-74. Adjustment of bill as result of defect in customer's line.

(a) Any residential, commercial, multifamily or outdoor customer of the city may request a correction of any water bill showing excessive usage due to a loss of water through an excusable defect in the customer's water line for a period not to exceed three consecutive months. In order to apply for the correction the customer must file a sworn written application with the utility official within six months of the repair of the excusable defect. Customers may apply for no more than two such adjustments in any 12-month period for any one account. Such application shall contain the following matters and such other information as the utility official may require:

- (1) The name of the applicant, the address or description of the property or premises furnished water, the bill which is sought to be corrected, the date of the bill and the period of water usage covered thereby.
- (2) A statement of the date on which the excusable defect in the applicant's water line was discovered and the date on which it was repaired; and a statement that water was lost through the city water meter serving such property and that such water was not used in any manner by anyone.
- (3) A written acknowledgment that the applicant makes the statements shown on the application and swears to their veracity for the purpose of inducing the city to grant a reduction in the amount of the water bill for which a correction is requested.
- (4) The application must show whether or not there has been any additional water consuming devices placed in use on the applicant's premises during the period covered by such bill.
- (5) Documentation shall be submitted detailing the exact nature and date of repairs to the applicant's water line.
- (6) A statement that the applicant is personally familiar with all of the matters of facts stated in the application and sworn to therein, that they are made on his personal knowledge and that they are each true and correct.
- (7) The customer shall execute a statement setting forth an understanding that the application is a government record subject to criminal prosecution for false statements under chapter 37 of the Texas Penal Code and shall state that the applicant certifies that the application contains no false statements.

As used in this section the term 'excusable defect' shall mean a rupture or leakage of the customer's water lines as may be caused by freezing weather, settlement, corrosion, wear or accident. The term does not apply to defective or out-of-repair faucets."

(b) Applications under this section shall be made on forms prescribed by the director of public works and engineering.

(c) Upon receipt of a properly completed application, the utility official shall review such application, and if he approves the same as being in compliance with this section, the applicant's

bill shall be corrected by applying to the amount of water consumption shown thereon in excess of the applicant's average water usage, a rate of charge equal to one-half of the normal rate of such water usage by a customer in the applicant's classification, which reduction in rate shall be accomplished in the following manner:

- (1) The applicant's average usage shall be determined as set out in section 47-61(b) of this Code. If the applicant has not been a customer for a sufficient length of time to make such determination, the department shall hold the adjustment for a sufficient period of time to calculate the average water usage."
- (2) From the total water consumption shown on the bill submitted for correction, the average usage will be deducted. The resulting figure will hereafter be referred to as "excess usage."
- (3) The excess usage will be considered consumption beyond the average usage, and one-half of the regular rate for consumption beyond the average usage (for customers in the applicants' rate classification) will be applied to the excess usage and this will determine the amount the applicant must pay for the excess usage.
- (4) The regular rate for customers in the applicant's rate classification will be applied to the average usage and this amount will be added to the amount due for the excess usage and the total of those two amounts will be the amount that the applicant must pay for water usage during the period covered by the corrected bill.
- (5) Provided, however, for multifamily residential customers that have established umbrella accounts, "average usage" and "excessive usage" under this section shall be determined with reference to each customer meter rather than the entire account as billed by the department.

(d) If the applicant has already paid the bill for which an adjustment is authorized under this section and the adjustment is no more than six times the applicant's average bill, the department shall credit the applicant's account the amount of the adjustment to be applied to the charges thereafter accruing. However, if the adjustment is more than six times the customer's average bill and the customer requests a refund, or the applicant can show extreme economic hardship to the utility official, the department shall refund the amount of the adjustment. The utility official shall determine whether extreme economic hardship exists.

If an applicant discontinues water service before subsequent charges have depleted the credit, the department shall refund to the applicant at the time of discontinuance the remaining credit balance minus any overdue debt the applicant owes the city.

(e) A determination by the utility official of the amount of a correction to be made in an applicant's water bill in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be final.

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Sec. 47-75. Adjustment of unusually large bill.

(a) Any single-family residential customer who receives a water bill for any given month that is greater than 200 percent of the average usage of the customer, the customer may request an adjustment of the bill in the manner provided in this section. Provided, that the customer must make an application within six months of receipt of such bill and only one such monthly bill out of any 12 consecutive monthly bills may be adjusted under this section. If the applicant has not been a customer for a sufficient length of time for the department to determine average usage, the department shall delay the adjustment until it can calculate the average usage. In order to request such an adjustment, the customer must file an application for the adjustment on a form furnished by the utility official. The application form shall contain a statement setting forth an understanding that the application is a government record subject to criminal prosecution for false statements under chapter 37 of the Texas Penal Code, and the customer must state that the application contains no false statements. The application shall identify the bill and briefly state:

- (1) The reasons for the request for the adjustment;
- (2) A description of the additional water consuming devices or fixtures, if any, that have been placed in use by the customer during the current month or the preceding 12 months;
- (3) That there have been no plumbing repairs or necessity therefor during the month for which an adjustment is sought or that the nature of any plumbing defects was not such as would explain the additional usage; and
- (4) Such other information as the utility official may require.”

(b) Upon receiving such application, the utility official shall make an investigation to determine if an error was made, which investigation shall include inspection of the customer’s water meter for accuracy and review of the customer’s billing record. If the initial investigation reveals a billing or meter error, the utility official shall make an adjustment to correct the error. If the investigation does not reveal an error, the utility official may make such further investigation as the utility official deems advisable and shall give full consideration to the statements contained in the customer’s application. If the utility official concludes that, in all reasonable probability, the customer was charged for more water than has the customer consumed during the month in question but is unable to actually account for such unusual quantity, the utility official shall recompute the bill using as the gross quantity 200 percent of the average monthly gross quantity applicable to the customer. A determination by the utility official made in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be final.

(c) If the customer has already paid the bill for which an adjustment is authorized under this section and the adjustment is no more than six times the customer’s average bill, the department shall credit the customer’s account the amount of the adjustment to be applied to the charges thereafter accruing. However, if the adjustment is more than six times the customer’s average bill and the customer requests a refund, or the customer can show extreme economic hardship, the department shall refund the amount of the adjustment. The utility official shall determine whether extreme economic hardship exists.

If a customer discontinues water service before subsequent charges have depleted the credit, the department shall refund to the customer at the time of discontinuance the remaining credit balance minus any overdue debt the customer owes the city.

(d) The provisions of this section shall be cumulative of the provisions of section 47-73 of this Code.

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