

**CAPE FEAR PUBLIC UTILITY AUTHORITY (CFPUA)
SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES**

Introduction

This summary of customer service policies is based on the CFPUA Ordinance governing provision of utility services to non-industrial customers and includes administrative policies implemented by the Chief Executive Officer as authorized by the Ordinance. In the event of any conflict or difference of interpretation between this Summary and the Ordinance, the Ordinance shall be followed.

A copy of the CFPUA Utility Ordinances is available at the website www.cfpu.org or may be obtained by calling the Authority office at 910-332-6550.

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1. Customer Service General Information

- 1.1. **Customer Service Locations:** CFPUA has two locations to serve you—305 Chestnut Street in downtown Wilmington and 235 Government Center Drive near the intersection of Eastwood and Market Streets.
- 1.2. **Office hours:** Are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. CFPUA observes the same holiday schedule as the state of North Carolina offices.
- 1.3. **Customer Service Phone:** 910-332-6550
- 1.4. **Customer Service E-mail:** customer.service@cfpua.org
- 1.5. **Customer Service Website:** www.cfpua.org
- 1.6. **Customer Service Fax:** 910-332-6352.
- 1.7. **Temporary Interruptions:** From time to time your water service may be interrupted while crews perform routine maintenance, planned replacements, or emergency repairs. You may notice a decrease in water pressure or water quality (unusual odor or color). You may call Customer Service at 910-332-6550 or the Problem/Emergency line at 910-332-6565 for assistance. Notices of planned outages may be publicized on the web, in the newspaper, or on your utility bill.
- 1.8. **Reporting Problems with Water and Sewer Service:** For any problems or emergency situations, call 910-332-6565. Examples include if you have no water service or your water is discolored, none of your drains work or sewage backs up into your tub or sink, you see water flowing in the street or smell sewage outside, or you hear an alarm at a water or sewer pump station.

2. Setting Up and Terminating Service

- 2.1. **Starting New Service:** Application forms are available at both CFPUA offices and on the website. Or you can call the Customer Service number to complete an application over the phone, provided the building already has water service. You will need to pay an application fee and unless you have a good history of utility payments, you may be required to pay a deposit. The Customer Service Representative will let you know when the water service will be turned on. You or a responsible person must be on the premises when the technician arrives to turn the water on. Once the water is turned on, that responsible person should verify that the water service is indeed working and that all faucets are turned off and all connections to appliances such as washing machines and ice makers are secure. CFPUA will not be responsible for damage to property caused by open spigots or cracked hoses. To prevent damage to your hot water heater, you or the

other responsible person should also make sure the water valve to the hot water heater is open and that the electric current to the appliance is not turned on until there is enough water inside.

- 2.2. Social Security and Drivers License Numbers:** The application form asks for identifying information to give assurance that CFPUA will be paid for utility services. You do not need to disclose this information, but if you don't, you may be unable to receive information about your account over the phone or in our offices unless you have a photo ID to establish your identity.
- 2.3. Deposits:** Residential customers who are tenants with no or a poor credit history must pay a deposit of \$200 and new commercial customers may be required to pay a deposit equal to two bi-monthly payments before receiving service.
- 2.4. Changing mailing address or phone:** If your mailing address or telephone numbers change, please notify CFPUA by calling Customer Service at 910-332-6550 or by e-mailing customer.service@cfpua.org.
- 2.5. Transferring Service:** If you are already a CFPUA customer and will be moving from one location to another also served by CFPUA, you may transfer your service without going through the application process. There is a form you can complete at one of the office locations or you can print one from the Web and send to CFPUA. You will be charged a premise visit fee to cover the cost of sending out a technician to turn on the water service. That fee will be added to your first bill unless your account is delinquent. CFPUA will require all prior charges and the premise visit fee to be paid before service at the new location is connected.
- 2.6. Terminating Service:** If you will be moving away, or if you will be totally changing your meter and service (for example replacing a house with a commercial building using a larger meter), call or visit a Customer Service representative to set up when the service is to be stopped. You will be responsible for charges as long as you are the owner of the property. If you do not notify Customer Service prior to the date the property changes hands, there is no way for a meter reader to get an accurate consumption amount. If there is no ending meter reading, CFPUA prorates consumption by the number of days the property was owned during that billing period.
- 2.7. Suspending Service:** If you will be temporarily away from your property and want to have the water turned off to avoid worrying about leaks or neighbors attaching hoses to your outside spigots, contact Customer Service to arrange for your water to be turned off. You will be charged a premise visit fee when the technician visits your property to turn the service off and again when it is turned back on. While you will not be billed for any water used, you will be billed for the fixed meter charge (see Section 3.3 below). The purpose of the fixed meter charge is to provide for the capital facilities used and *available* to provide service to the property, whether or not the owner uses that availability.

3. Billing and Payment

- 3.1. Bi-Monthly Bills:** Bills are sent out bi-monthly, or in other words, every two months.

- 3.2. Services Appearing on Bills:** CFPUA is the billing agent for the City of Wilmington's storm water and solid waste. So you will see charges for these services along with your water and sewer.
- 3.3. Utility Rates:** Your water and sewer charges have two components. The first will remain the same every billing period. The fixed meter charge covers the cost for building and paying debt service on the plants and pipes used to provide water and sewer service. The second component is the consumption charge which covers the cost of treating the water you use and the wastewater you put into the sewers. Your meter records how much water you use and is what the consumption billing for water and sewer is based on. To encourage water conservation, CFPUA has adopted an inclining block rate structure. This means you will be charged more per gallon if you use over specified amounts. You can get a copy of the rate schedule from CFPUA Customer Service representatives or on the website www.cfpu.org.
- 3.4. Payment Options:** You can pay your bill using cash, check, money order, or debit/credit card in person at CFPUA offices. You may mail a check using the envelope provided in your bill. You can also make a payment using your credit or debit card over the phone with a Customer Service Representative. You can log onto www.cfpu.org and click on ezBilling to pay by credit/debit card or e-check. The easiest and simplest way is to set up an automatic bank draft so you never have to worry about forgetting a payment or finding a stamp.
- 3.5. Starting or Stopping Automatic Bank Drafts:** Contact a Customer Service representative to start or stop automatic bank drafts. Forms are also available on the CFPUA website www.cfpu.org.
- 3.6. Where to pay:** CFPUA has two locations—305 Chestnut Street in downtown Wilmington and 235 Government Center Drive near the intersection of Eastwood and Market Streets. Offices are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. CFPUA observes the same holiday schedule as the state of North Carolina offices.
- 3.7. Due Date:** Bills are due in 30 days. The due date is printed on your bill.
- 3.8. Late Fees:** Payments not received within 30 days will be charged a late fee of 10% of the outstanding charges up to a maximum of \$25. Late fees on disputed bills may be waived if you are following the appeal procedure (see Section 3.13).
- 3.9. Application of Partial Payment:** In the event payment is made in an amount less than the total due on a bill, any such amount shall be allocated to outstanding charges in the following order: storm water, trash bags, trash services, other charges, sewer, and water.
- 3.10. Returned Checks and Bank Drafts:** If your checks or bank draft is not honored by the bank, you will be charged a fee to reimburse CFPUA for administrative time. You will need to come to the CFPUA office to pay that amount plus the returned check fee with cash, money order, or credit/debit card. Otherwise you are considered to have not made any payment, and will be subject to any late fees and procedures for collection of past due sewer charges, which could include cutting off your water.

- 3.11. **Adjustments for Leaks:** Adjustments for domestic customers may be made for water and/or sewer charges caused by a leak in excess of twice average usage over the previous twelve month period. The amount credited may be up to half of the water and sewer consumption charges over the average usage. However, if the water was not discharged into the sewer, the adjustment may be up to 100% of the sewer charges over the average consumption usage. You will need to submit a written request within 90 days of the high usage bill along with a repair invoice from a licensed plumber or other evidence to show the excess charges were caused by a leak. CFPUA will adjust for only one leak within any twelve month period, and no adjustment will be allowed for water loss caused by your negligence or deliberate act. The Authority reserves the right to limit or deny the amount of the credit.
- 3.12. **Billing Errors:** If you believe there is an error in your bill, you should contact a Customer Service Representative within 90 days. Your bill will be adjusted in full for clerical or computer errors. However, if the error was billing for services which were never rendered (for example charging you for water when you were on a well and not required to connect to the water line), an adjustment will be allowed only for amounts you paid within the prior three years.
- 3.13. **Appeal Billing Disputes:** If you disagree with a bill or refusal of a credit or refund for disputed water or sewer charges as determined by the Customer Service Manager, you can file a written request for an appeal hearing to the Director of Customer Service. Such request should be made within ten (10) days after the bill or notification of an assessment for a violation and/or service termination was received. The Director of Customer Service will mail you a copy of the final decision by registered or certified mail within ten days after hearing the appeal.
- 3.14. **Extension of Payments:** You are responsible for paying your bill in full by the due date, or you will be charged late fees and your water may be turned off. If you cannot pay in full by the due date, call a Customer Service Representative to see if you qualify for assistance.
- 3.15. **Installment Payments:** If CFPUA charges you for a tap fee or other service that is more than double your usual utility bill, you may qualify for installment payments. Contact a Customer Service Representative to review your options.
- 3.16. **Discovery of Unbilled Accounts:** If we discover that you have received water and/or sewer service but we have not billed you or not billed you correctly, we will send you a bill for up to three years of service, even if you received service for more than three years and were not billed for it. No interest charges are included for unbilled past service. Of course, if your account has been in your name for less than three years, or if we can determine that the billing error or omission began less than three years ago, we will prepare the bill accordingly. If the amount due is large (see Section 3.15 above), you may qualify for installment payments.
- 3.17. **Duplicate Bills:** If you have misplaced your bill, contact a Customer Service Representative to find out how much you need to pay.

3.18. Third Party Notification: If you would like to have a copy of a bill or delinquency notice mailed to another person such as a tenant or relative, contact a Customer Service Representative. There is also a form on the website www.cfpua.org that you can complete and submit to Customer Service.

4. Shutting Off Water

4.1. Reasons your water service may be shut off:

1. If you don't pay charges for service within 30 days of billing.
2. If you don't provide reasonable access to your meter for readings.
3. If you don't pay for your willful or negligent damage to Authority facilities.
4. If you don't make good a worthless check and pay the NSF fee within five (5) business days of notice by the Authority.
5. If you allow a potential safety or health hazard to customer or Authority property and/or personnel.
6. If you don't pay within 30 days any fees or charges assessed for violation of any portion of the water and sewer ordinance.

4.2. How to Get Service Turned Back On: You will need to call a Customer Service Representative and make payment in full of all charges and fees in cash, certified check, or credit card. The Customer Service Representative will tell you in what time period a technician will be at your house to turn the water back on. You will need to have a responsible person at the house when the technician arrives (see Section 2.1) to turn the water back on.

4.3. Tampering with Meter: It is against the law for you to tamper with the meter to reconnect your water. If you do, you will be charged a tampering fee which will also need to be paid before your water is turned back on.

5. Meter Information

5.1. No Obstructions: You are responsible for making sure there is nothing interfering with the ability of the CFPUA technician to get your meter reading. This means trimming grass and bushes around the meter, not blocking by installing a fence in front or parking a car on top of the meter, and keeping dogs confined.

5.2. No Meter Tampering: It is illegal to tamper with a meter for any reason (see 4.3 above). You should not allow anyone to connect any device to your meter, nor should you tamper with any other meter.

6. **Backflow prevention:** To prevent contamination of your and your neighbors' water, you shouldn't fill special use tanks or tankers containing pesticides, fertilizers, or other toxic chemicals from faucets on your property unless you have installed a backflow prevention device. You could be subject to a civil penalty up to \$1,000. Contact Environmental Services at 910-332-6558 for more information.