



ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

*A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services
to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.*

WHAT IS THE COST OF A WATER LEAK?

The answer to this question depends on how long the leak lasts, whether the leak causes property damage, how much the repair costs, whether and how much of an account credit you receive after fixing the leak, etc. Below are estimates of water and sewer costs for leaks of various sizes, if they last for one day, week or month. As shown below, a small leak can be costly if it continues for a week or more.

THE INCREMENTAL COST OF A GALLON OF WATER AND SEWER SERVICE: 1.26¢

For a typical individually-metered residential customer using 5,000 gallons per month, the incremental cost of 1,000 gallons of water and sewer use is \$6.26 per water (based on our block two water rate for 3,000 to 5,000 gallons of monthly water use) and \$6.35 for sewer service, for a total of \$12.61. This equals 1.26 cents per gallon. For customers who use more than 5,000 gallons per month or less than 3,000 gallons per month, our water rates are higher or lower. Please see [View an explanation of OWASA's monthly bill for individually-metered residential customers](#) and [Summary of rates and fees in effect as of October 1, 2010](#) for more information on our increasing block water conservation rates, which rise with the level of monthly water use.

For customers such as businesses and multi-family neighborhoods where seasonal water rates apply, the incremental cost of 1,000 gallons of water use is \$7.75 from May through September (peak seasonal rate) or \$4.08 per 1,000 gallons from October through April (off-peak seasonal rate). If water use per month were level over a full year, then the seasonal water rates would average about \$5.61 and the total for water and sewer would be \$11.96 for 1,000 gallons or 1.2 cents per gallon.

GALLON AND DOLLAR COSTS OF LEAKS

size of leak	gallons wasted per DAY (if water pressure is 60 lbs./sq. in.)	water/ sewer cost per DAY at 1.2¢ per gallon	gallons wasted per WEEK	water/ sewer cost per WEEK at 1.2¢ per gallon	gallons wasted per MONTH	water/ sewer cost per MONTH at 1.2¢ per gallon
1/16"	360	\$4.32	2,520	\$30.24	10,800	\$129.60
1/8"	3,096	\$37.15	21,672	\$260.06	92,880	\$1,114.56
3/16"	8,424	\$101.09	58,968	\$707.62	252,720	\$3,032.64
1/4"	14,952	\$179.42	104,664	\$1,255.97	448,560	\$5,382.72

ACCOUNT ADJUSTMENTS FOR FIXING NON-IRRIGATION LEAKS

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ To request an account adjustment if you fix a non-irrigation system leak, please contact us at 537-4343 or webmaster@owasa.org.
- ✓ We will need to have information including when the leak was repaired and an invoice for the repair work or receipt(s) for materials that were purchased if a customer does the repair.
- ✓ Under OWASA's policy as revised by the Board of Directors on January 28th, 2010, the amount we charge for excess water use due to a leak may be adjusted down to our lowest retail water rate, \$2.58 per 1,000 gallons as of October, 2010.
- ✓ The amount of our account adjustment depends on past water use, whether the leaked water returned to our sewer system, etc. (If leaked water did not go into our sewer system, we waive our sewer volume charges for the estimated amount of the leak.)
- ✓ It is necessary to request an adjustment within 90 days of an OWASA notice that water use is above normal or within 90 days of receiving an OWASA bill reflecting high water use due to a leak, whichever came first.
- ✓ We limit adjustments to once every three years, and the adjustment period for leaks in readily visible fixtures is limited to one month's billings.

SUMMARY OF POLICY

To make an adjustment, we will need information from you including:

- when the leak was discovered;
- who made repairs, where and when; and
- a copy of the plumber's bill, or receipts for materials purchased if you made the repair.

The amount of the bill adjustment depends in part on whether the water from the leak returned to the sanitary sewer system or leaked elsewhere on your property.

FOR SITUATIONS WHERE LOST WATER DID NOT RETURN TO OUR SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM:

For WATER service, we may adjust charges for water use over the customer's previous 12 months' average down to our lowest retail rate (\$2.58 per 1,000 gallons as of October, 2010).

For seasonal users (customers with fixed and predictable patterns of consumption, usually due to irrigation), the adjustment will be based on a comparison to the corresponding month(s) from the preceding year.

For SEWER service, we waive 100% of the amount exceeding the previous twelve months' average monthly use.

The situations where lost water does not return to the sewer system may include:

- non-irrigation leaks that occur underground or in walls,
- leaks in outdoor spigots, and
- faulty water heaters or pressure reducing valves where such appliances and devices are not easily accessible or visible.

FOR SITUATIONS WHERE LOST WATER IS RETURNED TO OUR SEWER SYSTEM:

For WATER service, we may adjust charges for water use over the customer's previous 12 months' average down to our lowest retail rate (\$2.58 per 1,000 gallons).

For seasonal users (customers with fixed and predictable patterns of consumption, usually due to irrigation), the adjustment will be based on a comparison to the corresponding month(s) from the immediately preceding year.

For sewer service, we waive 50% of the amount exceeding the previous twelve months' average monthly use.

The situations where lost water returns to the sewer system may include malfunctioning toilets and leaking indoor faucets.

PLEASE NOTE:

- We do not make adjustments for irrigation system leaks.
- We limit the adjustment period for leaks in readily visible fixtures to one month's billings.
- We do not make adjustments within one year of completion of new construction. (We recommend that you contact the builder.)
- Accounts may be adjusted due to leaks only once every three years.
- Adjustments must be requested within 90 days of the date of the high water bill due to water loss/leak, or within 90 days of an OWASA notice of high water use, whichever came first.
- Customers who completely refill their pools qualify for one adjustment per year to their sewer charges.
- We may make discretionary determinations in circumstances involving abnormal water use or loss.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Please feel free to contact our Customer Service staff at 537-4343, send e-mail to webmaster@owasa.org, or visit or write to us at 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510.

POLICY FOR ADJUSTMENT OF CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING LOSS OF METERED WATER

Adopted by the OWASA Board of Directors on January 28, 2010

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a credit adjustment to the water and/or sewer account of a customer who has experienced an emergency situation involving the loss of metered water. The excess water metered will have occurred as a result of conditions beyond normal and reasonable control of the customer or other parties responsible for the use, care and maintenance of fixtures and devices that are a part of the customer's water service system.

CONDITIONS

It is the customer's responsibility to promptly discover and stop the loss of water. In addition, the customer is responsible for making arrangements to repair or have repaired the fixture or device causing the water loss. Although there is no obligation for OWASA to adjust accounts when the water has been metered properly, it is OWASA's desire to encourage customers to make prompt and permanent repairs and to show consideration for the unusual circumstance by sharing the cost of the excessive billing charges.

CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITY

1. The customer must provide information describing the emergency situation or circumstances that resulted in the loss of water. Emails and phone calls are an acceptable form of notification. This should include the cause of the water loss, when the problem was discovered, what action was taken to stop the loss of water, and the arrangements made for repairs.
2. If a repair is completed, the customer must provide a copy of the plumber's bill or a statement of materials purchased if the repair was performed by the customer.

ADJUSTMENT PROCEDURE

1. Upon receipt of the customer's verbal or written statement describing the water loss and copies of invoices or receipts documenting repair, the OWASA Customer Service Department will evaluate the circumstances surrounding the water loss.
2. The Customer Service Department, upon determination that an adjustment is appropriate under the policy, may adjust charges for water usage over the customer's previous twelve (12) months average billings for water, excluding the month(s) of excessive consumption for which the adjustment is requested, to OWASA's lowest retail service rate. Additionally, the adjustment will include
 - a) 100% of the amount in excess of the previous twelve (12) months average billings for wastewater, excluding the months(s) of consumption for which the adjustment is requested, for the following conditions or similar situations where the water has not returned to the sewer system:

Leaks underground not associated with irrigation systems, or in walls,
Frozen and burst pipes not associated with irrigation systems,
Outdoor spigot and hose leaks,

Faulty water heaters or pressure reducing valves where such appliances and devices are not easily accessible or visible, and
Vandalism to plumbing that is documented with a police report.

- b) 50% of the amount in excess of the previous twelve (12) months average billings for wastewater excluding the months(s) of excessive consumption for which the adjustment is requested, for the following conditions or similar situations where the water has returned to the sewer system:

Malfunctioning toilets, and
Leaking indoor faucets.

- c) No adjustment shall be made for the following:

Leaks resulting from any portion or component of an irrigation system,
Losses that occurred within one (1) year of construction, and
Unoccupied dwellings listed as “vacant” in OWASA’s billing system.

- d) If a twelve-month average is not available (such as with a new customer), the average will be based on 2,000 gallons of usage per month per person in the household, or the rate of consumption after repairs, whichever is greater.
- e) For seasonal users (customers with fixed and predictable patterns of consumption, usually due to irrigation), the adjustment will be based on the corresponding month(s) from the year immediately preceding, where no emergency water loss or meter malfunction was recorded during the corresponding month(s).

3. The billing period adjustment shall be limited to one (1) month in cases of adjustments for malfunctioning toilets, indoor faucets and other visible, easily accessible fixtures. With the exception of the annual sewer adjustment for pool filling, not more than one (1) such adjustment will be made for any given thirty-six (36) month period per location.
4. No adjustment shall be made when the request for the adjustment is received more than ninety (90) days after the billing date of the bill to be adjusted in the case of an active customer, or thirty (30) days after the billing date of a final bill. Exceptions will only be made if there is proof for extraordinary mitigating circumstances.
5. Adjustments will not normally be allowed for water loss arising from carelessness, negligence or lack of due diligence on the part of the customer, as it is the customer’s responsibility to promptly discover and stop the loss of water.
6. All customers with pools shall qualify for a once per year adjustment to their sewer charges if they have completely emptied and refilled their pool. The customer must supply OWASA, in writing, with the volume of the pool in gallons, and the date it was filled. The Customer Service Representative will then compare that volume to the total consumption for the month in question. Assuming the customer’s total consumption increased above their average by the approximate volume of the pool, the sewer portion of the bill shall be adjusted by the amount of water it took to fill the pool. No adjustment will be given if the total volume of the pool exceeds the total consumption for the month.
7. All emergency water loss calculations shall be documented by Customer Service personnel, and shall include a complete and adequate description of the problem and justification for the adjustment.
8. A proposed adjustment in excess of \$300.00 will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Customer Service Manager before a credit adjustment is made to the customer’s account. A proposed adjustment in excess of \$2,000.00 will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Director of Finance and Customer Service before a credit adjustment is made to the customer’s account.
9. In accordance with Customer Service procedures, a copy of the adjustment documentation will remain in the Customer Service Department for a period of thirty-six (36) months with a copy of the adjustment forwarded to the Accounting Department.
10. Once the adjustment has been made to the customer’s account, the Customer Service Representative will notify the customer in writing that the adjustment has been made.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Director, or his or her designee, shall be responsible for implementation and interpretation of this policy, and is authorized to exercise on behalf of OWASA the discretionary determination as to the applicability of this policy in the various circumstances involving abnormal water usage or loss.