Resolution of the OWASA Board of Directors Adopting an Amended Policy for Adjustment of Customer Accounts for Emergency Situations Involving Loss of Metered Water

Whereas, implementation of OWASA's Agua Vista automated metering infrastructure will create new opportunities for earlier intervention to reduce and water loss through leaks and accidental breakages, to save customers' money, and to reduce water consumption by reducing such water losses; and

Whereas, these additional tools and procedures require modifications and amendments to OWASA's existing policies pertaining to Adjustment of Customer Accounts for Emergency Situations Involving Loss of Metered Water; and

Whereas, the Board of Directors has determined that the attached Amended Policy is necessary to serve the forgoing purposes;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved:

1. That the Board of Directors of Orange Water and Sewer Authority hereby adopts the attached Policy for Adjustment of Customer Accounts for Emergency Situations Involving Loss of Metered Water, amended and effective October 25, 2018.

2. That the Executive Director is, authorized and directed to interpret and implement said policy.

Adopted this 25th day of October, 2018.

Yinka Ayankoya, Chair

ATTEST:

Raymond E. DuBose, Secretary

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
POLICY FOR ADJUSTMENT OF CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING LOSS OF METERED WATER
Amended and effective October 25, 2018

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.

Customers are responsible for paying for all water that passes through the meter serving the customer's location. However, for water-use caused by a leak that exceeds the customer's average use (explained below), this policy allows OWASA to reduce the volumetric rate of the excess water-use.

CONDITIONS

It is the customer's responsibility to promptly discover leaks and stop the loss of water; however, by analyzing per-customer hourly water-use data available through the Agua Vista metering system, OWASA has the ability, but not the obligation to notify customers of suspected leaks in the customer's plumbing system.

A customer who has chosen not to have an OWASA Agua Vista meter installed at their location is not eligible for this credit.

At a customer location served by an OWASA Agua Vista meter, to be eligible for a credit adjustment the customer must have provided accurate contact information that OWASA can use to notify the customer of a suspected leak.

LEAK ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

The credit adjustment will cover excess water-use from the date OWASA notifies the customer of the leak until the leak is repaired up to a maximum of seven (7) days.

For those locations that OWASA has not yet upgraded the meter to an Agua Vista meter, the billing period adjustment is limited to one (1) month.

If a customer who has provided OWASA with accurate contact information experiences an emergency situation involving the loss of metered water and did not receive notification from OWASA, the billing period adjustment is limited to one (1) month.

With the exception of the annual sewer adjustment for pool filling (see below), not more than one (1) credit adjustment for an emergency situation involving the loss of metered water will be made for any given 36-month period per location.

The customer is responsible for repairing 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

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 any arrangements made for repairs.

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

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.

1. For leaks, other than those resulting from any portion or component of an irrigation system:

   The Customer Service Department, upon determination that an adjustment is appropriate under the policy, may adjust charges for water-use over the customer's previous 12-months' daily average water-use, excluding the days of excessive consumption for which the adjustment is requested, to OWASA's lowest retail commodity rate. Additionally, the adjustment will include:

   a) 100% of the amount in excess of the previous 12-months' daily average water-use for wastewater, excluding the days 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 12-months' daily average billings for wastewater excluding the days 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:

- Losses that occurred within one (1) year of construction, and
- Unoccupied dwellings listed as "vacant" in OWASA's billing system.

d) If a full 12-month period daily average is not available (such as with a new customer), the average will be based on 65 gallons of use per day per person in the household, or the rate of consumption after repairs, whichever is greater.

e) For users billed under OWASA's seasonal rate structure, the adjustment will be based on the corresponding days from the year immediately preceding, where no emergency water loss or meter malfunction was recorded during the corresponding days.

2. For leaks resulting from any portion or component of an irrigation system that is not served by an irrigation meter:

a) OWASA may adjust charges for water-use that exceeds the customer's previous 24-month period's highest average daily water-use. The adjustment will be the difference between the amount billed for the excess use, using the customer's applicable rate structure less charges for the excess use calculated using OWASA's irrigation commodity rate. If the calculation using the irrigation commodity rate results in an increase in the charges for water-use, then there will be no adjustment for water charges.

b) Additionally, the adjustment will include 100% of the amount of charges for wastewater that exceeds customer's previous 24-month period's highest average daily water-use.

c) No adjustment shall be made that reduces a customer's bill to an amount less than the customer's previous 24-month period's highest average daily water-use.

d) If a customer has less than 24 months of history for the location at which the loss of water occurred (such as with a new customer), the maximum adjustments for water and wastewater will be based on the customer's previous highest average daily water-use.

In the case of an active customer, no adjustment shall be made when the request for the adjustment is received more than 90 days after the billing date of the bill to be adjusted. If the customer has closed their account and the bill to be adjusted is the customer's "final" bill, no adjustment shall be made when the request for the adjustment is received more than 30 days after the billing date of the bill to be adjusted. Exceptions will only be made if there is proof of extraordinary circumstances.

Adjustments will not normally be allowed for water loss arising from carelessness, negligence or lack of due diligence on the part of the customer.

Customers with pools qualify for a once per year adjustment to their sewer charges if they completely empty and refill their pool. The customer must supply OWASA, in writing, with the total capacity of the pool in gallons and the date it was filled. OWASA will then compare the pool's total capacity 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.

All emergency water loss calculations shall be documented by OWASA and shall include a complete and adequate description of the problem and justification for the adjustment.

A proposed adjustment in excess of $300 will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Customer Service Manager before an adjustment is made to the customer's account. A proposed adjustment in excess of $2,000 will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Director of Finance and Customer Service before an adjustment is made to the customer's account.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Director, or his or her designee, shall be responsible for implementing and interpreting this policy, and is authorized to exercise discretion in determining its applicability.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective as of October 25, 2018.

Reviewed by General Counsel: 10-25-2018 Robert Epting
Date Robert Epting, General Counsel

Adopted by the Board: 10-25-2018 Andrea Orbich
Date Andrea Orbich, Clerk to the Board