



City  
of

Columbus

Administration Division  
16319 Kettle River Blvd  
Columbus, MN. 55025  
Telephone: (651) 464-3120

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## Utility Bill Adjustment Policy

### POL 23-03

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#### **Purpose and Policy**

It is the policy of the City of Columbus to make adjustments to customer utility bills where said adjustment is necessary to correct billing errors, to correct errors due to equipment failure, or to fairly apply the rates and rules of the City utility. The purpose of this policy is to improve customer service by enabling staff to quickly and accurately respond to customer requests for adjustments to City utility bills rather than waiting for the matter to come before the City Council and also setting forth the situations where adjustments will and will not be considered.

#### **Responsibility**

A panel made up of the public works department, the Deputy Treasurer and the utility billing clerk shall determine the amount, if any, of the adjustment to be made. The City Administrator or designee shall receive requests and notify the customer of the determination.

#### **Adjustments Allowed**

Staff is authorized to make adjustments to City utility bills, without City Council action, in the following cases:

**Billing Errors:** Where an error has occurred that results in an inaccurate City utility bill being sent to a customer, staff shall correct the error as soon as discovered, whether by the customer or by staff. These adjustments shall include data recording and entry errors as well as meter failures if tested and found to be inaccurate.

**Late Fees:** Where a customer incurs late fees and requests an adjustment, staff may reduce or remove the late fee based on the customer's circumstances and payment history.

**Sanitary Sewer:** Where a customer experiences extraordinary water consumption during a billing period due to a break in customer owned plumbing, equipment malfunction, etc. and said water did not enter the sanitary sewer system, staff may adjust the sanitary sewer charge to an amount that is more typical of that customer's normal usage.

When an adjustment is made, a credit of the amount of the adjustment, including any sales tax shall be made to the customer's account.

When a customer makes a written request for an adjustment, the amount under consideration for adjustment shall not be payable until a determination on the adjustment is made. All other amounts not in dispute shall be due according to City utility rules.

When a customer pays an amount that is later adjusted, the credit shall remain on the account. No cash refunds shall be made for adjustments unless the account has been or is subsequently closed and a credit balance remains.

### **Adjustments Not Allowed**

The City will not consider adjustment for the following situations:

**Water:** Adjustments to water charges where a customer experiences extraordinary water consumption during a billing period during a break in customer owned plumbing, equipment malfunction, etc.

**Sanitary Sewer:** Adjustments to sanitary sewer charges for customers who claim normal outdoor water usage (i.e. lawn or garden sprinkling, car washing, filling swimming pools, etc.) where the water used did not enter the sanitary sewer system.

### **Request for Adjustments**

The customer shall provide all information requested by the City on a form provided by the City and deemed necessary to make a determination on the request.

### **Response**

The City utility shall respond to the written request for adjustment within ten (10) business days after receiving from the customer all the information necessary to make a determination on the request.

**Reporting**

The City Administrator or designee shall provide a quarterly report to the City Council on adjustments made under this policy exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00).

**Appeals**

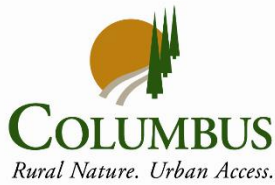
Customers who disagree with the determination of staff regarding their requested adjustments may appeal to the City Council. Said appeal must be in writing and shall be scheduled to be heard at the meeting immediately after receipt of the written appeal.

**Effective Date**

This policy shall be effective immediately upon approval of the City Council. Adopted by the City Council of the City of Columbus on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of March, 2023.

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Elizabeth Mursko, City Administrator

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Jesse Preiner, Mayor



## Utility Bill Adjustment Request Form

| APPLICANT/PROPERTY INFORMATION   |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Name on Account:   | Account Number:         |
| Property Address:  | City/State/Zip:         |
| Phone:   | Email:                  |
| <b>Type of Adjustment:</b><br>Billing Error    Late Fee    Sanitary Sewer    Other | Other Description:      |
| Describe the actions that were taken to complete the repairs:                      |                         |
| Date Occurred:   | Date Repaired/Resolved: |

| NOTES TO APPLICANT   |
|--|
| <p>By signing, I verify that necessary repairs/corrections have been made prior to submitting this form. I understand that adjustments to the water or sewer portion of my bill cannot be made until repairs have been completed.</p> <p>I authorize the City of Columbus to process an adjustment on the water and/or sewer portion of my bill. I hereby certify that I have read and examined this application and all statements are true and correct.</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of Applicant</b> <span style="float: right;">_____</span><br/><b>Date</b></p> |

| OFFICE USE ONLY          |                       |  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Received By:             | Date Received:        | Notes:   |
| City Official Reviewing: | Date Reviewed:        | Approved or Denied:<br><br>Reason:                           |
| Customer Notified:       | Date of Notification: | This completed form will be saved to the customer's account. |