

RECEIVED

JUN 04 2014

CITY OF
VENTURA

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

City Council

Cheryl Heitmann, Mayor
Erik Nasarenko, Deputy Mayor
Neal Andrews, Councilmember
James L. Monahan, Councilmember
Carl E. Morehouse, Councilmember
Mike Tracy, Councilmember
Christy Weir, Councilmember

May 29, 2014

The Honorable Brian J. Back
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura CA 93009

Re: Grand Jury Report "City of Ventura Water Rates"

Dear Judge Back:

Enclosed please find our response to the Grand Jury report titled "City of Ventura Water Rates".

We agree with the findings numbered: FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05, FI-06, FI-07, and FI-09

We disagree partially with the finding numbered: FI-08

FI-08-Copies of all adjustments made on bills received from February-May are kept in an Average Winter Consumption file. Each one of the customer accounts is individually monitored and re-calculated without the "out of normal" usage. After the average winter consumption routine is run, each customer account in the file is changed to reflect the usage without the excessive water use; thereby, not impacting customers future wastewater rates.

Recommendations

- Recommendations numbered R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5 have been implemented.
- R1- A water billing adjustment policy has been written and published online (attachment B). We will inform the customers by including the information on the water bills.
- R2- A documented policy for calculating adjustments has been written and published.
- R3-Ventura Water has always re-calculated wastewater bills when there has been

an anomaly with customer water usage from the February to May sewer determination period.

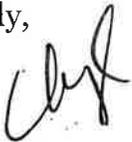
- R4-A second employee has always confirmed any changes to a customer account. A staff member calculates and enters the changes and the supervisor reviews and signs the paperwork. The City audits the process and picks random accounts to test annually.
- R5-Every customer and property owner was mailed a notice outlining the proposed rate changes. The proposed changes were also:
 - Posted on the website.
 - Published in the *Pipeline*, our E-newsletter.
 - Explained to all customers with questions calling the Customer Care line.
 - Presented at Community Councils.
 - Outlined in press releases.
 - Clarified in radio interviews.
 - Detailed in the Town Hall meeting.
 - Presented at City Council Public hearing.

Response

While Ventura Water has had water billing adjustment policy for many years, it was unwritten. Ventura Water's Professional Quality Standards include, "Anticipating and responding to customer needs" and "Communicating effectively". Ventura Water views customer service as an important commitment to its residents. As a result, Ventura Water has documented the water billing adjustment policy.

On May 5, 2014, the Ventura City Council approved this Grand Jury report response and authorized the Mayor to make this reply. We appreciate the Grand Jury efforts in looking into this important matter.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Heitmann
Mayor

Enclosure

✓ C: Foreperson, Ventura County Grand Jury

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY & PROCEDURES

VENTURA WATER INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 5-5-2014 PROCEDURE FOR RESIDENTIAL WATER ADJUSTMENTS

Subject: Ventura Water Billing Adjustments	
Issued by: Mary Landis, Water Resources Account Supervisor	Approved by: Shana Epstein, General Manager
Date Issued: May 5, 2014	
Review/Update Frequency: Annually	Review/Update Responsibility: Water Resources Account Supervisor
Date of this Revision:	Dates of Previous Revisions:

PURPOSE: This Policy establishes and outlines procedures for crediting customers who experience high water usage due to either unexplained causes or a leak within the customer's property.

Customers eligible for credits must meet all of the following criteria:

- Customer has at least six months of history at the premise.
- Unexplained usage or leak usage must be more than twice the two year premise average.
- Premise may not exceed than one adjustment every five years.
- In the event of a leak, the leak must be corrected prior to any adjustment. Customer must submit documentation within two months of the occurrence. If the customer has repaired the leak themselves, they may submit documentation including a copy of the planning permit for the repair and invoices for materials purchased.
- Customer's account is paid up to date before a credit is issued.

For residential customers credit shall be as follows:

- Two year premise average is calculated and multiplied by two (A).
- Identify premise usage for adjustment (B).
- A minus B equals usage to be adjusted (C).

- Usage to be adjusted is calculated at the difference between billed tier and next lower tier.
- In the event that the usage for the adjustment (B) is all in the first tier, anything over the difference between A and B is credited.
- Example: $A - B = C$ or Premise two year average is 15, multiplied by 2 is 30 (A); Customer unusual usage is 20 (B); Amount to be adjusted is 10 (C). 10 hcf will be calculated at tier 1 rates.

For commercial customers credit shall be as follows:

- If the documentation states the leak was on an irrigation line and customer does not have a separate irrigation meter, the credit will be given on the wastewater portion of the bill.
- The wastewater charge will be recalculated at the customer's two year premise average.
- Credit is the difference of billed and recalculated charges.

Notes on credits and eligibility

- Customer shall still be responsible to pay all billing statements in full until credits are listed in subsequent billing statements. Customer shall not withhold any payments in anticipation of a credit. Failure to pay a bill in full will subject the customer to delinquency penalties and water shut-off per normal procedure for delinquent accounts.