

Title Customer Billing, Payments, and Collections	Number CS-310.1	Rev. no. 2
Responsibility Customer Service Branch	Supersedes N/A	Pages 4
General Manager/CEO Approval  Mami Hara	Effective Date January 3, 2017	

1. PURPOSE

This Director's Rule establishes the administrative process for the billing, payment, and collection of charges for water, wastewater, and solid waste services to customers of Seattle Public Utilities. It conforms with Seattle Municipal Code provisions under SMC 21.04, 21.28, SMC 21.40 and SPU policy CS-310.

2. DEFINITIONS

account balance. The total dollar amount owing on an account, which includes current charges, past due balances, late fees, delinquency penalties, returned-check fees, and charges for property visits, shutoffs, meter removals, turn-ons, and resets that have been applied to the account.

account fees. Charges to an account made in accordance with Director's Rule FIN-210.2, Standard, Connection, and Administrative Charges, which include late fees, returned-check fees, charges for property visits, shutoffs, water restorations, meter removals, and meter resets.

bill. The monthly or bi-monthly statement of charges accrued for water, sewer and garbage service. The Bill is the official notice to the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder that payment is due.

certified funds. Cash, cashier's check, money order, Visa or Master Card debit or credit card.

past due balance. Unpaid debt from a single bill or multiple bills that was not paid by the due date specified on the bill(s).

pay plan. An agreement between SPU and the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder, used to satisfy a current or outstanding debt. To be granted a pay plan, customers must make an initial down payment and commit to subsequent payment(s) to satisfy the remaining balance within 60 calendar days from the date the initial down payment is made.

3. RULE

A. Billing for Services

- 1) SPU bills for utility account services on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, depending on account type.

SPU requires that utility accounts be established in the legal property or parcel owner's name.

Property owners will be sent the original bills and notices to their provided mailing address. However, upon request, property owners can request that duplicate bills and notices be sent to the occupants of a rental property.

- 2) Bills are provided by either of the following:
 - Mailing to the property owner, the owner's agent, or account holder of record
 - Online, if the property owner, the owner's agent, or designated account holder is enrolled in SPU's electronic billing service.
- 3) Property owners are responsible for
 - Providing SPU with accurate, reliable, and up-to-date contact information.
 - Notifying SPU within 10 business days of the exact date of a change in ownership.

B. Payments

- 1) Payment is due within 21 days of the bill date. Payments are first applied to the amount due for solid waste collection, then to sewer, and finally to water services.
- 2) Payment may be made by different means, such as cash, check, debit card or credit card. If a payment made by check is returned, SPU will charge a returned-check fee and require cash or Certified Funds be used to pay the balance due.
- 3) If payment made by Visa or MasterCard is declined, SPU will require cash, a cashier's check, or a money order be used to pay the balance due.

C. Past Due Notification

SPU will notify customers whose accounts become delinquent. Depending on the amount of the outstanding balance and the number of days the outstanding balance is delinquent, one or more of the following SPU collections and severance processes may occur.

- 1) **Reminder Calls**
Auto-generated phone calls are made to the account holder to inform them of their past due balance.
- 2) **Urgent Notice**
Once an Urgent Notice is generated, customers can either pay their past due balance in full or pay a minimum of 50 percent of their past due balance in certified

funds and establish a pay plan to pay the remaining past due balance within 60 calendar days from the date the 50 percent down payment is made.

3) **Final Shutoff Notice**

Once a Shutoff Notice is generated, customers can either pay their past due balance in full, or pay a minimum of 50 percent of their past due balance in certified funds, and establish a pay plan to pay the remaining balance within 60 calendar days from the date the 50 percent down payment is made.

D. Water Shut Off (Severance)

If water services have been shut off for nonpayment, Pay Plans are no longer allowed. To restore water services, the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder must pay 100 percent of the Past Due Balance in certified funds.

E. Pay Plans

Pay Plans are offered to assist customers in satisfying debt owed to the utility. Specific criteria must be met before a pay plan can be established. Pay plan guidelines are listed below:

- 1) If an Urgent Notice or Shut off Notice has not been generated, a pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 25 percent of their account balance in certified funds. The remaining balance must be paid in installments or in full within 60 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.
- 2) If an Urgent Notice has been generated, a pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 50 percent of their past due balance in certified funds. The remaining balance must be paid in installments or in full within 60 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.
- 3) If a Shutoff Notice has been generated, a pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 50 percent of their past due balance in certified funds. The remaining balance must be paid in installments or in full within 60 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.
- 4) If a customer needs to change the terms of an existing pay plan, they will be required to do the following:
 - a) Pay 25 percent of the balance owing within their existing pay plan in certified funds.
 - b) Agree to a date to pay the remaining pay plan balance in installments or in full within 60 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.

F. Meter Removal

If the water meter has been removed, water services will not be restored to the property until the property owner has completed a meter reset application and paid the entire Account Balance and meter reset fee in certified funds.

4. AUTHORITY/REFERENCES

- SMC 21.04, Water Rates and Regulations
- SMC 21.28, Wastewater Rates and Charges
- SMC 21.40, Solid Waste Collection Rates and Charges
- Director's Rule FIN-210.2, Standard, Connection and Administrative Charges Rule – Water