

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Water Advisory Branch

STANDARD PRACTICE ON BILLS AND FORMS
AND RELEASE OF CUSTOMER INFORMATION
UNDER GENERAL ORDER 96-B

Standard Practice U-15-W

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
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STANDARD PRACTICE ON BILLS AND FORMS
GENERAL ORDER 96-B

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A--PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. The purpose of this standard practice is to provide guidance to utilities on the release of customer information and utilities' and Water Division staff on the proper format for bills and for forms the utility uses in dealing with customers.
2. Bills and forms are used for various purposes.
 - a. Bills are sent to the customers to announce that payment for water service is due. On April 20, 1983 the Commission approved a recommendation requiring all water utilities to do "report card" billing for metered service. It also directs utilities to send a bill insert at least once a year and whenever a rate increase is effective providing "report card" information (see Appendix A).
 - b. Forms are fill-in-the-blank documents that are used to collect information necessary to the operation of the utility. Some forms, such as the Connection Fee Data Form, must be in a specific format: the format given in Appendix B. For most forms, companies may develop unique versions or use the examples included in this standard practice.

All bills and forms used when dealing with the public must be filed as a tariff with the Commission.

B—PROCEDURE

3. Bills. The minimum requirements for information on a bill for metered service is as follows:
 - a. Meter Readings, Previous and Present
 - b. Mention that the numbers refer to the number of hundred cubic feet used
 - c. Service Charge
 - d. Quantity Charge
 - e. Quantity rates per hundred cubic feet
 - g. PUC surcharge
 - h. Other charges such as utility tax
 - f. Billing period usage comparison this year and last year
 - g. Date upon which the bill is past due
 - h. Amount Due

The bill may also contain the Account Number, service from and to dates, days of service and a breakdown in the quantity rates if block rates apply. In addition to the information included on the bill, all water utilities that provide metered service will send a bill insert (Appendix C) at least once a year to all metered customers.

4. The bill must contain contact information for the utility, with a telephone number.

5. The bill must also contain substantially the following information¹.

“If necessary, you may contact the California Public Utilities Commission if we have not handled your problem to your satisfaction. Send the bill and a statement setting forth the basis for the dispute to the California Public Utilities Commission, State Office Building, Consumer Affairs Branch, 505 Van Ness Avenue, Room 2003, San Francisco, CA 94102; phone number **(800) 649-7570**; for the hearing impaired **(415) 703-4973** or you may file your complaint online at **www.cpuc.ca.gov**. To avoid discontinuance of service, enclose a deposit for the amount of the bill, made payable to the California Public Utilities Commission. Upon receipt of the deposit, the Commission will review the basis of the dispute and disburse the deposit accordingly. The Commission will not, however, accept deposits when the dispute appears to be over matters that do not relate to the accuracy of the bill. Such matters include the quality of a utility’s service, general level of rates, pending rate applications and sources of fuel or power.”

6. The bill may contain charges for sewer service, garbage service or trash collection if the Commission has allowed the changes to Tariff Rule 11² and the local sewer, garbage or trash agency has entered into a written contract with the water company to bill for these services³. However, the water company may not shut off water service if the other service is unpaid.

7. Main Extension Contract Forms

8. Miscellaneous Forms. The following forms, if used must be included in the tariff book: Application for Water Service, Application for Change in Water Service, Portable Meter Deposit, Late Notice, Service Termination Notice, Closing Bill, Deposit Form, and any other forms or contracts the utility requires customers to sign.

9. Application for Water Service. This form may request personal information, including social security number, driver’s license number, date of birth, employer, work number and home phone number; however, except for purposes of determining an applicant’s qualification for a low income ratepayer assistance program, a water company cannot require as a condition of service

¹ Letter from Richard Clark, Director, Consumer Services Division to All Utilities and Other Entities Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission, December 11, 2000. This letter was authorized by Commission Resolution No. CSD-5, May 4, 2000.

² Tariff Rule No. 11, Section B. 1. b. states in relevant part: “When a bill for water service has become past due and a 10-day discontinuance of residential service notice or a 7-day discontinuance of non-residential service notice for nonpayment has been issued, service may be discontinued if the bill is not paid within the time required by such notice.”

³ California Health and Safety Code section 5470 et. seq.

that an applicant provide his or her social security number. The form should note that providing one's social security number is voluntary, and that service shall not be denied for failure to provide such information⁴.

10. Release of Customer Information to the Public. Public Utilities Code Section 588 reads in part:

“in no case shall information be released disclosing customer usage of the services provided by the utility without a court order or subpoena.”

It then goes on to describe what steps must be taken to get customer information, but says in Section 588 (b) (3):

“(3) This section does not authorize inspectors and investigators to obtain any utility customer information, other than that authorized by this section without service of process as required by law.”

⁴ Memorandum from Helen W. Yee to Fred Curry and Richard Tom, September 24, 1996, Subj: Personal Information Requested in a Water Company's Application for Service

APPENDIX A

On April 20, 1983 the Commission approved a recommendation requiring all water utilities to do "report card" billing for metered service. It also directs utilities to send a bill insert at least once a year and whenever a rate increase is effective providing "report card" information

WATER RATE INFORMATION*****SAVE THIS SHEET

This sheet explains our water rates and shows how a sample bill is calculated. We will mail you a sheet like this one once a year or whenever there is a rate increase.

You pay us a service charge (a fee for being connected to the system) which stays the same no matter how much water you use. You also pay a quantity rate or a charge for each cubic foot (one cubic foot is about 7 1/2 gallons) of water that you use. Reducing your water use will save you money by reducing the quantity charge (the fee for each gallon) that you pay. However, using less water will not save you money on the service charge because it stays the same no matter how much water you use.

Here are the rates we now charge: (Laguna Hills Water Co.)

Service Charge

| If your meter is this size | You pay this much per month: |
|---|------------------------------|
| 5/8 by 3/8 inch (most homes have these) | \$3.20 |
| 3/4 inch | 3.50 |
| 1 inch | 4.80 |
| 1 1/2 inch | 6.00 |
| 2 inch | 9.00 |

(If your meter is larger than 2 inches, call us for the service charge)

Quantity Rates

The first 300 cubic feet (or about 2250 gallons) of water that you use in a month costs 85.8 cents per hundred cubic feet (or about 1.1 cents for each ten gallons).

If you use more than 300 cubic feet (most people do), each hundred cubic feet that you buy in addition to the initial 300 cubic feet costs you 7.1 cents or 1 cent for each ten gallons.

FOR EXAMPLE: Let's say that you used 500 cubic feet (or about 3800 gallons) of water this month and you have the smallest (5/8 by 3/4 inch) meter. How much is your bill?

The service charge is \$3.20.

You used 500 cubic feet. The first 300 cubic feet costs 85.8 cents per hundred cubic feet. The charge for the first 300 cubic feet is 3 x 85.8 cents or \$2.57.

There are 200 cubic feet left to be paid for. The price for them is 71.7 cents for each one hundred cubic feet. 2 x 71.7 cents is \$1.43.

Your total bill is \$3.20 + \$2.57 + \$1.43 = \$7.20

APPENDIX B
Connection Fee Data Form

(Name of Water Company)

Connection Fee Data Form for Service to _____
(Name of Customer)

_____, _____
(Address) (Telephone)

I. Local Government Permits and Fees

| <u>Line</u> | <u>Name of Agency</u> | <u>Name of Fee</u> | <u>Cost</u> |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1 | _____ | _____ | \$ _____ |
| 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5 | Total (Add lines 1 through 4) | | \$ _____ |

II. Materials

A. Service Pipe

6 Type (e.g., copper) _____

7 Unit cost = \$ _____ per foot of length

8 Length of service pipe = _____ feet
(Use typical connection in your service area)

9 Service

Pipe Cost = Unit cost (Line 7) x Length (Line 8)

Pipe Cost = \$ _____ /ft. x _____ ft. = \$ _____

APPENDIX B
Connection Fee Data Form

II. Materials (continued)

B. Other than Service Pipe

| <u>Line</u> | | \$ |
|-------------|---|----------|
| 10 | Saddle tap | _____ |
| 11 | Valve (corp stop) | _____ |
| 12 | Valve (meter stop) | _____ |
| 13 | Cast concrete box | _____ |
| 14 | Meter | _____ |
| | Other (describe) | _____ |
| 15 | _____ | _____ |
| 16 | _____ | _____ |
| 17 | Subtotal (Add Lines 10 through 16) | _____ |
| 18 | Miscellaneous allowance (5% of Line 17) | _____ |
| 19 | Total (Add Lines 17 and 18) | \$ _____ |

III. Installation

A. Tapping

Labor for tapping main, installing valves, setting meter and meter box (not applicable to flat rate service), and all other hardware work regardless of the length of service pipe.

Tapping cost = Avg. time for tapping x hourly rate

For metered service:

20 Tapping cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____ /hr. = \$ _____

For flat-rate service:

21 Tapping cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____ /hr. = \$ _____

B. Earth Work

Labor and Equipment for trenching and compaction of backfill.

22 Length of trench = _____ feet
 (Use typical connection in your service area)

APPENDIX B
Connection Fee Data Form

III. Installation (continued)

B. Earth Work (continued)

1. Labor

Cost = Avg time x hourly rate

Line

23 Operator cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____

24 Laborer cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____

25 _____ = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____
(other)

26 Total Labor (Add Lines 23 through 25) \$ _____

2. Equipment

Cost = Avg. time x hourly rate

27 Backhoe cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____

28 Compactor cost = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____

29 _____ = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____
(other)

30 _____ = _____ hr. x \$ _____/hr. = \$ _____
(other)

31 Total Equipment (Add Lines 27 thru 30) \$ _____

C. Pavement replacement (including base)

32 Pavement type (e.g., asphalt concrete) _____

33 Unit cost = \$ _____/ft.

34 Length of pavement = _____ feet
(Use typical connection in your service area)

35 Cost = Unit cost (Line 33) x Avg. Length (Line 34)

36 Pavement Cost = \$ _____ / ft. x _____ = \$ _____
(Line 33) (Line 34)

APPENDIX C
Bill Insert

1. This Connection Fee Data Form is available to Class C and Class D water utilities and Class A and Class B utility districts of subsidiaries serving 2,000 or fewer connections. The blank Connection Fee Data Form must be filed in the tariffs of a utility seeking to assess a connection fee.
2. When the Connection Fee Data Form is filed in a utility's tariffs, the completed form showing costs of installation must be presented to all new individual customers seeking installation of a connection.
3. At the time a completed Connection Fee Data Form is presented to a customer, the utility must advise the customer, in writing, of the following:
 - a. An applicant for a water utility connection who disputes the fees set forth by the utility in its Connection Fee Data Form may file a complaint with the California Public Utilities Commission, 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102-3298
 - b. An applicant for a water utility connection may, as an alternative to connection by the utility, have the connection performed by a contractor deemed qualified by the utility. Such installation must be done in accordance with utility specifications. Such installation is subject to inspection and approval of a utility, at an inspection fee rate of \$ _____ per hour. At completion of the installation, applicant must provide the utility with a copy of the contractor's invoice for the installation.
4. The Total Service Connection Cost (Line 38) represents a typical service connection in your service area for one service size. A separate calculation is required for each size.
5. Separate calculations are required for metered and flat rate service.
6. It is assumed that if procedures and equipment other than those included above are selected for a particular (but typical) installation (e.g., boring rather than trenching), it is because it is more economical for that particular installation. There is no need for special provisions for such cases.
7. The utility may request a deviation from its Connection Fees tariff and charge the actual cost of installation for any service for which the Total Cost of Service Connection exceeds the typical cost (Line 38) by three times.
8. Connection fees are assumed to be in the first \$50,000 of income for which the federal income tax rate is 15%.