

CITY OF NEVIS UTILITY BILLING POLICY

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning as defined by this section.

- a. **Bill:** means the statement of account for municipal utility services rendered by the City to a customer and due and payable to the city by the customer.
- b. **City:** means the municipal corporation known as the City of Nevis, Minnesota, and any designated agent authorized to act on behalf of the City.
- c. **City Staff:** means City Administrator, Deputy Clerk, or Public Works employees.
- d. **Customer:** means any person, firm, corporation or entity to which the municipal utility services are rendered.
- e. **Delinquent customer:** means any person, firm, corporation or entity who fails to pay any current charges or portion thereof for any municipal utility by the due date of the bill.
- f. **Municipal Utilities:** means the water and sewer systems for the City of Nevis, Minnesota.
- g. **Past due amount:** means any current charges or portion thereof for any municipal utility which remain unpaid past the due date of the bill on which such current charges first appear.
- h. **Disconnect:** means that water services shall not be made available to any person, firm, corporation or entity due to non-payment.

Utility Billing Policies and Procedures:

The City of Nevis provides water and sewer services to the residents, including private homes, apartments and commercial users. The purpose of this policy is to set up additional policies and procedures not specifically written in the Ordinance. This policy will establish a process to dispute the accuracy of the water meter reading used to calculate the charges for such water and sewer services, of which services are hereafter referred to as “municipal utility services”.

The following policies and procedures shall govern the provision of municipal utilities of the City of Nevis, Mn.

Utility Billing:

There is hereby created a utility billing office designated by the City Council. The billing department shall be responsible for the calculation and rendering of all municipal utility bills. The utility billing department shall maintain account records for each customer that includes the customer’s name, billing address, current charges and account history including past due charges, penalties and fees. These records shall be maintained a minimum of two years’ worth of account history.

The city shall bill the owners of the property served by utility services. In the case of residential rental property, the owner shall be responsible for all charges because of the significant payment problems with tenants of residential property within the city.

Rate Resolution:

All municipal utility charges shall be calculated in accordance with the specific rate resolution applicable to each utility of service rendered to the customer. The city Council shall from time to time adopt a Fee Schedule through Resolution.

Monthly Utility Bill:

The utility billing section shall provide each municipal utility customer a combined monthly municipal utility bill which shall include the charges incurred by the customer for a regular monthly water and sewer services, plus any fees, penalties or previous balances. Each municipal utility shall be designated as a separate entry on the billing statement. Bills for municipal utility services provided shall be rendered and paid monthly.

Billing Cycle:

- a. **Meter reading date:** Meters shall be read monthly between the 15th day of the month and the last day of the month.
- b. **Billing period:** Monthly billings shall be rendered within one week following the last day of the month. The total bill shall be due and payable by 4:30p.m. on the 5th day of the next month of which services were billed for. If the due date falls on a Holiday, Saturday or Sunday, the due date shall be at 9:00am on the first business day following the holiday or weekend; payments can be deposited 24 hours a day in the payment slot at City Hall to ensure they meet the 8:00am deadline. It is not recommended to place cash in the payment slot.
- c. **Delinquent date:** If a bill is not paid on or before 4:30p.m. on the due date, a late charge equal to 10% of the current bill amount shall be added to the charges. The first 6th of the month shall be known as the delinquent date. If the delinquent date falls on a holiday, Saturday or Sunday the bill shall then become delinquent at 9:00am on the first business day following the holiday or weekend.
- d. **Disconnect notification date:** If a bill is past due as of 4:30p.m. on the 5th of the month, the City Administration Office will send a disconnection notice to the customer on the 6th of the month. The disconnection notice will state the past due amount on the customer's account plus applicable reconnection fees if not paid by the disconnection date.
- e. **Disconnection date:** If a bill that is all or partially not paid by the 16th of the month, the City Administration Office will send a final disconnect letter stating the maintenance staff shall disconnect the customer's municipal utility service in 7 days.
- f. **Hang Tag:** If the bill that is all or partially not paid by the end of the 7th business day following the 2nd Disconnection letter sent the 16th of the month, a Hang Tag will be placed on the door of the property. The Hang Tag will list the property owner, address and amount that must be paid by 12:00 noon of the following business day to avoid disconnection of city services.

Delinquent Customers:

Any customer whose bill remains unpaid by 12:01p.m. following placement of the Hang Tag shall be considered delinquent and services to the property will be disconnected. Once utility service is disconnected, it shall not be reconnected or reinstated until payment of all charges, fees and penalties necessary to bring the account to a current status. The disconnection process is generally put in place for customers that are one month past due on their utility bills. The city may also refer customers to a collection agency or attorney for collection on a case- by-case basis. Delinquent utilities may also be certified to property taxes to be collected in the same manner as special assessments and other taxes.

Municipal Utility Service Application:

Any person, firm or corporation desiring to set up any municipal utility service or combination thereof shall make application for said service(s). The application shall be on such form(s) as may now or hereinafter be prescribed by the appropriate utility. The application may include the applicant's name, spouse name, service address, mailing address, telephone number and signature of the party responsible for payment. Persons applying on behalf of others or acting as an agent for others may provide the required information provided such agent agrees to assume responsibility for the person, firm or corporation upon whose behalf they are applying. Each service location shall be considered a separate account.

Disputed Utility Bills:

A customer may dispute a utility bill but first with city staff. If the customer is not satisfied with city staff outcome of the complaint, they may pursue the complaint with the City Council. The customer is responsible to go through the process of checking for leaks/excess usage before further pursuing the complaint to the City Council. A customer may request a hearing regarding any dispute over a proposed disconnection of service before the Council to hear such matters. This conference must take place at the next scheduled City Council meeting after the disconnection notice has been served.

A customer who feels the total usage reflected on their account for municipal utilities is incorrect, may request to have City staff re-read the meter, a customer requesting to have their meter re-read must allow City staff access to the home at an agreed upon time during the course of Public Works Department normal business hours. The city staff check will ensure that the meter reading from the hand-held device is running parallel to the meter reading on the physical dial on the meter. City staff may clean out the meters of any obstruction at the customer's request. However, cleaning out of meters will in most cases ensure the meter is working correctly and may capture a more accurate, higher reading. Council may request City staff to change out the customer's water meter however, the customer utility account must be paid in full before this can take place. This payment in full of the utility bill is a trade for the cost of a new water meter and installation cost. The State of Minnesota has set forth requirements that public water meter sources account and bill for all water used. The City Council adheres measuring and billing customers for all water used to follow the State's practice. If the City staff finds that the water meter is in working order, the customer is required to pay for the metered usage.

Service Charges:

The following additional fees shall be charged for services provided by the municipal utility:

- a. Disconnect/Reconnection of service due to nonpayment of bill:
 - \$75.00 (\$50.00 for Public Works Staff time along with a \$25.00 Administration fee)
8:00 am to 3:00 pm – Monday to Thursday (excluding holidays)
- b. Returned Check Fees (this includes ACH customers):
 - \$30.00 for all checks or direct deposits
 - Returned checks, the customer shall pay, by cash or money order, the amount of the returned check(s) plus the returned check fee.
 - After a returned check, the customer may be required to pay all current and future payments by cash or money order until notified otherwise.

Obstructions:

It shall be prohibited for any person to obstruct access to a municipal utility water meter, meter reader or curb stop whether in a public right-of-way or on private property. Should any person be in violation of this will be subject to a citation and may be issued for a misdemeanor.

Responsibility of Customers:

Customers are responsible to check their water piping system/end appliances. City staff are not responsible to check for elevated usage after the customer's meter.

The customer can check for the potential causes of a leak/excess by looking at the following sources:

- a leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed.
- water softener problems – cycles continuously or longer than needed.
- a dripping faucet; a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water or more each day.
- water the lawn, new grass, or trees can add to the regular usage.
- check for open hoses/faucets on the exterior of homes/buildings.
- houseguests add to regular usage.
- a broken water pipe or previous leak, check pipes in basement or crawlspaces.
- check water heaters for leaks.

Approval of Policy:

This policy was formally approved and adopted by the Nevis City Council on April 12, 2021.

Nevis Mayor Jeanne Thompson

Dawn Veit, Nevis City Administrator