

POLICY ON WATER & SEWER ADJUSTMENTS

It is the policy of the City of Rochester not to grant adjustments to water & sewer bills unless the problem rests within the City's system. However, the City recognizes that a high bill resulting from accidental, unpreventable water release can present financial hardship to a customer. While most water releases are preventable, there are certain circumstances when an accidental water release cannot be reasonably prevented. The intent of this policy is to establish a one-time abatement, during any ten-year period, for up to half of the excess water consumption above normal consumption, due to an accidental, unpreventable water release.

Adjustment Determination Procedure:

1. All customer requests to abate any portion of a metered water bill that is unusually high due to unpreventable leakage shall be reviewed by City staff on a case-by-case basis. In order to qualify for abatement, a customer's excess consumption must exceed the greater of 100% or 35,000 gallons above their normal average consumption. The customer must also prove that the deficiency responsible for leakage has been repaired or corrected. This policy only applies to leaks that have occurred within the previous six (6) months of the date of the abatement request.
2. In the event that a customer cannot determine the source or cause of the abnormally high consumption, the customer is required to hire a private licensed plumber to assist the customer in trying to determine said source or cause. If the plumber is unable to determine the source or cause of the abnormally high consumption, the City can only speculate that the customer has located and repaired or corrected said source. If the customer claims that said source never existed, the City shall test the meter and make an adjustment to the bill in accordance with NHPUC requirements for meters found to be over-recording. If the meter test reveals an accurate or under-recording meter, the customer shall be held responsible for the entire bill plus the cost of meter testing and shipping/handling.
3. In the event the source or cause of the abnormally high consumption is related to a leak due to customer negligence such as the failure to maintain internal (private) plumbing fixtures in good repair and/or protect plumbing from freezing, the customer shall be held responsible for the entire bill.
4. In the event the abnormally high consumption has occurred due to "unpredictable leakage" not caused by customer negligence, ignorance or unfortunate circumstances, as determined by City staff and the Utility Advisory Board, the City shall consider granting a one-time abatement, per account, during any ten-year period, up to half of the water consumption above normal consumption. The abatement calculation may consider compensation from any other sources, including insurance policy claims, etc. Normal consumption will be the average of at least the previous three years' consumption history, for similar billing periods, unless deemed otherwise by the City staff or the Board. The City staff and Utility Advisory Board reserve the right to grant adjustments on water use or sewer use or both.

5. The customer may be required to submit a written statement from their homeowner's insurance policy provider stating what portion, if any, of the leak is covered by insurance.
6. The City shall not disconnect service (for abnormally high consumption) provided the customer pays the entire amount due within the normal payment period or enters into payment arrangements for the excessive amount and is in good standing on all current billings.
7. Landlords will be responsible for tenant bills in accordance with this policy. Failure by a tenant to pay water and sewer charges will not excuse the landlord of any outstanding obligations.

The following example shows how the abatement is calculated based on rates in effect as of 5/1/16:

Water Impact – Rate \$4.81 per 1 unit of consumption

Note: 1 unit of consumption = 100 cu. ft. = 748 gallons

	Consumption	Dollar Amount
Total Usage (1 quarter)	70 units (52,360 gallons)	\$336.70
3 year average (quarterly average)	14 units (10,472 gallons)	\$67.34
Excess above average	56 units (41,888 gallons)	\$269.36
Half of excess abated	28 units (20,944 gallons)	\$134.68
Remaining excess - Customer responsibility	28 units (20,944 gallons)	\$134.68
3 year average (quarterly average)	14 units (10,472 gallons)	\$67.34
Total remaining bill due		\$202.02

Sewer Impact – Rate \$6.24 per 1 unit of consumption

Note: 1 unit of consumption = 100 cu. ft. = 748 gallons

	Consumption	Dollar Amount
Total Usage (1 quarter)	70 units (52,360 gallons)	\$436.80
3 year average (quarterly average)	14 units (10,472 gallons)	\$87.36
Excess above average	56 units (41,888 gallons)	\$349.44
Half of excess abated	28 units (20,944 gallons)	\$174.72
Remaining excess - Customer responsibility	28 units (20,944 gallons)	\$174.72
3 year average (quarterly average)	14 units (10,472 gallons)	\$87.36
Total remaining bill due		\$262.08

The above policy replaces all existing water and sewer adjustment policies.