

Sec. 16-3-102. Estimated billing

A. Definitions.

1. Residential customer as used in Section 16-3-102 means any person to whom a utility company has agreed to supply utility services at residential premises occupied by that person alone or with others as a single housekeeping unit.

2. Company as used in Section 16-3-102 means any gas, electric or water company, corporation or other such entity under the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Control Authority which provides utility services.

3. Utility service as used in Section 16-3-102 means gas, electric or water service provided by a utility company to a residential customer at retail rates based upon metered consumption.

4. Actual reading as used in Section 16-3-102 means a meter reading obtained directly from the metering device.

5. Customer reading as used in Section 16-3-102 means an actual reading obtained by the customer of the utility service.

6. Company reading as used in Section 16-3-102 means an actual reading obtained by a representative of the company.

7. Actual bill as used in Section 16-3-102 means a bill for utility service submitted to a residential customer which is based upon an actual reading.

8. Estimated bill as used in Section 16-3-102 means a bill for utility service submitted to a residential customer with charges calculated in accordance with formulae employed to estimate utility service consumption.

B. General requirements.

1. Each company which estimates bills shall file with the Public Utilities Control Authority a current, simple, clear and concise statement of the formulae employed in preparing its estimates. The Public Utilities Control Authority may reject such filing and require a new filing if, after investigation, it determines either that the statement is not sufficiently clear and concise, or that the formulae employed result in significant deviations from actual consumption. Each company shall provide a copy of its filed statement to any customer upon request.

2. After 30 days of the effective date of this regulation, no company may submit an estimated bill to a customer unless it currently has on file with the Public Utilities Control Authority a statement of formulae employed in estimating bills described in the preceding subsection.

3. After depletion of its existing, on-hand supply of pre-printed bill forms, but in no event later than 120 days following the effective date of these regulations, each estimated bill submitted to a customer must be clearly so marked on its face. Codes or symbols may be used to designate the bill as being based upon estimated consumption only if a legend clearly explaining the code or symbol appears on the face of the bill.

4. An electric or gas company which serves a substantial number of Spanish speaking customers shall provide all information relating to estimated bills in Spanish and English.

C. Companies' obligation to obtain actual reading.

1. Each company shall obtain a company reading whenever possible.

2. When a company is unable to obtain a company reading during any billing period for

which such company reading was scheduled to be made, the company shall provide the residential customer with a card requesting an immediate customer reading, instructing the customer that he may provide such customer reading to the company, and warning the customer that if no customer reading is received by the company in time to be used in preparing the bill (such time limit to be specified on the notice), an estimated bill will be issued. The company shall provide the customer with instructions for furnishing the customer reading to the company. The company may provide for customer readings by mail or by telephone or by both methods.

3. When a company issues estimated bills to a customer for two consecutive billing periods, the company shall send to the customer through the mails, a notice which bears the legend "IMPORTANT NOTICE" and which informs the customer that it is imperative that the company obtain an actual reading in order to prevent error and hardship. The notice shall inform the customer of the next schedule visit by a company representative in order to allow the customer to make arrangements for a company reading, if the customer chooses, or to allow the customer to make a customer reading on the same date.

D. Amortization agreements.

1. If a customer receives an actual bill which follows one or more estimated bills, and the amount of the actual bill because of the inaccuracy of prior estimation is more than twenty-five percent larger than the amount of the prior estimated bill, the company shall upon order of the Public Utilities Control Authority arrange for amortization of the excess amount of the bill in equal installments at a rate such that the bill will be fully amortized over a period of not less than equal duration to the duration of the period during which no actual reading was taken. In cases where customers request an arrangement for amortization of bills, the companies shall advise the customer in writing to contact the Public Utilities Control Authority for an order approving an amortization arrangement.

2. Companies shall make known to their customers the availability of amortization agreements under this section.

(Effective June 7, 1978)