



## ***City of McDonough***

### ***Water Leak Adjustment Policy***

#### **PURPOSE**

The City of McDonough understands that Water/Sewer customers may experience higher than normal water/sewer bills due to an unexplained increase in water consumption or unintentional water loss caused by broken and/or malfunctioning plumbing fixtures.

The Water Leak Adjustment Policy is intended to govern the circumstances for making reasonable adjustments to a customer's account that experience exorbitant water/sewer bills. This policy is not intended to compensate the customer for the entire amount of the increased water bill, as there is a cost associated with delivering safe, potable water to consumers. And the City of McDonough deems it appropriate that neither customers nor the city absorbs the entire cost of an increased water bill resulting from a leak or unexplained water consumption.

In making a determination for a water leak adjustment, the City shall take into consideration the cause of the water loss and/or increased consumption. This policy defines the circumstances under which adjustments may be applicable, establishes repair expectations and ensures the consistent application of leak adjustments to accounts.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY**

For the purpose of providing adequate water supply for the designated service area, the City of McDonough Water Distribution Department is responsible for maintaining and repairing water lines to the meter. If a leak occurs in a city-maintained line, the City is responsible for repairing the leak and absorbing the cost for lost water.

The homeowner and/or customer is obligated to keep all plumbing and pipes on the property-side of the meter in good working order and must make reasonable efforts to locate a leak and initiate repairs within 30 days of notification. Failure to repair the leak within the 30-day period may forfeit the customer's right to a leak adjustment.

The City of McDonough **is not** responsible for any expenses incurred in determining if a leak is present or for the cost of repairing a leak on the property-side of the meter.

#### **POTENTIAL LEAK NOTIFICATION**

The City of McDonough Utility Billing Department or the water/sewer customer may be notified when a potential leak is suspected or realized. Notification of a potential leak may include, but not be limited to, a billing statement, a notice left at the property, or communication between the City of McDonough Customer Service Representative and the customer.

#### **ACCOUNT NOTATION**

City of McDonough Customer Service Representative shall add notes to an account detailing the communication with the account holder or homeowner concerning a potential leak or significantly higher water bill. Notations should include the date customer realized the potential leak or was notified by City of McDonough representative or, any comments concerning watering lawn, filling swimming pool, new sod/grass, number of residents increased, victim of vandalism, etc.



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#### **REPAIR DOCUMENTATION**

The adjustment will be considered after all repairs have been made and documentation of the repair is submitted to a City of McDonough Customer Service Representative. Documentation may include a plumber's invoice, receipt for items purchased for the repair, a written statement from the customer with details of the repair, or other proof confirming the leak was repaired. The City's reporting system shall be utilized to verify no other leaks exist. Documentation must be received by the Customer Service Department within ninety (90) days of repair for an adjustment to be considered.

All documentation will be carefully reviewed to ensure policy guidelines are met.

#### **ADJUSTMENT PERIOD**

During any 12-month period, an account is eligible to receive a total of three (3) consecutive months of water and/or sewer adjustment for a leak.

Depending on the date of the leak and/or repair, a leak may crossover into the month following the repair. Notations are made to the account indicating additional adjustments may be necessary based on the date of the repair.

#### **ADJUSTMENT POSTING**

Once approved, customers should allow up to thirty (30) days for the adjustment to be posted to the account, as staff must determine if there has been a decrease in usage since the leak was repaired. This waiting period serves as an advantage for the customer as it ensures the following: (1) that the leak was properly repaired and (2) that the City has the correct time frame to apply the adjustment.

#### **APPROVAL PROCESS**

Based on the guidelines included in this policy, the Finance Director or his/her designee shall be authorized to approve equitable water leak adjustments for water/sewer customers.

Once the adjustment has been determined and calculated, the customer will be notified of adjustment status. If an adjustment request is denied the customer may appeal this decision to the City Administrator.

#### **ADJUSTMENT AMOUNT - Example**

Adjustments will be calculated based on the average of the previous 12 months billings. This calculation shall include the months of the increased water bill(s). The average monthly bill will be subtracted from the months reflecting the increase. (*See example*)

- Increased bill \$142.26
- Monthly average \$ 85.48

\$142.26

-\$85.48

\$56.78 amount of adjustment

If the customer has both water and sewer service, the adjusted amount shall be divided by two (2); with \$28.39 adjusted for each service.



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In the event that a customer has less than a 12-month usage history, the months of service, including the months with the increased consumption and the cost for the consumption of 3,000 gallons of water are used for determining the monthly average.

The cost of the repair has no bearing on whether a leak adjustment will be granted or the amount of the adjustment.

#### **SEWER ONLY ADJUSTMENTS**

##### **SWIMMING POOLS - SEWER ADJUSTMENTS**

At the request of the account holder, an adjustment to **sewer charges only** will be considered for filling swimming pools one (1) time per year and is based on the 12-month average of the sewerage billing history.

No adjustment will be made for swimming pools that are refilled due to leaks. And, no adjustments will be made on the water consumption for swimming pools filled.

##### **LANDSCAPING AND OR SOD – SEWER ADJUSTMENTS**

**Sewer only** adjustments shall be considered for watering **NEW** sod or landscaping. Documentation of the installation/planting sod, grass or landscaping, and watering instructions must be submitted when requesting an adjustment. Sewer adjustments for watering **NEW** sod, grass or landscaping may not exceed 3 months.

Sewer adjustments are based on the 12-month average for sewer usage. **NO** adjustments will be made on **water consumption** for watering sod and/or landscape.

#### **LATE FEES/PENALTIES**

The City of McDonough **will not** extend the due date while a leak adjustment is under review. To avoid a late fee/penalty, the customer must make a payment equivalent to a 12-month billing average while an adjustment is under consideration. If no payment is made, no adjustment will be made to the late fee/ penalties.

#### **ADJUSTMENT REVERSAL**

Any repairs not adequately repaired may be just cause to reverse the adjustment until all leaks are repaired and consumption is monitored for a minimum of three (3) months.

Leak adjustments shall be reversed if Information submitted is proven to be false. The adjusted amount will be posted back to the account.

#### **INCREASED CONSUMPTION NOT COVERED**

The following circumstances are not covered under the Water Leak Adjustment Policy

- Leak **not** repaired within 30 days of notification or detection of leak
- Outside faucets not turned off properly
- Ineffective repairs which results in continued high consumption
- Toilets that have been turned off but not repaired
- Irrigation system leaks due to damage sprinkler heads, faulty valves, etc.
- Seasonal usage such as watering of sod, gardening, washing vehicles
- Increased consumption due to theft, vandalism, negligence, construction damage



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- Meter tampering or water turned on/off by anyone other than a City of McDonough employee
- Three (3) leak adjustments were issued within the past 12 months for the same account
- Consumption at an unoccupied or vacant properties