

Your Water & Wastewater Service



Florida Public Service Commission

The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for the economic regulation of the state's investor-owned water and/or wastewater utilities (IOUs), which requires setting just and reasonable rates and assuring adequate service.

Environmental regulations, including water withdrawal permits, sewage disposal, and health and safety standards are enforced by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Water Management Districts, and the local county health agencies.

To assist customers, this brochure [required by PSC Rule 25-30.310(3), F.A.C.] explains some of the policies and procedures for water and/or wastewater IOUs regulated by the PSC.

Initiation of Water & Wastewater Service

Each utility is required to provide service to anyone in its service area who makes proper application. A copy of the utility's PSC-approved tariff, containing all rate schedules, a schedule of charges, and its rules and regulations, must be available in the utility's office for public inspection.



How to Contact the PSC

If customers have a problem regarding service, billing, or rates, they should first attempt to resolve it with the utility. After allowing the utility adequate time to correct the problem, unsatisfied customers may contact the PSC's Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach by calling 1-800-342-3552, faxing 1-800-511-0809, emailing contact@psc.state.fl.us, or writing:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850



Customer Deposits

When a customer applies for water or wastewater service, the utility can ask the customer to establish credit.

A customer can do this by:

- ◆ furnishing a cash deposit,
- ◆ finding a satisfactory guarantor to secure bill payments,
- ◆ producing an irrevocable letter of credit from a bank, or
- ◆ providing a surety bond.

Each utility requiring customer deposits must pay a minimum of 2 percent interest per year on the deposit. After a residential customer has established a satisfactory payment record and has had continuous service for 23 months, the utility must refund the customer's deposit. A satisfactory payment record is established when the customer has not, in the preceding 12 months:

- ◆ made more than one late bill payment,
- ◆ paid with a check refused by a bank,
- ◆ been disconnected for nonpayment,
- ◆ tampered with the meter at any time, or
- ◆ used service in a fraudulent or unauthorized manner at any time.

Under certain circumstances, such as repeated late bill payments or continued bills exceeding the current deposit amount, the company may require an additional or new deposit. However, the requested deposit amount cannot exceed the average charge for two billing periods. The company must give 30 days written notice of an additional deposit request.

When an account is closed, the deposit can be credited to the final bill and any balance must be refunded to the customer within 15 days.

Rate Structure

Most water and wastewater rates include a *base facility charge* and a *gallage charge*. The *base facility charge* is a flat monthly charge designed to recover the fixed costs of utility service, regardless of con-

sumption. The *gallage charge* recovers variable costs associated with the electricity, chemicals, and labor for the production and distribution of water service and for the removal, treatment, and disposal of wastewater. The gallage charge is assessed for each 1,000 gallons or 100 cubic feet of water that is registered on the customer's meter.

Some water utilities have an inclining block rate structure that is designed to encourage water conservation. The water is priced so that the cost per 1,000 gallons over a certain threshold is greater than the cost of usage below that threshold.

Recognizing that all of the water used by residential customers is not returned to the wastewater collection system, a billing consumption maximum (or cap), normally between 6,000 and 10,000 gallons, is set. Any water consumption over that amount is generally considered as irrigation use and is, therefore, not returned to the wastewater system.

Billing Practices

The utility is required to read the customer's meter and send bills at regular intervals. Most utilities bill monthly for service; however, a few utilities bill bimonthly or quarterly. The customer has 20 days from the postmark date to pay the bill. If payment is not made by the due date on the bill, service may be discontinued.

A company must notify the customer in writing that the account is delinquent and subject to service interruption. The notice should allow the customer at least 5 business days to pay the account balance. Service for bill nonpayment may not be discontinued between 12 noon on a Friday and 8:00 a.m. the following Monday or between 12 noon on the day before a holiday and 8:00 a.m. the next working day. Service cannot be discontinued or withheld because a previous occupant did not pay the bill.

Customers have the right to request information on the utility's meter reading and bill computing practices and on the rates applicable to their class of service. The utility is required to help customers obtain the best rate

A CUSTOMER CAN HAVE A
PSC REPRESENTATIVE
OBSERVE AND/OR
SUPERVISE ANY
BENCH TESTS.



Meter Problems

A customer who suspects that the water meter is not accurately measuring water consumption may request a meter field test, performed by the utility free of charge. To witness the field test, customers should make an appointment with the utility. If the field test results are not satisfactory, the customer can make a written request for a bench test. The utility is allowed to charge a fee to defray the cost of the test and is required to provide the customer with a written report of the test results.

Leaks

Faucet and/or pipe leaks are common and can increase a utility bill. It is important to have leaks repaired because the customer, not the utility company, is responsible for any charges related to leaks on the customer's side of the water meter. The utility is not obligated to show how the water was consumed once it has passed through the meter. The company is obligated to make sure the meter is working accurately.

Service Interruptions

The utility must notify customers prior to a scheduled interruption. Sometimes, service is interrupted due to circumstances beyond the utility's control. The utility is not required to notify customers when that happens, but the utility is obligated to restore service as soon as possible.