

CHAPTER 24. SUBSTANTIVE RULES APPLICABLE TO WATER AND SEWER SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Subchapter I. WATER UTILITY SUBMETERING AND ALLOCATION.

§24.283. Billing.

- (a) **Monthly billing of total charges.** The owner shall bill the tenant each month for the total charges calculated under §24.281 of this title (relating to Charges and Calculations). If it is permitted in the rental agreement, an occupant or occupants who are not residing in the rental unit for a period longer than 30 days may be excluded from the occupancy calculation and from paying a water and sewer bill for that period.
- (b) **Rendering bill.**
 - (1) Allocated bills shall be rendered as promptly as possible after the owner receives the retail public utility bill.
 - (2) Submeter bills shall be rendered as promptly as possible after the owner receives the retail public utility bill or according to the time schedule in the rental agreement if the owner is billing using the retail public utility's rate.
- (c) **Submeter reading schedule.** Submeters or point-of-use submeters shall be read within three days of the scheduled reading date of the retail public utility's master meter or according to the schedule in the rental agreement if the owner is billing using the retail public utility's rate.
- (d) **Billing period.**
 - (1) Allocated bills shall be rendered for the same billing period as that of the retail public utility, generally monthly, unless service is provided for less than that period.
 - (2) Submeter bills shall be rendered for the same billing period as that of the retail public utility, generally monthly, unless service is provided for less than that period. If the owner uses the retail public utility's actual rate, the billing period may be an alternate billing period specified in the rental agreement.
- (e) **Multi-item bill.** If issued on a multi-item bill, charges for submetered or allocated utility service must be separate and distinct from any other charges on the bill.
- (f) **Information on bill.** The bill must clearly state that the utility service is submetered or allocated, as applicable, and must include all of the following:
 - (1) total amount due for submetered or allocated water;
 - (2) total amount due for submetered or allocated wastewater;
 - (3) total amount due for dwelling unit base charge(s) or customer service charge(s) or both, if applicable;
 - (4) total amount due for water or wastewater usage, if applicable;
 - (5) the name of the retail public utility and a statement that the bill is not from the retail public utility;
 - (6) name and address of the tenant to whom the bill is applicable;
 - (7) name of the firm rendering the bill and the name or title, address, and telephone number of the firm or person to be contacted in case of a billing dispute; and
 - (8) name, address, and telephone number of the party to whom payment is to be made.
- (g) **Information on submetered service.** In addition to the information required in subsection (f) of this section, a bill for submetered service must include all of the following:
 - (1) the total number of gallons, liters, or cubic feet submetered or measured by point-of-use submeters;
 - (2) the cost per gallon, liter, or cubic foot for each service provided; and
 - (3) total amount due for a service charge charged by an owner of a manufactured home rental community, if applicable.

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- (h) **Due date.** The due date on the bill may not be less than 16 days after it is mailed or hand delivered to the tenant, unless the due date falls on a federal holiday or weekend, in which case the following work day will be the due date. The owner shall record the date the bill is mailed or hand delivered. A payment is delinquent if not received by the due date.
- (i) **Estimated bill.** An estimated bill may be rendered if a master meter, submeter, or point-of-use submeter has been tampered with, cannot be read, or is out of order; and in such case, the bill must be distinctly marked as an estimate and the subsequent bill must reflect an adjustment for actual charges.
- (j) **Payment by tenant.** Unless utility bills are paid to a third-party billing company on behalf of the owner, or unless clearly designated by the tenant, payment must be applied first to rent and then to utilities.
- (k) **Overbilling and underbilling.** If a bill is issued and subsequently found to be in error, the owner shall calculate a billing adjustment. If the tenant is due a refund, an adjustment must be calculated for all of that tenant's bills that included overcharges. If the overbilling or underbilling affects all tenants, an adjustment must be calculated for all of the tenants' bills. If the tenant was undercharged, and the cause was not due to submeter or point-of-use submeter error, the owner may calculate an adjustment for bills issued in the previous six months. If the total undercharge is \$25 or more, the owner shall offer the tenant a deferred payment plan option, for the same length of time as that of the underbilling. Adjustments for usage by a previous tenant may not be back billed to a current tenant.
- (l) **Disputed bills.** In the event of a dispute between a tenant and an owner regarding any bill, the owner shall investigate the matter and report the results of the investigation to the tenant in writing. The investigation and report must be completed within 30 days from the date the tenant gives written notification of the dispute to the owner.
- (m) **Late fee.** A one-time penalty not to exceed 5% may be applied to delinquent accounts. If such a penalty is applied, the bill must indicate the amount due if the late penalty is incurred. No late penalty may be applied unless agreed to by the tenant in a written lease that states the percentage amount of such late penalty.