

DOCKET U-144155

(September 4, 2015)

Revised DRAFT Rules Governing Corrective Bills

WAC 480-90-178 and WAC 480-100-178

(5) Corrected Bills:

(a) Upon discovery of an under-billing or over-billing resulting from a meter failure, a meter malfunction, a meter with unassigned energy usage, or any other billing error, a utility must issue a corrected bill to a customer to recover or refund billed amounts. The utility must use the rate schedule in effect at the time of each affected billing period covered by the corrected bill. The utility must issue the corrected bill within 60 days from the date the utility discovered the under- or over-billing. The utility must issue the corrected bill within 60 days from the date the utility discovered the under- or over-billing. However, except as provided for in subsection (7), when a utility discovers that it has billed a customer incorrectly, it may not seek to collect from that customer for any period more than six months prior to the date it discovers the error.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection (5):

(i) A meter failure or malfunction is defined as: a mechanical malfunction or failure that prevents the meter or any ancillary data collection or transmission device from registering or transmitting the actual amount of energy used by the customer. A meter failure or malfunction includes, but is not limited to a stopped meter, a meter that is faster or slower than the metering tolerance specified in WAC 480-90-338¹, or an erratic meter.

(ii) For the purpose of this rule, unassigned energy usage meter is defined as a meter that correctly records and transmits energy usage but does not have a customer assigned to the account.

(iii) For the purpose of this rule, a billing error is defined as any error which results in incorrect charges to the customer.

(c) A utility must develop and maintain procedures for identifying and repairing or replacing meters that are not functioning correctly and identifying meter usage from unidentified usage meters. The procedures shall address steps taken to preclude corrected bills for under-billing errors that exceed six months in duration. The initial plan delineating the procedures must be filed with the commission by May 1, 2016.

¹ WAC 480-100-338 for electric.

If the utility makes subsequent changes to the plan, the modified plan must be filed within 30 days of any changes. The plan must include, at a minimum:

- (i) Procedures to prevent billing errors for, but not limited to, billing errors resulting from incorrect prorated bill, mislabeled meter base, incorrectly installed meter, incorrect billing rate schedule, or incorrect billing multiplier.
- (ii) Procedures for investigating meter errors including, but not limited to, those created by stopped, slowed, and erratic usage meters.
- (iii) Procedures for investigating meter usage from unidentified usage meters.

(6) For the purpose of this rule, a corrected bill may take the form of a newly issued bill or may be reflected as a line item adjustment on a subsequent monthly bill. When a corrected bill is issued, the utility must provide the following information on the corrected bill or in a letter sent to the customer:

- (a) The reason for the bill correction;
- (b) A breakdown of the bill correction for each month included in the corrected bill;
- (c) The total amount of the bill correction that is due and payable;
- (d) The time period covered by the bill correction; and
- (e) The actions taken to eliminate the cause of the bill correction.
- (f) An explanation of the availability of payment arrangements in accordance with WAC 480-90-138(1)², Payment arrangements.

(7) Corrected bills issued for the following purposes are exempt from the provisions of section (5)(a):

- (a) Meter failure or malfunction or billing error related to customer tampering with the utility's property, use of the utility's service through an illegal connection, or the customer fraudulently obtaining service.
- (b) An estimated meter read made in accordance with subsection (1)(i) is not considered a meter failure or malfunction or a billing error. A bill true-up based on an actual meter reading after one or more estimated bills is not considered a corrected bill for purpose of subsections (5)(a).

² WAC 480-100-138(1) for electric.