

City of Benton Harbor (COBH)

Leak Policy

The City of Benton Harbor's Utility Service Payment Center is to provide timely billing and collections of water, sewer, refuse, and capital improvement revenue.

The need to adjust a utility bill may become evident by a customer complaint of excessive billing or leakage on the customer side of the meter that has not entered the municipal sanitary sewer system. Customer can complete a water dispute form (BHU credit/collection Po/pro 2012). In accordance with the City's Ordinance, it is the customer's responsibility to keep his/her plumbing system in good working order.

The Water Department will first determine that the meter has been read properly and in good working condition. If an investigation of the meter record establishes that it was properly read, the bill will remain valid and payable.

If the customer questions the accuracy of the meter, he/she may pay the utility bill in question, in addition to a testing fee at a rate to be set by the City. The Utility Service Department will remove the meter and have it tested in accordance with guidelines established for used meters by the American Water Works Association (AWWA). If the meter accurately tests, the customer forfeits the meter testing fee. If the meter does not meet AWWA accuracy standards, the City shall refund the testing fee and replace the meter at the City's cost.

If an adjustment of the customer's bill is warranted, the amount of the bill will be determined based upon an average usage of your billings (5 months).

Adjustments must be requested within 30 days of the date of the water bill in question.

The City shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not contested within 30 days from the billing date or consistently high each month due to any unrepaired leaks.

ALL requests for billing adjustments must be received in writing or in person during regular business hours. A written form furnished by the COBH for each adjustment detailing the information on the leak and its repairs.

The City of Benton Harbor will allow one (1) adjustment, per customer, during the life of the metered service for qualifying water leaks. In order to qualify for the adjustment, the account holder **must**:

1. NOT have received a previous adjustment
2. NOT received an adjustment for an irrigation leak (any leaks associated with irrigation system are not eligible—watering).
3. NOT received an adjustment for builders for new construction or rehabs.
4. NOT received an adjustment for filling of swimming pools.
5. No water from the leak has entered the sanitary system (toilets, dripping faucets, etc.)
6. Ensure immediate steps were taken, after detection of the leak, to prevent further loss of water.
7. Provide proof of the repair (receipts for any materials or services related to that repair).

Billing Adjustment

The City of Benton Harbor may consider a utility billing adjustment for the following reasons ONLY:

- Clerical billing or reading error on part of the City;
- Proven malfunction of the water meter; and
- Leak adjustment in accordance with approved policy.

When a meter is read and the usage is at least 200% larger than normal, the City will issue a work order and tag the customer, as a courtesy. If the utility bill continues to increase, without decreasing throughout several meter reading cycles, it will be assumed that the customer may have a leak.

If the leak is determined to be the customer's responsibility, they should repair the leak and submit documentation of the repair (including receipts for labor, supplies and equipment) to the City offices along with completed billing **Leak Adjustment Request Form**. Once documentation has been reviewed and approved, the documentation will be processed immediately and adjustment made, if merited.

The amount and time period to which the adjustment can be applied varies depending on the nature of the leak. Any request for leak adjustments must be made within thirty (30) days of leak repair (**keep in mind repairs must be made prior to adjustment**). If you have any questions, call City Hall at 269-927-8400.

Leaks in the Municipal Water System may be from the following sources:

- At fire hydrant
- At water meters
- In interior waterlines (homeowners are responsible for any leaks found after the meter connection)
- In the waterlines from the meter to the house where meter pits are installed (City is responsible from the curb stop/external shut-off to meter pit, homeowner is responsible for meter pit to the home and home interior)
- In distribution lines from the curb stop/external shut-off to the meter (also known as water lead these repairs are the homeowner's responsibility)
- In transmission lines (these repairs are the City's responsibility)

Sec. 44-21. Ownership of service connection.

All rights, title and ownership to the street portion of the water service, including the corporation cock, curb cock, service box and service pipe shall be vested in the city. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 302.5; Code 1972, § 2.45)

Sec. 44-22. Maintenance of service.

Every person having service from the water distribution system shall at his own cost and expense keep in repair that portion of the service between the service box and the meter. In case the service be permitted to remain out of repair, the division of water may shut off the water from the premises served. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 303.1; Code 1972, § 2.46)

Meter Test

Customers may request a test of the water meter. If the meter reading is accurate, a testing fee will be charged (please see the Leak Adjustment Policy for further information on meter testing).

Sec. 44-29. Testing meter.

The accuracy of the water meter on any premises will be tested by the division of water upon written request of the owner accompanied by a fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00). If on such test the meter shall be found to register over four (4) percent more water than actually passes through it another meter will be substituted therefor and the fee will be refunded to the owner and the water bill may be adjusted in such manner as may be fair and just. If on such test the meter shall be found to register less than four (4) percent more water than actually passes through it, the fee will not be refunded and actual costs for removal, testing and resetting will be added. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 304.7; Code 1972, § 2.53; Ord. No. 546-86, 3-10-86)

Meter Leaks

The City of Benton may consider a utility adjustment(s) for leaks at meter if it is deemed to be on the City (i.e. worn washers, spuds not tightened, etc.). All other leaks will be the responsibility of customer and/or property owner.

Sec. 44-25. Meter location.

All water meters must be set in a clean, dry, sanitary place which is easily accessible as determined by the city manager. They will not be allowed in closets, or other places that are kept locked or in coal bins, crawl spaces, or other places difficult of access. Where practical meters shall be installed within the building served but where this is impracticable, meter pits shall be built in accordance with plans and specifications furnished by the division of water. The cost of construction of meter pits shall be borne by the consumer. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 304.3; Code 1972, § 2.49; Ord. No. 546-86, 3-10-86)

Sec. 44-27. Title to meter

Water meters will be furnished by the division of water at cost to the consumer and all rights, title and ownership of the meter shall be vested in the city. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 304.5; Code 1972, § 2.51; Ord. No. 546-86, 3-10-86)

Sec. 44-28. Damage to meter.

The city will maintain all water meters and make all necessary replacements caused by wear through normal usage, but the consumer will be held responsible for care and protection of the meter from freezing or damage by hot water and from injury by any person, and any damage which may occur to any water meter due to the carelessness or neglect of the tenant, owner or agent of the property on which the water meter is placed shall be paid for by such person upon presentation of a statement of damages. (Gen. Code 1946, Ch. 5, § 304.6; Code 1972, § 2.52)

For any adjustments made, there shall be no cash refund to the customer. A credit will be applied to your utility account when an adjustment is warranted.

Any dispute of a meter reading does not waive your responsibility to pay a utility bill by its due date.

Payment Arrangements

The City of Benton Harbor may consider payment arrangements for customers with high usage that do not qualify for an adjustment(s) (i.e. running toilets, leaking bathroom faucet, etc.), if leak is repaired.

These arrangements could potentially be extended beyond the twelve (12) month period based on the customer's ability to maintain current billings without creating a hardship. However, if the terms of the arrangements are not met, the account will be subject to normal procedures for delinquent accounts.

No Repair Receipt/Documentation Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Account Number _____

Please explain where your water line broke (attach additional pages if necessary)

Briefly describe the repair made

If repair parts were used for this repair or a commercial establishment performed the repair why are receipts not available?

Customer Signature

Date

**APPLICATION FOR LEAK ADJUSTMENT
CREDIT**

Name _____ Date _____

Service Address _____

Customer Phone Number _____

Alternate Phone Number (optional) _____

Customer Account Number _____

Date you first noticed your leak: _____ Date the leak was repaired: _____

Where was the leak located? (Please indicate below)

- Inside the house
- Between the house and the water meter
- In the irrigation system
- Other (specify) _____

Have you ever received a previous leak adjustment?

- Yes
- No

Have you attached a receipt/documentation for the leak repairs?

- Yes
- No**

**Please complete the "No Repair Receipt/Documentation" form enclosed with this application.

*Note: Copies of receipts documenting the repair or a "No Repair Receipt/Documentation" form **MUST** be returned with your completed application, or the application will be returned to you.*

Are you a tenant at this property?

- Yes
- No

Landlord's Name _____

Landlord's mailing address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Please describe how your leak was identified or provide any additional facts you think might be helpful (or attach an extra page)

How much is your total water bill? _____

We suggest that you pay at least the amount of your "average" bill at this time and pay the current amount for any future bills until the adjustment has been processed including the administrative fee. The balance due after your Leak Adjustment will typically be higher than your usual bill amount.

REQUEST FOR BILLING ADJUSTMENT CREDIT

Name _____ Date _____

Service Address _____

Daytime Phone _____

Alternate Phone Number (optional) _____

Customer Account Number _____

REASON FOR REQUESTING BILLING ADJUSTMENT:

- Clerical Billing Error
 - Suspected Meter Malfunction*
 - Water Leak**
 - Other (please explain) _____
-
-

** For Suspected Meter Malfunction, Water Department will contact you regarding testing and/or replacement.*

***For Water Leak, please complete an Application for Leak Adjustment Form*

Have you ever received a billing adjustment?

- Yes
- No

For Leaks:

Have you attached a receipt/documentation for the leak repair(s)?

- Yes
- No**

***If "No", please complete the "No Repair Receipt/Documentation" form and "Application for Leak Adjustment" form and submit with this application.*

Note: Copies of receipts documenting the repair or a "No Repair Receipt/Documentation"

form ***MUST*** be returned with your completed application, or the application will be returned to you.

Are you a tenant at this property?

- Yes
- No

Landlord's Name _____

Landlord's Mailing Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

How much is your total water bill? _____

We suggest that you pay at least the amount of your "average" bill at this time and pay the current amount for any future bills until the adjustment has been processed including the administrative fee. The balance due after your Leak Adjustment will typically be higher than your usual bill amount.

By signing this request, I certify that I understand the terms and conditions of the city of Benton Harbor Leak Adjustment Policy.

Customer Name

Printed Name

Date

Note:

If you haven't received a water bill through the date your leak was repaired, we will process your claim after your next bill. It takes an average of thirty (30) days to process customer Leak Adjustment claims. Your patience during this process will be appreciated. If you qualify, a pay delay will be put on your account so you will not receive any delinquency notices while we process your claim. Any and all adjustments will be based on the average of the customer's account over a twelve (12) month period.

If you have any questions, please call 269-927-8400

Plumbers near Benton Harbor, MI

Town & County Plumbing

2179 Plaza Dr. BH

269-332-0591

Home Comforts Experts

269-983-0219

City Plumbing & Heating

407 State St. St Joe MI

269-932-9113

John's Plumbing

9018 Dwight Boyer Rd

269-463-7872

Flagel & Morgan Plumbing & Heating

335 Urbandale Ave BH

269-927-4166

Advanced Plumbing

5796 Cleveland Rd Stevensville

269-932-3500

If the customer is renting and/or leasing a property, they may want to contact the property owner to make the necessary repairs.