



JUNE 2023

## Electric Billing Practices and Procedures and other disclosures

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*Note: This informational sheet includes disclosures required by state and local laws and is consistent with terms and conditions set forth in the settlement agreement in *Deien v. Seattle City Light*, Case No. 19-2-21999-8 SEA. Additional information is available on our website ([www.seattle.gov/city-light](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light)) or by calling the Contact Center (206-684-3000).*

### **DEPOSITS & CREDIT**

Seattle City Light does not require a deposit or credit to establish service.

### **DEPOSITS FOR CONSTRUCTION**

For installations of electric services estimated to be equal to or less than \$50,000 (looped radial) or \$100,000 (network), charges must be paid prior to the commencement of work. For installations valuing more than those amounts, actual time and material costs will be billed, and they require advance payment of 20% of the total estimate before work begins. Refer to City Light's Service Installations Department Policies and Procedures ([clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322647](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322647)) for additional details.

### **RATES & CHARGES**

Retail rates are published on our website by service area classification:

- Residential rates - [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/rates](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/rates)
- Business rates - [www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/business-billing-and-account-information/business-rates](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/business-billing-and-account-information/business-rates)

Additional charges can be found in the following City Light Department Policies and Procedures (DPP):

- Account Service Charges DPP - [clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/321961](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/321961)
- Credit and Collection DPP - [clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322497](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322497)
- Advanced Metering opt-out DPP - [clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/319983](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/319983)
- Service Installations DPP - [clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322647](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322647)
- Public Electric Vehicle Charging Stations DPP - [clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322541](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322541)

## SETTING OF RATES & NOTICES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Rates are established by the Seattle City Council ([www.seattle.gov/council](http://www.seattle.gov/council)), whereby rates are generally reviewed and approved every two years. To receive notices of City Council public hearings including public meetings where electric utility rates are considered and approved, sign up to receive agendas ([www.seattle.gov/council/committees](http://www.seattle.gov/council/committees)). You may also:

- View City Council's calendar - [www.seattle.gov/council/calendar](http://www.seattle.gov/council/calendar)
- Subscribe to receive calendar updates - [eventactions.com/eventactions/seattle-city-council#/subscribe](http://eventactions.com/eventactions/seattle-city-council#/subscribe)
- Watch coverage of regularly scheduled meetings - [www.seattle.gov/council/watch-council-live](http://www.seattle.gov/council/watch-council-live)
- Submit public comments - [www.seattle.gov/cityclerk/agendas-and-legislative-resources/city-council-agendas/public-comment-guide](http://www.seattle.gov/cityclerk/agendas-and-legislative-resources/city-council-agendas/public-comment-guide)

## BILLING RESPONSIBILITY AND STARTING/STOPPING SERVICE

City Light holds customers named on the account, co-applicants, and adults receiving electric services in a household (e.g., spouse, domestic partner, roommates) as financially responsible parties for electric bills. It is the customer's responsibility to ensure that the meter billed is the meter serving their home.

Property owners and tenants are equally responsible for notifying City Light within 10 business days of any changes in occupancy and/or ownership. Residential and business customers can call our Contact Center at (206) 684-3000, submit a request through City Light's online portal ([myutilities.seattle.gov/](http://myutilities.seattle.gov/)), or visit one of our payment centers in person to start or stop service. Property owners and their agents may start and stop services for tenants on our Landlord, Owner, Agent portal ([www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/landlord-owner-agents](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/landlord-owner-agents)). Landlords may be held responsible for all or part of a delinquent tenant account if we are not properly notified tenancy changes.

City Light complies with the City of Seattle Identity Theft Protection Program. When you request service, you must verify your identity either through an online check or by showing identification at one of our payment centers. If a property owner submits information for a tenant through our Landlord, Owner Agent portal, they must attest that they have verified your identity. Service accounts will not be opened without acceptable proof of identity.

## BILLING STATEMENTS, PAYMENTS, AND DISPUTES

**Statements:** Billing statements are issued on either a monthly or, more commonly, a bi-monthly basis. We publish information on our website on how to read your bill and publish tips through social media or within the mailed billing statement. If you have questions on how to read your bill, please call the Contact Center or review the information on our webpage:

- Residential - [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/understanding-my-bill](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/understanding-my-bill)
- Business - [www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/business-billing-and-account-information](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/business-solutions/business-billing-and-account-information)

You may choose to receive a paper bill or to receive it electronically. The due date is clearly stated on the billing statement and the charges become delinquent thereafter.

**Payments:** You can make a payment in several ways:

- In person at one of our customer service centers - [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-centers](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-centers)
- Through the mail - City of Seattle, PO Box 35178, Seattle, WA 98124-5178
- Through a bill pay service (like your bank)
- Over the phone\* - 206-684-3000
- Through the City of Seattle Utility Services Website - [myutilities.seattle.gov/](http://myutilities.seattle.gov/)

Creating an account on our Utility Services Website offers many benefits, including account access, make simple changes to your contact information, set up automatic payments, make one-time payments, control your billing preferences, and request account connection or disconnection.

Payments are applied to the oldest outstanding debts first.

*\*If you call our Contact Center and elect to make a payment with a live agent, you will be transferred to an outside firm to process your payment. This is done to protect your private information.*

**Dispute a Bill:** If you have reason to question charges or want to dispute a bill, please call our Contact Center at 206-684-3000. If your charges need further review, the Contact Center may refer you to a Specialized Customer Care Team who can analyze your power usage and charges, gather technical expertise, and work with you to resolve your concern.

If a billing issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, the matter is eligible for review through our progressive dispute resolution process, which includes a four-level review, the final of which is with Seattle City Light's Hearing Examiner. Detailed information on this process is available in the Customer Dispute Resolution and Utility Hearing Officer DPP ([clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/321349](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/321349)). There are time limitations on the ability to file with the Hearing Examiner after the third-level review is complete. Please review the information on our website regarding disputes ([www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information)) and call our Contact Center to initiate the first level review of your account.

## **PAYMENT PLANS**

If you cannot pay a bill on time or have a past due balance, please contact us immediately. We can help you make a payment plan. Short-term payment plans can also be made through our customer service portal. Long-term payment plans can be made through discussions with a customer service or credit representative. Call our Contact Center or visit [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/make-payment-arrangements](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/make-payment-arrangements).

## **BUDGET BILLING**

Budget Billing is an optional payment plan that, based on a customer's last 12 months of usage, spreads estimated annual utility charges evenly over an entire year so that a customer pays the same amount every bill. At the end of the plan year, charges will be adjusted to align with actual usage and a new payment amount will be set for the upcoming year. Please call the Contact Center to sign up for this optional plan.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

We have several programs designed to assist you if you have trouble paying your bill. The programs are described below; for more details, please call the Contact Center or visit our website [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-assistance-programs](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-assistance-programs).

For long-term assistance, our **Utility Discount Program** offers a 60% discount on electric service. Depending on your address, you may also be eligible for a credit on your account for Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) services such as water, sewer, and garbage, if these charges are included in your rent and you do not have an SPU account that you pay directly. Visit [www.seattle.gov/UDP](http://www.seattle.gov/UDP) to apply.

We also offer **Emergency Bill Assistance** to help with needs on an existing balance. Grants may be given up to two times per year, up to \$500 each. **Project Share** is a program funded by donations and offers up to \$250 one-time assistance for existing balances. Call 206-684-3688 to see if you qualify for either of these programs.

We partner with several community-based organizations to apply **Federal Energy Assistance** to utility bills. These programs are need-based and most have an application and eligibility requirements. You can apply for assistance from multiple programs. Please contact the community-based organizations directly and ask about assistance. For a current list of organizations, call the Contact Center or visit [www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-assistance-programs#federalenergyassistanceprogram](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/residential-services/billing-information/payment-assistance-programs#federalenergyassistanceprogram)

There may be additional federal or state funds available for customers impacted by Covid-19. If these funds become available, they will be distributed in accordance with the requirements of the program. Information and requirements for these programs are determined by the funding entity (e.g., the state of Washington) at the time the program is released. To be eligible for these funds, you may be required to participate in another discount program, such as the Utility Discount Program.

## ESTIMATED BILLS

The utility bills customers based on actual reads recorded by electric meters that are predominantly Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters. AMI meters are programmed to automatically send consumption data to the utility on a regular basis, eliminating the need to send a meter reader to the property. However, in some circumstances City Light may need to estimate consumption. Examples include:

- Shortage of staff available to read a non-AMI meter.

- A non-AMI meter is read incorrectly by staff.
- Premise access barriers—like a locked gate, a menacing dog, or difficult terrain—prevent utility staff from reading a non-AMI meter.
- A change in seasonal rates in the middle of a bill cycle.
- A bill segment is longer or shorter than a normal billing period.
- A meter is tampered with whereby electricity is diverted from being registered by the meter.
- A meter is not properly linked to a customer’s account.
- A meter malfunctions.
- A problem with the wireless network prevents an AMI meter from transmitting usage data.
- An unexpected error occurs with the utility’s billing system.

Pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code, estimates will be calculated using standard engineering practices, which may include but are not limited to regression analysis, customer loads, load comparison, meter conditions, and test readings. In cases where estimates cannot be made using standard engineering techniques, the longest periods before and/or after the period of usage may be averaged to arrive at an estimated rate of consumption. When an actual read is acquired, the estimated bill will be adjusted.

In line with these standards, City Light will use the following table to estimate consumption for residential customers: (1) if no meter is installed to register actual usage; (2) if there is a problem loading meter reads to our billing system; or (3) if due to no fault of the customer, the utility issues estimated or subsequent true-up bills.

<b>PRESUMPTIVE CONSUMPTION TABLE FOR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS</b>			
<b>Consumption Level</b>	<b>Calculation Basis</b>	<b>Flat Consumption</b>	<b>Value at 2021 Rates</b>
Normal	70% of average consumption	420 kwh	\$46.76/month
Below Average	50% of average consumption	300 kwh	\$33.40/month
Above Average	130% of average consumption	780 kwh	\$86.85/month

### **REQUESTING A METER TEST**

City Light has agreed to implement procedures generally consistent with AMI-TMO.26 when conducting meter investigations, as part of a legal settlement. The Technical Metering document entitled [Field Meter Investigation | AMI-TMO.26](#), dated June 15, 2018, outlines the procedures and process for City Light’s meter investigations.

The document describes six different meter investigation work practices that might be triggered in the event a customer receives a high electric bill and the customer expresses a concern to City Light that a high electric bill may be attributable to an inaccurate meter. Under these circumstances, City Light will first determine if the cause of a high electric bill is discernable via internal monitoring systems – either through CCB (Customer Contact and Billing) or MSCS (Meter Solution Cloud Service). If this preliminary

investigation does not resolve the concern, technicians may perform one or more of the following on the meter:

- Test the meter for accuracy.
- Confirm functional integrity of the meter.
- Replace meter where necessary.
- Troubleshoot meter communication issues.
- Troubleshoot meter operational functions.
- Identify security or tampering issues with communicating (AMI) meters.

In the event a meter is tested for accuracy, City Light will communicate the results of the meter test to the customer. Similarly, if City Light determines the cause of a high electric bill, City Light will communicate an identified cause to the customer.

In addition to the above investigative and communication procedures, AMI-TMO.26 also includes a list of tasks to implement the above process, the persons identified by title responsible for performing each task; and activity numbers to be used to track the progress of work in work orders. It also identifies the type of information to be gathered as part of a quality assurance program and subsequent reporting to Landis & Gyr, the manufacturer of City Light's AMI meters.

All electric meters used by SCL for billing purposes are manufacturer certified to meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accuracy standards. SCL's meter department also performs full-lot testing or statistical sampling of all incoming meters to verify accuracy. The utility maintains a calibration laboratory that keeps its test equipment calibrated and is traceable to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). SCL only purchases and uses ANSI accuracy metering devices, such as current and voltage transformers.

## **DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE**

Electric service may be terminated by City Light for the following reasons:

- Failure to timely pay a bill or make satisfactory payment agreement.
- Failure to comply with terms of a payment agreement.
- Failure to correct impaired or unsafe access to the utility meters or service within a reasonable time after being requested to do so.
- Failure to separate an electrical meter or other utility equipment from living quarters after being requested to do so.
- A customer's wiring or electrical equipment is defective or hazardous to life or property.
- Unauthorized use of service. If your service has been disconnected, it is illegal for you to reconnect it. See the Current Diversion DPP ([clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322652](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322652)).
- Upon a customer's request to disconnect. For disconnections when a property is vacant, see the Electric Service Disconnect/Reconnect – Vacant Premises DPP ([www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityLight/PolicyResVacancyBilling.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityLight/PolicyResVacancyBilling.pdf)).
- Upon Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections' request for disconnection when a building is vacant.

- Failure to comply with the utility's written rules and regulations.

Disconnections may be delayed under the circumstances listed in Section 2.7.2 of the Credit & Collections DPP ([clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322497](http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/322497)).

**Prerequisites for Disconnection:** Before shutting off electric service due to a delinquency, we provide two notices. Notifications will be sent to the contact information on record. Failure to receive notification will not prevent disconnection.

**Avoiding Shutoff:** To avoid disconnections due to delinquency, stay current by timely submitting payments by the bill due date or payment agreement date. If you cannot stay current, submit payment in full as promptly as possible before the shutoff date, or contact the utility to establish a payment agreement and to determine whether you are eligible for financial assistance to avoid disconnection.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION DISCLOSURES**

We follow federal and state laws about information disclosure whenever we work with outside governmental agencies and in answering Public Disclosure Requests ([www.seattle.gov/public-records/public-records-request-center](http://www.seattle.gov/public-records/public-records-request-center)). Business partners and contracted vendors who receive or collect personal information from us or for us to deliver City services must agree to our privacy requirements. If you need additional information, please visit our "Sharing Information with Third Parties" section of our Privacy Policy ([www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/what-we-do/privacy-policy](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/what-we-do/privacy-policy)).

### **PRIVACY STANDARDS**

We follow the City's Privacy Statement ([www.seattle.gov/tech/initiatives/privacy/privacy-statement](http://www.seattle.gov/tech/initiatives/privacy/privacy-statement)) and City Light's Privacy Policy ([www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/what-we-do/privacy-policy](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/what-we-do/privacy-policy)). These resources explain how we collect, use, and retain your information.

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

City Light's latest annual report can be accessed online at [www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/communications/publications](http://www.seattle.gov/city-light/about-us/communications/publications).