

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

Contents

- 1) Customer Services
 - a) Responsibilities of the City of Archdale’s Customer Service Department
 - b) Responsibilities of the City of Archdale’s Utility Customers
- 2) Application for City Utility Services
 - a) Requested information
 - b) Previous account balance
 - c) Processing fee
 - d) Temporary water service
 - e) Information available
- 3) Collection and Use of Social Security Number
- 4) Landlord As Responsible Party
- 5) Deposit Requirements
 - a) Guaranty of payment
 - b) Refund of deposit
- 6) Voluntary Disconnection of Service
- 7) Monthly Billing Procedures
 - a) Meter Readings
 - i) Monthly readings
 - ii) Use of estimates
 - b) Billing Service
 - i) Non-receipt of bill
 - ii) Due date and late fee
 - iii) Nonpayment fee and involuntary discontinuation of service
 - iv) Account automatically finalized and deceased account holder
 - v) City holidays
 - vi) Order of payment
 - vii) Collection of delinquent accounts
 - c) Higher than Normal Bill
 - d) Customer Rights and Responsibilities
 - e) Testing of Meters
- 8) Irrigation Meters
- 9) Metered Usage at Vacant Property
- 10) Adjustments for Billing Errors
- 11) Adjustments for Leaks or Plumbing Problems
- 12) Filling of Swimming Pools
- 13) Payment Options
- 14) Payment By Check
- 15) Returned Checks, Drafts, and Other Forms of Payment
- 16) Payment Extension
- 17) Special Needs
- 18) Use of Information
- 19) Schedule of Utility Billing Fees

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

1) Customer Services

- a) Responsibilities of the City of Archdale’s Customer Service Department include the following:
 - i) Treat all customers in a fair and indiscriminate manner.
 - ii) To respond to customer complaints, concerns, and inquiries in a prompt and courteous manner.
 - iii) To listen to each customer and provide the service that best meets the customer’s needs.
 - iv) To be respectful of the customer’s property.

- b) Responsibilities of the City of Archdale’s Utility Customers include the following:
 - i) To pay the account balance prior to the due date each month.
 - ii) To immediately notify the Customer Service Department of all service and billing concerns such as:
 - (1) Possible inaccuracies or billing concerns.
 - (2) Extenuating circumstances pertaining to the customer account.
 - (3) Changes in service, such as voluntary disconnection.
 - iii) To be respectful and cooperative in dealing with City personnel.
 - iv) Customer is responsible for leaks or other problems that occur on customer property.
 - v) Allow City personnel unobstructed access to meters.
 - vi) To provide information requested by the City.
 - vii) All customers are responsible for replacement cost of meters larger than one inch and damaged transponders.

- c) The above lists are general guidelines and are not intended to be all-inclusive.

2) Application for City Utility Services

- a) Anyone desiring water and sewer service must make an application to the City to establish an account. When the service address is occupied by a married couple, both must be listed on the application. The applicant(s) must provide proof that they are the owner or tenant of the property to be served. The applicant(s) must be of legal age and provide all the requested information.

- b) Owners’ of property with “Flat” sewer service are required to set up account in their name.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

- c) The application for service may include the following:
 - i) Proof of ownership or lease agreement, including name of property owner.
 - ii) Government-issued photo identification- preferably a drivers license- valid passports or military ID.
 - iii) Social security number or other tax identification number.
 - iv) Payment of a deposit may be required.
 - v) Applicant must apply in person. If joint account, at least one person must apply in person.
- d) If the applicant or other members of the applicant's household had a previous account with the City, that account must be paid in full prior to establishing new service.
- e) An application processing fee is required for all new accounts which will be added to the first bill and may appear as a balance forward. Transfer of service to a new address is considered a new account and may require an additional deposit.
- f) Water service at a vacant house/lot for contractors, builders and developers, with a reliable payment history with the City, may be established by applying in person or faxing a completed new service application of the location, date needed, including their tax identification number to the Customer Service Department. Any outstanding utility related bills for the service address must be paid in full before new service is established.
- g) Service for home inspections or temporary water service for less than 5 business days must be established at the Customer Service Department with the start date and off date for the service address. Advance payment will need to be provided in advance covering the service fee and the billable amount for minimum usage for each service location. Refer to the fee and rate schedule.
- h) Forms of application, service regulations, and rate and fee schedules are available at City Hall and will be provided to the customer on request or you may refer to the City's web-site at www.archdale-nc.gov. All such service regulations and fee schedules are subject to changes that may be made and approved by the City Council at any time.
- i) The City may refuse to provide services when an owner of a property is delinquent on utility payments and sells the property to a new owner. The previous owner (seller) is responsible for the payment of the delinquent fees.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

3) Collection and Use of Social Security Number

- a) S. L. 2005-414 (S1048), section 4, prohibits government agencies from collecting a social security number (SSN) from an individual unless the collection of the social security number is authorized by law or otherwise imperative for the performance of the agency's duties and responsibilities as prescribed by law. It also provides that social security numbers shall not be collected until and unless the need for the social security number has been clearly documented.
- b) The City of Archdale collects social security numbers from utility customers for verification of identity as an aid in our identity theft prevention procedures and for collection of unpaid bills, including the North Carolina debt set-off program.
- c) The disclosure of a social security number by a potential customer is voluntary. The maximum security deposit must be paid by all customers who choose not to disclose their social security number.

4) Landlord as Responsible Party

- a) After two defaults on utility fee payments within a two year time period at a rental property, the owner of the property may be required to establish service in owners name for that address.
- b) The property owner shall establish the account for service and be responsible for the utility payments where more than one rental unit is serviced through one utility meter. This is to prevent service interruption for an occupant whose only relationship with the party responsible for the utility payment is that they rent a adjacent property. The owner of a property where service is measured by one meter with more than one tenant is legally obligated to pay the utility bill.

5) Deposit Requirements

- a) The required deposit level will be determined according to the meter size and a third-party service which accesses the applicant's credit reports and applies calculations to return a prediction of the likelihood that the applicant will leave with a delinquent bill. The three levels are:
 - 1. Green – No deposit required
 - 2. Yellow -Moderate deposit
 - 3. Red- Maximum deposit designed to recover three months of utility fees.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

. See Schedule of Utility Billing Fees

When the service address is occupied jointly, both names must be listed on the application and the higher deposit level will prevail.

- b)** If the applicant's credit history is good, as determined by the third-party service or by customer's established payment history with the city, a deposit will not be required to initiate service. The customer's payment history over the previous 2 years should indicate no more than 1 late fee and no non-payment fees. Any past due amount that becomes past due from the previous location will be added to the current new account.
 - i)** However, a deposit will be required to continue service if the customer account is included on the cut-off list two consecutive months or three nonconsecutive times within one year. A deposit will be required to continue service if the customer's automatic bank draft or check is returned three times within the most recent twelve-month period.
 - ii)** Any customer choosing not to provide the City with a valid social security number will be required to pay a cash deposit at the highest level for the category of service.
 - iii)** The past due balance from customers previous service location will be transferred to the account at the new location.
- c)** Deposits do not earn interest for the customer.
- d)** After a 2 year period the customer may ask to review their account. If it's determined the customer has no more than 1 late fee and no cut-offs, their deposit may be reduced or fully refunded by applying deposit to their account. No amounts may be used to offset a late payment or for the purposes of avoiding an involuntary service interruption.
- e)** At discontinuation of service the final bill will be paid by applying the deposit to the outstanding balance at the end of the month following the last service date or at the end of the month of involuntary disconnection. A check will be processed for any remaining portion of the deposit and mailed to the account holder(s) at the address on file. It is important to provide customer service with a forwarding address and phone number so the check will not be delayed or returned. The City of Archdale remits unclaimed deposit refunds to the State of North Carolina Unclaimed Property Fund.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

6) Voluntary Disconnection of Service

It is the customer's responsibility to provide 24 hour advance written notice of intent to discontinue service at a specific address. The information must be put in writing to the Customer Service Department by mail, by faxing, by email, or stopping by City Hall during regular business hours. Regular business hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The account holder must provide a forwarding address for proper settlement of the account. The account holder is responsible for all metered usage up to the date the City disconnects and takes the final meter reading. Water/sewer bill charges are billed in arrears, therefore the final bill may not be sent for up to a month after the final reading is taken. If the customer has a deposit, the City will apply the deposit to the final bill and remainder of the deposit will be refunded to the customer at the end of the next month, providing the deposit balance exceeds \$3.00.

Customers' who do not provide the City with notice of intent to discontinue service remain responsible for utility charges until the City finalizes the account, even if no usage is registered on the meter. The City will finalize the account at the end of the month when service has been suspended due to nonpayment of previous bills.

7) Monthly Billing Procedures

a) Meter Readings

- i)** The automated meter infrastructure is in place and readings are gathered on a monthly basis. The customer is charged by the amount of water that registers on the meter each month and the meter reading is also the basis for the sewer charges. Bills are prepared each month. The water meter reading information is checked for any unusual variances from customer normal service levels. Any discrepancies are flagged for immediate rereading of the affected meter.
- ii)** Occasionally extenuating circumstances may cause the City to base a monthly billing on estimated meter readings. The meters are "continuous read" meters so variances that may occur between the estimated consumption and the actual meter reading will be made up in the next month. Total consumption billed over the two-month period should be accurate.

b) Billing Service

- i)** Utility bills are mailed to customers once each month and are payable as of the due date on the statement. The City makes every effort to give customers a fair amount of time to pay the bill. Non-receipt of the bill for utilities by the customer does not diminish the obligation of the customer

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

to pay the bill on time. Utility bills are mailed about the same time each month and a customer should notify the Customer Service Department if they do not receive a bill at the usual time.

- ii)** The due date is generally the twentieth of each month and is printed on the billing statements. No second notices will be provided. A late fee will be applied to all accounts paid after 5:00 PM on the current balance due date printed on the billing statement. The late fee will be payable with the next month's bill if a payment is received in the mail or drop box after 5:00 PM on the current balance due date and the late fee is not included with the payment. If the account holder is deceased, the fees and penalties can be waived. A Death Certificate must be provided along with the completion of a 'Transfer of Account Responsibility'.
- iii)** Bills exceeding a minimum amount that are not paid by the 4th of the following month will be subject to a substantial nonpayment fee and involuntary discontinuation of service. City personnel will place a notification tag at the customer's door when service has been involuntarily suspended for nonpayment. The nonpayment fee is charged to recover some of the costs of extra office work and trips to the account location caused because the bill remains unpaid. See fee and rate schedule for late and nonpayment fee amounts.
- iv)** Involuntary discontinuation of service may result for the nonpayment of charges arising under the current service contract or any other contract for utility services. The past due balance from the customer's previous service location will be transferred to the account at the new location. Accounts in the name of a deceased person must be transferred into the name of a spouse, family member, executor, or administrator of the estate to prevent a disruption of service.
- v)** An account where a security deposit has been paid will be automatically finalized when a balance remains unpaid after involuntary disconnection of service. The deposit will be applied to the amount due and the customer will receive a refund for any remaining balance of the deposit. The customer will remain responsible for any balance still due after the deposit has been applied. The customer will then be required to apply for new service and pay a new security deposit at the rate currently in effect.
- vi)** In months when the due date and the date for discontinuation of service due to nonpayment fall on a weekend or City holiday, the customer is given until 5:00 PM on the next business day to pay the amount due. City holidays are established each year by the City council and do not include all of the traditional holidays observed by banks and the US

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

Postal Service. A customer may visit our website, www.archdale-nc.gov or call our office to determine which day's City offices are closed for a holiday.

vii) The utility bill includes charges for garbage, recycling, storm water, and water and sewer services. A customer's payment will be applied to the bill in the following order:

- (1)** Past due amounts including late charges and nonpayment fees
- (2)** Garbage service
- (3)** Recycling service
- (4)** Storm water fees
- (5)** Sewer service
- (6)** Irrigation water service
- (7)** Water service

viii) Delinquent accounts may be sent to a collection agency or to the Debt Set-Off Program, where amounts due to the City may be deducted from the customer's state income tax refund or lottery proceeds. Information supplied on the customer application for service, including social security number, may be reported to the state or other collection agency for use in collection efforts.

c) Higher than Normal Bill - A customer who receives a bill that seems higher than normal should consider the following:

- i)** An increase in the number of people at the house
- ii)** Leaky faucets or other fixtures
- iii)** Plumbing problems
- iv)** A toilet that continues to run after flushing
- v)** Silent toilet leaks (put food color in the tank; do not flush; if color seeps into the bowl you have a "silent leak.")
- vi)** Frequent watering of the lawn or flowers
- vii)** Frequent washing of cars at home
- viii)** Pressure washing
- ix)** Broken water lines (check yard for wet spots)
- x)** A variation in the number of days covered by the bill.

d) Customer Rights and Responsibilities - A customer who believes there is an error on the billing statement should contact the Customer Service Department immediately upon receiving the statement. The customer should state the reasons why he/she believes there is an error and provide any supporting documentation. The City can provide graphs with usage and do an on demand reading if needed. It is the customer's responsibility to

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

check for leaks and get repairs for problems on the customer side of the meter. Establishments using meters larger than one inch are responsible for the replacement cost, including an installation fee, of the meter.

- e) Testing of Meters - Customers may request that the City test the water meter for accuracy one time within a calendar year at no charge to the customer. Additional testing may be requested for a fee. The fee is waived if the test results indicate a meter malfunction. The City may, at its option, test any meters currently in service at any time at no charge to the customer. The City uses Positive Displacement meters that are designed to slow down or stop water flow if they malfunction.

8) Irrigation Meters

- a) All utility charges for a property will be combined on one utility statement. Irrigation meters will be charged at least the minimum bill each month.
- b) The customer may make a written request for the City to remove an irrigation meter if for some reason they wish to give up use of their system.
- c) The customer may make a written request and pay a service fee for the reinstallation of an irrigation meter.
- d) Under the City's drought management plan the rate charged for water used for irrigation may be charged at a higher rate than water used for other purposes.

9) Metered Usage at Vacant Property

The property owner is responsible for all water that registers on the water meter reading, even if the property is listed as vacant.

10) Adjustments for Billing Errors

It is the responsibility of both parties to review the bill and notify the other party of improper billing. The customer is not relieved of its duty to pay for service received even if the City inadvertently or negligently fails to properly bill for services. Upon discovery of an error in billing the City will forward the corrected bill to the customer along with notification of a refund or request for payment. The customer may request a payment plan. Improper billing will be adjusted for a lesser of the actual period up to two years from the date of discovery. We will work with each customer to make sure that all billing errors are corrected. These errors could result in a higher or lower bill for the customer. In some cases the correction may be made by applying a credit to a future billing statement.

11) Adjustments for Leaks or Plumbing Problems

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

- a) A customer's bill may be adjusted for unusually high water usage within 60 days from date billed if the customer can provide a plumber's invoice, receipt for repair parts, or other proof that a repair has been made. The adjustment will cover one month's bill however if leak is repaired in between meter readings it could effect two month's bill. The customer will pay for all water as read from the meters and pay for sewer based on their average sewer bill over the previous six months. Upon written request, a payment schedule may be available for an unusually high water bill. Certain restrictions apply to leak adjustments. Leak adjustments are not provided for water only accounts, leaking faucets, toilets, air-conditioning cooling towers, ice-makers and faucets left on for an extended time. The items mentioned here are examples and do not represent a complete list of problems ineligible for a leak adjustment.

- b) The City will be proactive in notifying customers' with unusual consumption by tagging the door, however; it remains the customers' responsibility to monitor their usage.
If the City proactively notifies a customer of a potential leak, bill adjustments may be limited if the customer fails to repair the leak in a timely manner. See Code of Ordinance-Chapter 10.

- c) The City does not reimburse customers for any plumbing bills, property damage, or related expenses associated with a water leak or a sewer problem.

12) Filling of Swimming Pools

A customer may avoid paying sewer charges on water used to fill a swimming pool one time each calendar year. The customer must notify our Customer Service Department and provide the City with a meter reading prior to filling the pool and again after filling the pool. Failure to make notification of the meter reading prior to filling the pool may disqualify the customer from receiving this adjustment.

13) Payment Options

- a) By Mail. Please enclose the bottom portion of the bill with your check or money order making sure the address shows in the envelope provided. The address is City of Archdale, PO Box 14068, Archdale, NC 27263.

- b) At the Customer Service Department located at City Hall. City Hall is located at 307 Balfour Drive.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

- c) At drive up utility drop box located to the right of building, please include the account number or bottom portion of bill.
- d) Automatic Bank Draft. Fill out the information requested and mark one of the two bank draft options either the 3rd or the 18th on the back of the utility billing statement or come by City Hall. The information will be provided to the bank for the account to be drafted.
- e) Pay on-line through personal bank website. Customers who pay on-line through their bank need to allow enough time for the bank to prepare a check and mail it to our Customer Service Department. It is the customer's responsibility to make sure the bank has the correct mailing address. It is: City of Archdale, PO Box 14068, Archdale, NC 27263.
- f) Pay on-line @ www.archdale-nc.gov we accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover cards.
- g) Use Kiosk at Customer Service Department located at City Hall.
- h) Pay by phone. A convenience fee will be charged when a Customer Service representative enters your credit/debit card information in the on-line system. Refer to the Schedule of Utility Billing Fees.
- i) Payments processed after 4:30 PM may still result in late fees or involuntary discontinuation of service. Payments received after 4:30 PM will be posted to the customer utility account on the next business day. Customers making an online payment, after an involuntary discontinuation of service, should call the Customer Service Department to alert them to the fact that a payment has been made. The Customer Service Representative will verify the payment and prepare a work order for reconnection.

14) Payment by Check

All checks must be made out to the City of Archdale for the exact amount of the payment. Cash may not be given as change back from a check. No two-party checks will be accepted.

15) Returned Checks, Bank Drafts and Other Forms of Payment

- a) When a customer's check, bank draft and other form of payment is returned by the bank on which it is drawn because the bank will not honor it, for any reason, the customer will be notified that the request for payment was not honored and service will be terminated on a specified date unless the payment is made good. A service charge for the returned check, bank draft, or for payment denials on all

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

other forms of payment, including but not limited to credit cards and debit cards will apply, in addition to any other charges and fees.

- b) A returned check or automatic bank draft will not be considered as payment on an account until it has been settled. The late fee will be applied to all accounts not considered to be paid on the due date, regardless of when the original check or bank draft was received by the City.

- c) The City reserves the right to require a customer to pay utility bills in cash, money order or cashier's check when a customer has had three items returned for nonpayment within the previous twelve months.

16) Payment Extension

A customer with extenuating circumstances may request additional time to pay a utility bill "ONE" time during the calendar year. The customer needs to call the Customer Service Department prior to the due date printed on the statement. The customer should explain the situation and make a statement as to when the bill is expected to be paid. The late fee will still apply to the account. However, notification received prior to the due date may avoid the discontinuation of services for nonpayment and avoid the nonpayment fee. If the customer fails to pay the account as promised, the service will be discontinued at that time and the nonpayment fee will apply. In no case may the extension of the time to pay extend beyond the next scheduled date for service disconnection due to nonpayment, this will disqualify customer for future extensions.

17) Special Needs

Please notify a Customer Service Representative if you are a customer with special physical needs or health conditions that you believe may be important for us to know. A customer may request that a third party be notified prior to involuntarily discontinuation of service. This voluntary program is helpful for those who are ill or elderly and live alone. The third party should be a friend, relative or community organization that will get in touch with the customer and help solve the problem. The customer, not the third party, remains responsible for the bill.

Non-English speaking customers should try to engage the help of an English speaking friend to communicate their service needs.

18) Use of Information

Utility billing information compiled and maintained by the City is not a public record as defined by North Carolina General Statutes §132-1. It is the policy of the Archdale City

City of Archdale
 Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
 June 2018

Council that utility customer information will not be shared with other agencies or individuals. Individual account information on delinquent balances may be forwarded to a collection agency. Disclosure of certain billing information may be allowed in connection with the issuance of bonds or other utility related debt, reports and analysis used in management of the utility, and to assist law enforcement or other public safety officers or judicial officers in the performance of their duties and can be used internally in all departments or shared with other government agencies. In no case will the customer social security number or bank account information be made public

Schedule of Utility Billing Fees

Convenience fee for each employee-assisted credit card transaction	\$ 5.00
Application Processing Fee – per property	\$ 25.00
Service Fee – Temporary water-per property	\$ 25.00
Security Deposit per meter based on meter size:	
3/4 –inch	\$ 0.00 to 300.00
1-inch & 1 ½-inch	600.00
2-inch	1,000.00
3-inch	1,500.00
4-inch	2,000.00
6-inch	to be determined
Security Deposit if Social Security Number Not Provided	\$ 300.00
Late Fee –applied to account after 5:00 PM on due date	\$ 10.00
Late Fee when caused by return check	\$ 10.00
Nonpayment fee – 5th of next month	\$ 50.00
Meter calibration- Waived if meter is malfunctioning	\$ 25.00
Reinstall meter/sprinkler removed at customer request	\$ 100.00
Install sewer bladder for nonpayment	\$ 50.00

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

Tampering fee Plus equipment replacement cost. May also be subject to criminal and civil penalties and legal costs when applicable.	\$ 50.00
Standard Residential Meter	at cost – subject to change
Transmitter	at cost – subject to change
Standard Meter Lid	at cost – subject to change
Standard Meter Box	at cost – subject to change

19) Damage to City Property:

Customers' are required to notify the City when damage occurs to City property. The City will replace the first accidental damaged item however; repeated damage will be the responsibility of the customer.

City of Archdale
Utility Customer Service Policies and Procedures
June 2018

20) Minor Revision to Policies Allowed

This policy has been adopted by resolution of the Archdale City Council. Minor clarifications and improvements to the wording of the policy may be made at the discretion of the City Manager when such improvements assist with the implementation of the policies. The City Manager will notify Council of any changes.