



**UTILITY BILLING POLICIES**  
**Approved by the Villa Grove City Council**  
**May 25, 2011**

1. City Hall shall serve as the liaison between the utility customers of the City and the Public Works Department whenever possible. The regular business hours for utility services are Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. During non-business hours, customers may obtain service information by calling a pre-recorded message at the business phone number of 217-832-4721.
2. Persons requesting service must complete an "Application for Utility Service" at City Hall and pay any deposit and/or outstanding collection amount due before service can be initiated. Service may not be initiated for three business days, pending approval of the application information and history review. **Service deposits may be refunded after one or two years of service if the customer is in good standing and fills out the required *Service Deposit Refund Request* form.**

Customers who have established utility service for vacant property and anticipate little or no water usage for such property, either on a temporary basis or as "snowbirds", may request to be placed on inactive billing status. Such status allows for one billing for all usage at the time that the account is "finalized" or returns to active billing status.

3. Work orders will only be done two times daily, at approximately 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., unless an emergency situation necessitates otherwise.
4. As per ordinance/policy, meters are normally read between the 15th and 20th of each month and bills are issued for service of five or more days. Regular bills are mailed around the last day of the month and customers with a local mailing address should expect to receive them around the first of the month; final bills are issued immediately. Payment is due ten calendar days after rendition of any bill. If the due date falls on a City, State or Federal ("banking") holiday, the due date will be extended by one day. **This rule does not apply to Sundays**, as a drop box is provided for receipt of payments at City Hall. The same one-day extension rule would also apply to shut-offs.

On-time payments may be made at Villa Grove State Bank, Longview Bank, or in person at City Hall. The banks will not accept late payments or payments for final bills. Mailed payments should be addressed to Post Office Box 108, Villa Grove, Illinois 61956-0108. Additionally, the City offers programs such as automatic "direct debit" from checking accounts and on-line only credit card payments through Illinois E-Pay; this information will appear on the back of each postcard bill sent to the customer.

5. Customers with questions/concerns regarding high bills will be treated as follows:

If the reading registered as high when it was entered into the computer, and the reading has already been double-checked, the bill will stand as issued.

If the reading has not been double-checked, a work order will be written and a current reading taken. From this reading, it will be determined whether or not the previous reading ap-

pears to be in error or if a leak is present. If the meter appears to have been read incorrectly, the bill will be adjusted accordingly, depending on the situation. If no problems are apparent, the bill will stand as issued.

6. Customers with a leak will only be allowed an adjustment upon request, and only after the leak is repaired. One adjustment per leak is to be given; however, if the leak is discovered and cannot be repaired during one billing cycle, two adjustments applied to two consecutive bills are allowed.

Please see the section titled "Leak Adjustments" on page 4 for additional information.

7. Late fees will be assessed to all accounts for which payment has not been received at City Hall or at one of the banks by the open of business the first business day after payment is due. Late fees will be waived if a bill is under investigation and the investigation began and was not completed prior to the date that late fees were assessed. A combination late notice/shut-off notice will be sent to customers with outstanding balances.
8. Customers who are unable to pay their bills may request up to two extensions per twelve-month period (not necessarily a calendar year for this purpose). More than two extensions will not be granted except under extremely special conditions, and as approved by the Office Manager.
9. All customers who have not requested and been granted an extension and who have not made payment by 8:00 a.m. on the shut-off date will be placed on the shut-off list. As a courtesy, a customer in good standing who has never received an extension will not be shut off, but will instead be given an automatic extension, and will be notified by the office in writing. Customers who pay their bill on shut-off day prior to the list leaving the office will be removed from the list.

Customers whose names remain on the list when it leaves the office will be assessed the applicable service fee. Service will be shut off at the address for which service is billed, unless the customer no longer resides at that address (in which case the service will be shut off at the customer's present address if the customer still has service in his/her name).

Per ordinance, all service fees and the current bill must be paid in full prior to service being restored. Persons requesting service restoration after hours must place their payment in the drop box at City Hall. If service is restored and payment is not in the drop box at the open of the next business day, service will be terminated again and result in a second service fee.

City ordinance also states that once a customer has had service terminated for non-payment two or more times, the service deposit amount may be tripled (based on the customer's monthly usage). This amount would also be due in full before service can be restored.

On shut-off day, service will be restored as soon as possible after all fees are paid. On days other than shut-off days, service will be restored at the next regularly-scheduled work order interval (approximately 8:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m.).

10. City ordinance states that anyone other than public works department personnel cannot open water meter pits for the purpose of reading the meter to "double-check" or starting unauthorized water service. This code is strictly enforced, and violators can be taken to court and charged from \$100 to \$750 per day for this offense.
11. When a customer's service is permanently discontinued, any deposit on file will be applied toward the balance due. Any remaining deposit will be applied to other accounts payable within the City (this is stated on the application as "I further agree that my deposit may be

retained and applied by the City upon bills or any indebtedness whatsoever to the City.”), with the balance being refunded to the Customer. Deposit refunds may not be issued prior to ten days after discontinuation of service to allow sufficient time for any outstanding checks on the customer to clear the bank.

Final bills are sent immediately and are due within ten calendar days. A second notice with late fees shall be sent at that time if the bill remains unpaid. Any “finaled” account that has not been paid or set up on a payment arrangement approved by the Office Manager shall be remitted to a landlord and/or collection agency 30 days after the original bill was issued; all properties are also subject to the filing of a utility lien with the Douglas County Recorder’s Office.

12. Any customer using water for outdoor purposes that does not enter the sewer system (i.e. filling pools, watering of grass, washing of vehicles, etc.) can purchase a secondary meter to avoid incurring sewer charges for those gallons. The customer must sign an agreement outlining the terms of the SM program, and then adjustments will begin. **Adjustments will not be given for usage prior to participation in the program under any circumstance.** Actual adjustments for the program shall be reflected on the regular monthly bill, shown as a lower consumption for sewer gallons (resulting in a lesser charge, as opposed to sewer charges for the same quantity of water gallons).
13. Customers needing service calls performed during non-business hours shall be subject to the following fees:

Any emergency situation.....	No charge
Non-scheduled, non-emergency situations .....	\$45.00
Pre-scheduled, non-emergency situations.....	\$20.00

It shall be left to the discretion of the public works director as to what situations appear to be emergent vs. non-emergent (as it relates to billing purposes).

14. Payments which are returned due to non-sufficient funds, stop payment or closed account will be treated as non-payment and a letter delivered to the customer at the next regularly-scheduled work interval. In the event of a returned payment:
  - First time—\$25 bad-check fee assessed; letter states the payment is required in the form of guaranteed funds at City Hall by 8:30 a.m. the following business day, and an extension will be entered on the customer’s record. If payment is not received by the deadline, service will be terminated and service fees will result.
  - Second time—\$25 bad-check fee assessed; letter states that the service has already been terminated at that time, and the customer is assessed a service/turn-on fee for restoration. If there has been less than six months between occurrences, future payments must be made in City Hall by guaranteed funds for one year.
15. Turn-on fees will be waived for customers who receive assistance from Camargo Township or the Villa Grove Ministerial Association for reinstatement of utility services, on a one-time per customer basis only. The township office is not open full-time; the telephone number to contact them for an appointment is 217-832-8133. Various local churches can be contacted for information about the Ministerial Association’s application process. All waivers will be noted in each customer’s permanent record.
16. Billing problems/situations that are not covered in this policy or in the City’s Municipal Code of Ordinances, or cannot be solved to the customer’s satisfaction, may be appealed to the Office Manager. This includes requests for adjustments due to unexplained, high usage on bills.

## LEAK ADJUSTMENTS

Leak adjustments are granted to customers only after the reported leak has been repaired. Customers are allowed up to two adjustments (on consecutive bills) for the same leak occurrence.

Revised bills are determined by charging the customer for their established average bill, plus half of the amount of additional usage attributed to the leak. The utility billing software rounds to hundred of gallons. Any water usage that does not return to the wastewater system for treatment (i.e. sewer) is not charged for. Any late fees due will also be prorated accordingly.

The two most frequently-reported types of leak are a running toilet and hole in an outside service line. If a customer has an established average of 5,000 gallons per month, and the current month's bill is for 11,000 gallons, the billing process would be as follows:

Based on sewer and water rates effective on March 16, 2017, the original bill amount mailed to the customer would have been \$174.89.

If a toilet leak is repaired (waste water requires treatment):

	<u>Gallons</u>	<u>Dollars</u>
Sewer charge for average	5,000	48.84
Water charge for average	5,000	<u>47.03</u>
Subtotal		95.87
Sewer charge for leak	3,000	20.76
Water charge for leak	3,000	<u>18.75</u>
<b>TOTAL REVISED BILL</b>		<u><b>135.38</b></u>
<b>TOTAL ADJUSTMENT/CREDIT = 39.51</b>		

If an outside line leak is repaired (water is absorbed by the ground):

	<u>Gallons</u>	<u>Dollars</u>
Sewer charge for average	5,000	48.84
Water charge for average	5,000	<u>47.03</u>
Subtotal		95.87
Sewer charge for leak	0	0.00
Water charge for leak	3,000	<u>18.75</u>
<b>TOTAL REVISED BILL</b>		<u><b>114.62</b></u>
<b>TOTAL ADJUSTMENT/CREDIT = 60.27</b>		

Leaks that occur as the result of repair work done by City servicemen will be adjusted in full, and the customer would be charged for their average monthly usage only. Customers are encouraged to request a service order if they feel a possible leak may exist, to prevent further damage and charges from accruing.



The City of Villa Grove uses local media and CodeRED to notify our residents and customers of issues and emergencies, including boil orders. **Your participation is voluntary and is not automatic.** You must either call the Douglas County EMA office at (217) 253-9538 or go to [www.douglascountyil.com](http://www.douglascountyil.com) and look for their "Coroner & EMA" page and this logo to sign up; notices can be received in several different methods including phone, text and email.

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