

# *Village of Stratford*

265 N. 3rd Ave., PO Box 12, Stratford, WI 54484-0012, 715-687-4166  
fax: 715-687-4435 website: [www.stratfordwi.com](http://www.stratfordwi.com) email: [stratfordclerk@stratfordwi.com](mailto:stratfordclerk@stratfordwi.com)



## **POLICY FOR FORGIVENESS OF SEWER CHARGES / LEAK ADJUSTMENT**

### **Policy**

The Village of Stratford and Stratford Water & Electric Department are responsible for maintenance and operation of water and wastewater treatment and distribution systems. Each property owner is responsible for installation, maintenance and repairs of water piping from the property line / curb stop to the main building and wastewater piping from the connection to the service lateral to the main building and all plumbing inside the building.

This policy is intended to address high sewer usage charges caused by water pipe breaks (leaks) or appliance failures that develop inside a building. As further defined hereinafter, this policy addresses only those leaks that are catastrophic in nature, beyond the control of the customer, and result in the water not reaching the waste water facility for treatment.

When such a leak occurs, adjustment of sewer charges may be considered if usage during the leak is at least 150% above the customer's average usage determined by the previous twelve billing cycles. Where a customer has not occupied or owned the property for at least twelve billing cycles, an average of any billing cycles will be used.

### **Applicability**

A sewer charge adjustment will be considered if the high usage is a result of:

- A cracked or broken water pipe inside of a building. Such a leak would typically result from a frozen pipe during the winter, or a deteriorated pipe or pipe fitting.
- A defect or malfunction in appliances or plumbing fixtures such as toilets, faucets, water softeners, water heaters, boilers or furnace humidifiers located in a vacant building or an area where the leak or failure may go unnoticed until a high bill occurs.

### **A sewer charge adjustment will not be considered in the following cases:**

- The water lost was discharged to a drain that resulted in the water reaching the waste water treatment plant.
- Customer failed to make repairs to a pipe, appliance or fixture known to have defects or be in need of repair.
- High usage occurred more than 30 days after customer received a high bill or high usage notice from the Stratford Water & Electric Department.
- Customer is unwilling to allow utility staff access or entry to inspect the reported leak and/or repairs made.
- High usage is due to water of lawns, trees or gardens.
- High usage is due to failure to turn off hoses, sprinklers or sprinkler systems.
- High usage is due to negligent water use or other incident within the customer's control.
- The customer has an outstanding delinquent balance. (Submit payment for delinquent balance or sign a deferred payment agreement prior to requesting adjustment).

**Application Process**

A customer may apply for a billing adjustment by completing a Request for Forgiveness of Sewer Charges / Leak Adjustment. Customers must submit applications to the Village Clerk within 45 days of the billing date where the excessive use was included. It is strongly suggested that the customer pay at least the amount of an “average” bill and continue to pay subsequent bills during the time the application for adjustment is under review.

**Application Review Process and Appeals**

The Village Board of Trustees shall review any Requests for Leak Adjustment on a monthly basis at their regular monthly board meeting. The Village Clerk or Utility Clerk will notify the applicant of the Board’s decision within five business days of the determination. If the case is determined to be eligible for a leak adjustment, the adjustment will be applied to the next billing cycle. The decision of the Village Board is final.

**Adjustment Terms**

**Water Usage Charges** – The State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission regulations require customers to pay at least the cost of the Utility providing the water lost due to a leak. Water charges will not be adjusted in the event of a leak.

**Sewer Usage Charges** – In cases where a customer shows sufficient evidence to the Village Board that water usage during a leak was not discharged to the sanitary sewer system, full credit of sewer charges above the customer’s average usage will be considered.

In cases where water usage during a leak was not discharged to the sanitary sewer system, an adjustment of sewer usage charges above the customer’s average usage will be considered with limitation to the number of adjustments allowed during the customer’s tenancy and/or ownership of the property during a ten-year period as follows:

- First occurrence..... Eligible for adjustment of 100% of sewer usage.
- Second occurrence..... Eligible for adjustment of 75% of sewer usage.
- Third occurrence ..... Eligible for adjustment of 50% of sewer usage.
- Fourth and subsequent occurrences are not eligible for an adjustment.

Please note that leak adjustment applications are subject to the Applicability section above and a recurring plumbing or appliance leak is not eligible for multiple leak adjustments where the customer failed to make necessary repairs to prevent the leak from recurring.

Adopted: November 12, 2013  
Revised: July 8, 2014