

Special Dispute Situations

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Estimated Bills Creating High Actual Bills

Scenario: Customer's bill was estimated low for 2-3 months, then actual read shows much higher usage, creating a "catch-up" bill.

Investigation:

- Review sequence of estimated bills
- Compare estimated amounts to actual
- Calculate the true usage over the entire period

Resolution: "Your bills were estimated for [months] while we couldn't access your meter. The estimates were lower than your actual usage. This bill is higher because it includes the additional usage from those previous months that wasn't captured. You did use this electricity-we just couldn't bill you for it until now."

Options:

- Payment arrangement to spread the catch-up amount
- Verify meter access for future to prevent recurrence
- Consider remote meter reading if available

Disputed Late Fees

Common claim: "I paid on time, why do I have a late fee?"

Investigation:

- Check payment date vs. due date
- Verify payment method (mail can be delayed)
- Check if payment was processed correctly
- Review account for previous late payment forgiveness

Resolution:

- **If customer paid late:** Explain late fee policy, but consider one-time forgiveness for good customers
- **If payment was late due to mail delay:** May warrant late fee removal
- **If customer paid on time and we made error:** Remove late fee immediately

Outage-Related Disputes

Claim: "I had no power for 3 days, why is my bill the same?"

Investigation:

- Verify outage occurred and duration
- Check outage reports and service tickets
- Calculate actual impact on usage (3 days = ~10% of month)

Reality check: Most residential outages, even multi-day, have minimal impact on monthly bills because:

- Billing period is 30 days
- Base charges still apply
- Usage catch-up when power returns (refrigerators working harder, charging devices, etc.)

Resolution: "I confirmed you had an outage on [dates] for [duration]. While that's frustrating, the impact on your monthly bill is relatively small-about [X]% of your monthly usage. Your base service charge still applies because we maintain the infrastructure for your service 24/7. However, I'd be happy to apply a courtesy credit of \$[amount] for the inconvenience you experienced."

"My Neighbor Pays Less"

Claim: "My neighbor's house is the same size and their bill is \$50 less!"

Important: Never discuss another customer's account details.

Response: "I can't discuss other customer accounts for privacy reasons, but I can tell you that bills vary significantly even between identical homes based on:

- Thermostat settings (just 2 degrees difference can impact bills by 10-15%)
- Number of occupants
- Appliance efficiency
- Insulation and window quality
- Usage habits (laundry frequency, cooking methods, electronics)
- Time of day usage (peak vs. off-peak rates)

Your bill reflects your specific usage patterns. Let me review your account to see if there are ways you could reduce your usage."

Disputed Reconnection Fees

Claim: "I never asked to be disconnected, why am I charged a reconnection fee?"

Investigation:

- Check service order history

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- Verify disconnection reason
- Review customer communication records
- Check payment history leading to disconnection

Common scenarios:

- **Disconnection for non-payment:** Fee is valid, explain delinquency timeline
 - **Customer-requested disconnect/reconnect:** Fee is valid, show service request
 - **Error disconnection:** Remove fee immediately and apologize
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