

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VAUGHAN

CORPORATE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: ACCIDENTAL WATER LEAK ADJUSTMENT

POLICY NO.: 12.C.13

Section:	Finance & Budgets		
Effective Date:	April 13, 2021	Date of Last Review:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Approval Authority:	Policy Owner:		
Council	DCM, Corporate Services & CFO		

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Vaughan’s Accidental Water Leak Adjustment policy provides residential, residential tenant account holders and not-for-profit corporations who utilize City water services, financial assistance regarding the repair of accidental water leaks on private property, excluding any water leaks in the water service pipe.

Institutional, commercial, industrial and income producing residential rental property owners are not eligible under this policy.

Under this policy, customers can request adjustments to water and wastewater consumption charges after the accidental leak has been repaired by completing the Accidental Water Leak Adjustment Request Form.

PURPOSE

To provide an opportunity for customers to request an adjustment to water and wastewater consumption charges where an accidental leak has been repaired in the water system on the customer’s side of the water meter in a reasonable timeframe.

SCOPE

The City’s Accidental Water Leak Adjustment policy provides limited financial relief to eligible customers to address abnormally high water and wastewater bills associated with accidental plumbing failures.

The policy allows for staff to address those instances when an eligible metered water customer receives an abnormally high bill as a result of an accidental plumbing failure. Though the customer is responsible to repair leaks on service plumbing, it is

recognized that a high water and wastewater bill resulting from an unintentional water leak can present financial hardship to a customer.

The policy provides the opportunity to educate the consumer about the impact of water leaks while ensuring the financial impact of the increased water consumption is partially mitigated.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

None.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Account:** A unique account created by Alectra that stores and records current and historical water and wastewater billing and contact information for each premise in the City.
2. **Alectra:** Alectra Utilities Corporation.
3. **Income Producing Residential Rental Property:** Exists where the property owner registered on title is different than the occupant and/or where a property pays business taxes and/or the property is registered as a short-term rental with the city of Vaughan.
4. **Leak:** An accidental water loss caused by broken and/or malfunctioning plumbing fixtures and/or pipes within a residence or building. A leak occurs when there is a failure of the plumbing system to do what it was designed to do.
5. **Not-for-Profit:** Not-for-profit corporations are incorporated under the Ontario Corporations Act as organizations that carry on activities without the purpose of gain for its members and any profits to the corporation.
6. **Residential Tenant:** A residential tenant of a residential rental property who is the water and wastewater account holder with Alectra and where the premise has a water meter to measure water consumption.
7. **Unoccupied:** A dwelling and/or building in which occupants are absent from the property for a time period of 72 hours or more, due to such matters as vacations or prolonged illness.
8. **Vacant:** Regardless of the presence of furnishings, a vacant dwelling and/or building means the occupants have moved out with no intent to return. A newly constructed dwelling and/or building is also considered to be vacant after it is completed and before the occupants move in. A dwelling and/or building is also vacant when the occupants move out and before any new occupant moves in.

9. Water service pipe: the pipe on private property which conveys potable water from a City watermain to the inside of the building on the property.

POLICY

1. General Information

- 1.1.** An adjustment may occur only after all leaks have been repaired and verified with an actual water meter read by City staff or the City's billing agent, Alectra. Obtaining an actual meter reading may be necessary, within a minimum of two weeks, to verify whether leaks have been repaired and usage has returned to normal.
- 1.2.** Reasonable efforts (including hiring a plumber) to locate the leak and initiate repairs must be taken by or on behalf of the customer within 60 calendar days after receiving the water bill indicating the leak or through initial notification of increased water usage provided to the customer by Alectra. Where possible, on a best effort basis, Alectra will attempt notification through a courtesy call to the customer to advise and discuss higher than normal water consumption, mailing of a "high water usage" letter, and/or issuance of a field activity work order to verify meter readings.
- 1.3.** The customer must complete in full the Accidental Water Leak Adjustment Request Form and provide documentation of repairs made prior to being approved for an adjustment within 120 calendar days after the date of final repair(s). The form can be found online at www.vaughan.ca.
- 1.4.** There is no extension of the due date or the time for paying water and wastewater bills because of a pending adjustment request. Customers are advised to pay the entire amount due with the normal payment period or enter into a payment arrangement with Alectra for the excessive amount in order to remain in good standing on all current billings.
- 1.5.** Reimbursements will only occur when an adjustment request is granted.

2. Criteria and Calculation

Leak adjustments are discretionary and will only be granted as follows:

- 2.1.** If an adjustment is granted, this is a one-time only adjustment per owner per property for active accounts.
- 2.2.** Adjustments will only be for a maximum adjustment period of 120 calendar days (60 calendar days prior and 60 calendar days after receiving the water bill indicating increased water usage).

2.3. Water usage must exceed two times (200 percent) the average of the similar billing period from the previous year. If no history is available, meter readings will be obtained to project normal usage. If projection is not possible, actual consumption of similar customers will be used to determine normal usage for the adjustment calculation.

2.4. Adjustments will be based on 50 percent of the water consumption amount exceeding the average of the similar period from the previous year.

2.5. Adjustments will be capped at \$5,000 (maximum combined water and wastewater adjustment).

2.6. Approved adjustments will be credited to the water and wastewater account.

3. Exclusions

No adjustments will be granted due to any of the following:

3.1. Usage above the customer's average monthly consumption is due to seasonal usage including, but not limited to, the following watering of sod, gardening, filling swimming pools or whirlpools and washing vehicles or other uses where the customer is aware (or ought to be aware) of water consumption.

3.2. Water loss is due to theft, vandalism or construction damage as the responsibility to resolve these issues lies with the customer.

3.3. The leak was caused by a third party from whom the customer is able to recover their costs.

3.4. The dwelling and/or building is/was unoccupied and/or vacant for 72 hours or more. Customers have the responsibility to ensure the dwelling's condition does not contribute to a failure of the plumbing system (e.g. ensure that heating has been maintained). For extended absences, customers should consider shutting off the water supply (except where water is used for heating) and draining all the pipes and appliances.

3.5. There is a higher-than-normal water and wastewater bill as a result of a 'catch-up' for estimated water usage. Actual meter readings are necessary for bills to reflect actual higher water usage to trigger the associated leak detection and any subsequent leak repairs. Customers are advised on their water bill if the billing is based on an estimated read. Customers need to provide timely response and/or access to the property to allow for maintenance to metering equipment to eliminate estimated readings. The associated delay in obtaining an actual reading, occasionally results in unbilled consumption once an actual read is eventually obtained.

4. Appeals

- 4.1. Within 30 days of being given notice of decision on the water leak adjustment, those who are not satisfied with the result may submit a request for appeal to the City.
- 4.2. Appeals must be submitted in writing indicating reason(s) why there is a disagreement with the adjustment amount. Appeals should be sent to:
City of Vaughan
Attention: Financial Services, Water Leak Appeal
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1
- 4.3. Appeals will be reviewed by the Deputy City Managers of Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer and Public Works departments (or their delegates) to ensure the adjustment amount was applied as prescribed in this policy.
- 4.4. A written response indicating City's decision will be sent to account holder
- 4.5. Subsequent appeals will not be considered, as the decision made under the appeal process will be final.

ADMINISTRATION

Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.

Review Schedule:	3 Years If other, specify here	Next Review Date:	
Related Policy(ies):			
Related By-Law(s):			
Procedural Document:	PRC.25 – Accidental Water Leak Adjustment		
Revision History			
Date:	Description:		
Click or tap to enter a date.			