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 OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

Procedure

Title Pay Plans and Payment Arrangements for Retail Customers		Number CS-360	Rev. no. 1
Responsibility Customer Care Division		Supersedes N/A	Pages 3
General Manager/CEO signature /s/ Andrew Lee	Approval date May 7, 2024	Effective date May 10, 2024	

1. PURPOSE

To establish a uniform procedure for offering payment plans to owners of residential or commercial property within SPU’s retail water, wastewater, drainage, and solid waste areas.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to the Customer Care Division and Risk and Quality Assurance Division.

3. DEFINITIONS

Pay plan. An agreement between SPU and the property owner, the owner’s agent, or designated account holder used to satisfy a current or outstanding debt. A down payment is required and payment of the balance of the pay plan must be made within sixty (60) calendar days.

Payment arrangement. An agreement between SPU and the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder, used to pay higher than normal bills or for circumstances as determined by the General Manager/CEO. A down payment is not required and payment may extend up to three (3) years.

Payment plan. A general term referring to any pay plan or payment arrangement offered by SPU.

4. TYPES OF PAYMENT PLANS

Pay plans

- A pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 25 percent of their account balance in certified funds and commits to subsequent payment(s) to satisfy the remaining balance within sixty (60) calendar days from the date the initial down payment is made.
- If a customer needs to change the terms of an existing pay plan, SPU will require the following:
 - Customer must pay 25 percent of the balance owing within their existing pay plan in certified funds.
 - Customer must agree to pay the remaining pay plan balance in installments or in full within sixty (60) calendar days from the date the new down payment is made.

- Tenants may enter into pay plans on SPU accounts when the Seattle City Light bill for their service address is in their names. Check with the Utility Accounts Manager for specific guidance.

Payment arrangements

- Must be agreed upon between SPU and the property owner, the owner's agent, or authorized designee.
- May extend up to three (3) years. Extension may be granted based on circumstances as approved by Utility Account Services (UAS) management.
- Customers are eligible to enter a payment arrangement in the following circumstances:
 - Receipt of an unexpected, higher than normal bill (e.g. backbilling)
 - Exceptional circumstances as approved by the General Manager/CEO or authorized designee

5. PROCEDURE

- A. Utility Services Contact Center
 - Establishes a pay plan on a customer's account.
 - Refers customers requesting payment arrangements to Utility Account Services.
- B. Utility Account Services
 - Establish pay plan or payment arrangement terms on customer's account.
- C. Risk and Quality Assurance Division
 - Hearing Officer may request that Utility Account Services set up payment arrangement terms on matters taken up on appeal.

6. DOCUMENTATION AND EXPECTATIONS

In compliance with this procedure, Customer Service job aids are created to guide staff with technical reference. The Customer Care Division Director oversees the job aids and ensures compliance with Director's Rule FIN-160 Customer Account and Billing Management. A list of job aids will be stored on the division's SharePoint site.

Pay plans and payment arrangements require appropriate documentation including, but not limited to, the following:

- For pay plans:
 - Dollar amount and date of down payment
 - Total dollars of the pay plan
 - Scheduled date for additional pay plan payments
- For payment arrangements:
 - Explanation of the qualifying situation that resulted in the payment arrangement
 - Name and phone number of property owner (or designee) who authorized the payment arrangement
 - Total dollars of the payment arrangement
 - Length of time given to pay
 - Date of the next bill that will show when the first installment is due

Retention of records shall comply with City of Seattle and State of Washington retention schedule.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

On a semi-annual basis, the Customer Care Division Director shall review approved pay plan and payment arrangement transactions and identify any issues. On an annual basis, the Deputy Director over the Utility Accounts Division shall submit a pay plan and payment arrangement report to the General Manager/CEO based on this review for further analysis and decision making.

8. AUTHORITY/REFERENCES

- FIN-160 Customer Account and Billing Management Director's Rule
- CS-310 Customer Billing, Payments and Collections Policy
- CS-310.1 Customer Billing, Payments and Collections Director's Rule