

POLICY#:	NG 016	POLICY TITLE:	Natural Gas Billing
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APPROVAL DATE AND MOTION:	February 8, 2022 (2022-02-11)	CROSS-REFERENCE:	
RESPONSIBILITY:	Director of Natural Gas	APPENDICES:	
APPROVER:	Council	EFFECTIVE DATE:	September 2024
REVISION DATE(S)/ MOTION #		NEXT REVIEW DATE:	September 2027

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.a. **Account** - a customer account set up in the gas billing system for the purpose of tracking pertinent customer and gas service details.
- 1.b. **Agreement for Natural Gas Services** - an Agreement entered into by the County and the Owner(s) or Licensed Operator(s) of a property for provision of natural gas service to the property by the County, also referred to as a Customer Contract.
- 1.c. **Billable Services** - services provided by County Gas Utility staff related to the gas service that are invoiced to the Customer, including but not limited to secondary gas services, gasfitting, sale of goods, gas service calls, leak repair, meter moves, cap-offs, trenching, plowing and digging.
- 1.d. **County** – the County of Vermilion River.
- 1.e. **Customer** - the Owner(s), Renter(s) or Licensed operator(s) who are being provided gas service by the County.
- 1.f. **Customer Contract** - an Agreement entered into by the County and the Owner(s) or Licensed Operator(s) of a property for provision of natural gas service to the property by the County, also referred to as an Agreement for Natural Gas Services.
- 1.g. **Director** – the Director of Gas Utility
- 1.h. **Gas Permit** - a permit required under the *Safety Codes Act* under the Provincial and Federal Gas Codes.

- 1.i. **Gas Service** - also referred to as a Gas Premise, shall mean a primary natural gas service provided to an Owner by the County, typically including an underground gas service line and a gas service riser.
- 1.j. **Gas Usage Charges** - the rates charged by the County to Customers based on consumption of natural gas, including but not limited to wholesale gas price, County gas fees, and applicable federal and provincial levies and taxes.
- 1.k. **Industrial Service** - also referred to as a Gas Premise, shall mean a primary natural gas service provided to an Owner by the County, typically including an underground gas service line and a gas service riser.
- 1.l. **Licensed Operator** - the Alberta Energy Regulator license holder for the property or facility.
- 1.m. **Monthly Fixed Charges** - the fixed monthly fees charged by the County to Customers on Active Accounts.
- 1.n. **Owner** - the person(s) listed as Owner on the current Alberta Land Title for the subject property.
- 1.o. **Property** - the titled parcel of land or surface lease licensed under the Alberta Energy Regulator.
- 1.p. **Renter** - the person(s) other than the Owner, identified by the Owner as tenants on the subject property.
- 1.q. **Renter's Account** - an Account established by the Owner for the purpose of providing monthly gas billing to a Renter.
- 1.r. **Residential Service** - a Gas Service provided by the County to an Owner of a property not regulated by the Alberta Energy Regulator.
- 1.s. **Service Riser** - the portion of piping where the gas service line surfaces above ground.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.a. Operation of the Natural Gas Utility is funded by monthly billing of Fixed Service Charges and Gas Usage Charges. It is imperative that customers are billed in a fair and equitable manner, and the accounts are kept in good standing.

3. OBJECTIVE

- 3.a. To establish a consistent process establishment of gas accounts, monthly billing, collection of delinquent accounts and termination of accounts.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.a This Policy consolidates previous individual policies on matters relating to gas billing and collection into a single policy and provides clarity to the County of Vermilion River and Customers on gas billing, collection rules and procedures.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5.a. Gas Services

- 5.a.i. Pursuant to the County of Vermilion River Bylaw 23-21 Gas Utility Rate Bylaw, upon payment of the established fees for gas service to a property and entering into an Agreement for Natural Gas Service or Customer Contract, the County of Vermilion River shall install a gas service to the property.
- 5.a.ii. No new Service, reconnection or Service alteration shall be connected by the Gas Utility until an approved permit, issued by the Gas Inspection Authority, is presented to the Gas Utility, except:
 - 5.a.ii.i. A reconnection where, in the sole opinion of the County, no alterations have been made and the service remains in sufficient condition such as to comply with applicable codes and regulations;
 - 5.a.ii.ii. Services not regulated by the Safety Codes Act;
 - 5.a.ii.iii. Temporary construction heat approved in writing by the County.
- 5.a.iii. The Gas Utility shall disconnect any service if required in writing by the Gas Inspection Authority and in such case, the County

shall not be liable for damages either direct or consequential resulting from such interruption or failure.

5.b. Customer Accounts

- 5.b.i. An Agreement for Natural Gas Services or Customer Contract must be entered into between the County and the Owner(s) of the property; or in the case of leased oil and gas facilities regulated by the Alberta Energy Regulator, the County and the Licensed Operator.
- 5.b.ii. Where multiple Owners or Licensed Operators exist on a property, all must sign the Agreement for Natural Gas Services or Customer Contract, and any other documents requiring approval by the Owner pursuant to this and other Policies and Bylaws with respect to the County Gas Utility
- 5.b.iii. The County may permit Customers to install secondary gas services to properties other than the property on which the Gas Service as follows:
 - 5.b.iii.i. Buildings within a shared yardsite where the owners of each property approve the secondary in writing or;
 - 5.b.iii.ii. Oil and gas supply and transportation systems.
- 5.b.iv. Upon entering into an Agreement for Natural Gas Service or Customer Contract, the County shall create an Account for the purpose of tracking and billing costs associated with the gas service.
- 5.b.v. The Customer may elect, in writing, to have a Renter's Account set up for the purpose of providing monthly gas billing directly to a Renter.
- 5.b.vi. A Renter's Account shall be considered a sub-account to the Account for the gas service. Any fees or costs assigned to a Renter's Account may be transferred to the Account for the gas service at any time.
- 5.b.vii. For Gas Services on properties subject to foreclosures or other actions in court causing the Owner to be removed from the Property or otherwise unavailable, the County may issue copies

of the monthly gas billing to an Agent authorized by the Court or the Owner.

5.c Monthly Gas Billing

- 5.c.i. Gas Billing is calculated monthly for each account based on the following, gas usage charges, monthly fixed charges, applicable federal, provincial and municipal levies and taxes, other fees applicable to the Account as established by County Bylaws or Policies.
- 5.c.ii. Gas Bills for the prior month shall be generated and distributed to customers each month.
- 5.c.iii. Customers may request, in writing, an Equalized Monthly Bill. In this case the Gas Bills are calculated based on an average of the prior twelve months and adjusted based on actual billing amounts annually.

5.d Automatic Meter Reading

- 5.d.i. Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) devices are installed at every meter site to provide accurate meter reading and an accurate balancing of gas flow.
- 5.d.ii. Customers may refuse an AMR device installed on a new meter or request removal of an existing AMR device by signing a form (including information package with technical and health information regarding AMR) requesting a meter without AMR and acknowledging the following terms:
 - 5.d.ii.i. The Customer shall pay the cost of removing an existing AMR device.
 - 5.d.ii.ii. The Customer must provide unrestricted access to their meter location.
 - 5.d.ii.iii. When Gas Utility personnel are required to obtain a read, the customer will be charged a fee based on County of Vermilion River Bylaw 23-21 Gas Utility Rate Bylaw.

5.e Unpaid Charges for Billable Services

- 5.e.i. Billable Services performed by the County Gas Utility for Customers are invoiced separately from monthly Gas Billing.
- 5.e.ii. Where fees for a Billable Service have not been paid after sixty (60) days, and a Gas Account exists on the property where the billable services were carried out, the unpaid fees may be transferred to the Gas Account
- 5.e.iii. Any fees transferred to a Gas Account will appear on the monthly gas bill and be subject to applicable penalties for non-payment.

5.f. Collection of Unpaid Accounts

- 5.f.i. First Notice shall be issued requesting payment on any Residential Accounts in arrears over **thirty (30)** days.
- 5.f.ii. Upon **fourteen (14)** days written notice, any of the following actions may be taken on Accounts in arrears over **sixty (60)** days:
 - 5.f.iii. Shutting off the Utility (Lock Off)
 - 5.f.iii.i. Main service valve shut and locked with a tamper-proof locking device.
 - 5.f.iii.ii. Service shall be reactivated upon payment, or payment arrangements approved by the Director of Natural Gas Utility, for outstanding charges including a Lock Off Fee as established in the County of Vermilion River Bylaw 23-21 Gas Utility Rate Bylaw.
- 5.f.iv. Transferring the amount owing to the Tax Roll for the Property
 - 5.f.iv.i. Amount is transferred from the Gas Account to the Tax roll of the property pursuant to Section 553 of the *Municipal Government Act*
 - 5.f.iv.ii. Only applicable to Accounts within the County of Vermilion River
- 5.f.v. Referral to a collection agency
- 5.f.vi. Registering a caveat against the title

5.f.vii. Disconnection of the Gas Service

5.f.vii.i Removal of the gas meter/service regulator, plugging and tagging the service riser, and registering a caveat on the land title.

5.f.vii.ii. Gas Service shall be reconnected and activated upon payment or sufficient payment arrangements for outstanding charges or Reconnection Fee to reactivate as established in the County of Vermilion River Fee Bylaw.

5.f.viii. Removal of the Gas Service

5.f.viii.i. This involves underground disconnection of the service line (underground), removal of the gas service riser if possible, and termination of the contract.

5.f.viii.ii. New contract and payment of the applicable fees for a new gas service must be paid before the reinstatement of gas service.

5.f.ix. Where any of the Gas Service has been shut off, disconnected, or removed, the County may require the Owner to obtain a new Gas Permit prior to reactivating the service if, in the sole opinion of the County, there is a potential for code deficiencies associated with the Owner's gas piping or appliances.

5.f.x. Upon Disconnection or Removal of the Gas Service pursuant to this Section the Account shall no longer be considered active until reconnection or reinstatement.

5.g. Industrial Security Deposits

5.g.i. For new Industrial Services created where the Customer does not have at least two years prior billing history with the County with Account maintained in good standing, the County may require an industrial security deposit up to sixteen percent (16%) of the estimated annual gas billing amount.

5.g.ii. Industrial security deposits may be returned to the Customer upon two years of keeping an account in good standing.

5.g.iii. Industrial security deposits must be returned to the Customer upon termination of the Account if the Account has been paid in full. If there is an outstanding balance on the Account at

termination, the security shall be applied against the balance owing and the remainder—if any—shall be returned to the Customer.

5.h. Renter's Security Deposits

- 5.h.i. Where a Renter's Account has been requested by the Owner for a gas service, the Owner may elect to have the County hold a Renter's Security Deposit in the form of a cash deposit.
- 5.h.ii. If the Owner has elected to require a Renter's Security Deposit, that amount shall be paid prior to establishing the Renter's Account.
- 5.h.iii. Renter's Security Deposits must be returned to the Customer upon termination of the Account if the Account has been paid in full. If there is an outstanding balance on the Account at termination, the security shall be applied against the balance owing and the remainder—if any—shall be returned to the Customer.

5.i. Temporary Disconnect, Discontinuation and Reinstatement of Gas Services

5.i.i. Temporary Disconnect

- 5.i.i.i. Upon request to temporarily disconnect a gas service by the Customer, the County shall disconnect or remove the service line, riser and meter as required by the Customer.
- 5.i.i.ii. For temporary disconnects the Account shall remain Active and subject to any and all fees and charges on Active Gas Services pursuant to County Bylaws and Policies.
- 5.i.i.iii. Temporary disconnects and reinstatements shall be subject to a fee equal to the actual cost to disconnect and reinstate the gas service excluding the cost of equivalent County gas meter and regulator.

5.i.ii. Discontinuation

- 5.i.ii.i. Upon request to discontinue gas service by the Owner or Licensed Operator, the County shall, within thirty (30) days, terminate the Account, disconnect the service line

(underground), and remove the service riser if possible, provided the following conditions are met:

- 5.i.ii.i.a. Written, signed request is provided by the Owner(s) in the format provided by the County.
- 5.i.ii.i.b. The owner accepts liability and obligation to pay to the County for all gas delivered to the Customer and any other applicable fees on the Account.
- 5.i.ii.i.c. Any and all easements or utility rights-of-way granted by the Owner to the County or registered against the property in favour of the County shall remain in full force and effect and without restricting the generality of the foregoing, the county has a right to keep in place and maintain all piping, meters and equipment.
- 5.i.ii.iii. Upon discontinuing a gas service under this Section, the Account shall no longer be considered Active until such time it is reinstated.
- 5.i.ii.iv. Residential Gas Service Discontinuations shall be carried out at no cost to the Customer, excepting any Land Costs incurred which will be charged to the Customer.
- 5.i.ii.v. Industrial Gas Service Discontinuations shall be subject to a Fee as set out in the County of Vermilion River Bylaw 23-21 Gas Utility Rate Bylaw.

6. REPEAL

6.a. Policy NG 012 is hereby repealed and replaced by this policy.

7. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE/TASK	TITLE(S) OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE
HANDLING INQUIRIES	Director of Natural Gas
MONITORING REVIEWS AND REVISIONS	Director of Natural Gas
IMPLEMENTING POLICY	Director of Natural Gas
COMMUNICATING POLICY	Director of Natural Gas, Natural Gas Staff
INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	County of Vermilion River Staff
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	Natural Gas Utility Customers

8. EXCEPTIONS

8.a. None

9. POLICY EVALUATION

9.a. The County of Vermilion River will engage in a Policy Evaluation every three years to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and review opportunities for improvement.