



TOWN OF BIG SANDY, MONTANA

WATER SYSTEM RULES AND REGULATIONS

GENERALLY

The following rules and regulations are made a part of the contract with every individual, firm or corporation, who takes water, and each such individual, firm or corporation agrees in making application for water service to be bound thereby, and a copy of the same shall be on file in the office of the Town Clerk for inspection and review upon request.

AUTHORIZATION AND PURPOSE OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. These rules and regulations are intended to define good practice which can normally be expected.
2. They are intended to insure adequate service and to prevent unfair charges to the customer, and to protect the Big Sandy Water System for unreasonable demands.
3. The Big Sandy Water utility is governed by the policies established by the Big Sandy Town Council and administered by the Town Clerk and Public Work Director.
4. The adoption of these rules and regulations shall in no way preclude the Town of Big Sandy Council from altering or amending them in whole or in part, or from requiring any other or additional service, equipment, facility, or standard upon complaint, upon its motion, or upon the application of the Water Department.
5. These rules and regulations are not relieving in any way the Big Sandy Water Department from any of its duties under the laws of the State of Montana.
6. The authority requiring the establishment of the rules and regulations is contained in Title 69, Chapter 7, Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

DEFINITIONS

Unless the context specifically indicates otherwise, the meaning of the terms used in this title shall be as follows:

1. "Town Council" means the duly elected governing body of the Town of Big Sandy, to include the Mayor.
2. "Town Water" means the system operated by the Town Water Department for the treatment and distribution of water.
3. "Commercial Service" means any water other than solely for residential purposes. Where a single structure has combined business and residential usage, the water service shall be considered "Commercial Service". Schools, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, churches, trailer parks, apartments, condominiums, and rooming houses having two or more rooms on a rental basis are considered "Commercial Services".
4. "Customer" or "Consumer" means an individual, partnership, association, firm, public or private corporation or government agency receiving water. In the case of a tenant/landlord, the property owner, or their legally authorized agent, is considered the customer or consumer.
5. "Developer" means any individual, firm, corporation, or other entity who causes improvements to be made upon the land with said improvements requiring water service.

6. "Distribution Mains" or "Mains" means a water pipe owned, operated, and maintained by the Town of Big Sandy Water Department, which is used for the distribution of water and to which service connections are made.
7. "Permittee" means any individual, firm, corporation, or other entity which obtains a written permit to cause construction work to be performed in accordance with the permit.
8. "Private Fire Protection Line" means a water service line extending from the distribution main to and through a structure for which the sole purpose of use is for the extinguishment of fire. A private fire protection system is the property of the customer and the Water Department does not maintain any portion or component of the system.
9. "Public Service Commission" means the Montana Public Service Commission.
10. "Service Connection" Or "Service Tap" means the piping from the service connection at the main to the customer's premises.
11. "Service Pipe" or "Service Line" means the piping from the service connection at the main to the customer premises.
12. "Town Standards" means those standards adopted by the Town Council, which pertain to the design, materials, and construction practices for the water works industry.
13. "Residential Service" means the water usage, solely for residential purposes.
14. "Water Department" means the Town of Big Sandy Department.

RECORD AND REPORTS

1. Preservation of Records. All records required by these rules and regulations, the State of Montana Water Quality Bureau, the Public Service commission, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Safe Drinking Water Act shall be preserved in accordance with the "Rules to Govern the Preservation of Records of Public Utilities and Licensees", as provided by the National Association of Regulatory Utilities Commissioners (NARUC), dated April 1972, or appropriate State and Federal Agency requirements. The record shall be kept at the Town Clerk's office and shall be open at reasonable hours for examination by the Public Service Commission or its representative or other State and Federal Agencies, as applicable.
2. Filing of Rules, Regulations and Rate Schedule: No rules, regulations, or schedules of rates or modifications of the same, shall be effective until adopted by the Town Council after due process of law and filed with the Montana Public Service Commission.
3. Posting. The Water Department shall exhibit, in a conspicuous location, a suitable placard in large type, giving information to the customer that a copy of the rules and regulations and a schedule of rates of the Water Department are available for their inspection. The placard shall also state that the Water Department is regulated by the Town Council and administered by the Town Clerk and Public Works Director.

APPLICATION FOR WATER SERVICE

1. Free Service. The Water Department shall not supply free water to any customer, public or private.
2. Introduction of Service within Big Sandy Town Limits. All residential or commercial customers wishing water service to premises, not presently receiving water service, that is located or will be located within the Town limits must make application at the Town Clerk's Office, on forms provided therefore, setting forth in said application all purposes for which water service will be used on the premises.
3. Introduction of Water Service outside of the Big Sandy Town Limits. Reserved.
4. New Applications. All new applications for the introduction of water service must be signed by the property owner, or their agent duly authorized, in writing, if applicable. Agent shall not include tenant.

5. Change of Contracting Customer. Any change in the identity of the contracting customer, property owner and/or legal agent, at a premises served by town water will require a new application for service, and no new application will be approved until all unpaid water charges, if any, have been paid in full. In all cases, the property owner shall be liable for all charges for water service to the property.
6. Application for Temporary Service. Water service for building, construction or other temporary purposes must be specially applied for. The method of connection and charges to be customer must be agreed upon before obtaining any service. The usage charge may be based on an agreeable estimate of water to be used at a rate commensurate with the rate schedule. The Water Department reserves the right to require metering of such temporary use, if the condition warrants. In any cases, the customer must pay for all charges, except the meter, necessary to provide the temporary service including the removal of the service and the meter if required.
7. Application for Private Fire Protection Service: Customers requesting fire protection systems shall make special application. The size and location of fire protection system connections will be determined by the Water Department. The pipe line used for the system shall be separate, with no interconnections between said service pipe and any other piping or fixtures within or outside the structure. The customer shall pay all costs of installation, operation, and maintenance of the system and the entire system shall be subject to inspection, test and approval of the Water Department before service is made effective, and at such time thereafter as may be deemed necessary or appropriate by the Water Department. The extend of the rights of the private fire service customer is to receive, but only at times of fire on his premises, such supply of water as shall then be available. The Water Department shall not be considered in any way an insurer of property or persons, or to have undertaken to extinguish fire or to protect any persons or property against loss or damage on account of any injury to property or person by reason of fire, water, failure to supply water, or pressure, or any other cause whatsoever. Hydrants or their fixture connected to a private fire service system may be sealed by the Water Department and such seals may be broken only in case of fire or as specially permitted by the Water Department, and the customer shall immediately notify the Water Department of the breaking of such seals. Private Fire Protection systems will be metered and will be charged as a service according to size as prescribed in the rate schedule. Whenever fire service system is to be tested, the customer shall notify the Water Department of such test, designating the day and hour when said test is to be made, so that, if desired, the Water Department may have an inspector present during the test.
8. Change in Use. The Customer agrees to obtain, in advance, the approval of the Public Works Supervisor for any change, alternation or addition in the fixtures, openings and uses specified in the application.
9. Prior Responsibility. It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the Water Department prior to making application to be sure that there is a town owned main adjacent to the applicant's property. If no main exists or there is not sufficient supply for the intended use, it is the applicant's responsibility, if service is still desired, to extend or install main in accordance with "Extension of Mains".
10. Rights and Compliance. Upon approval of the application for service, the consumer has the right to take and receive a supply of water for the particular premises for the purpose specified in the application subject to compliance by the consumer with these rules and regulations.

REFUSAL TO SERVE CUSTOMER

The Water Department may decline to serve an applicant:

1. Until the applicant has complied with these rules and regulations; or

2. If in the judgment of the Public Work Supervisor, the applicant's installation of piping, equipment or appurtenances is regarded as hazardous or of such character that satisfactory service cannot be given; or
3. The applicant's system could cause damage or harmful effects to the town's water system or adjoining properties.
4. All such refusals to serve shall be made in writing to the applicant.

COMPLAINTS

The Water Department shall make a full and prompt investigation of all complaints made by customers of the Water Department either directly or through the Public Service Commission and report the results thereof to the customer. If the complaint is not rectified to the satisfaction of the customer, the Water Department shall notify the customer of the privilege of appeal to the Town Council or Consumer Service Representative of the Public Service Commission.

PROVISION OF SERVICE

1. Limitations of Connections. No plumber or other person shall be allowed to make connection with any conduit pipe or other fixture or to connect pipes when they have been disconnected or to turn water off or on, on any premises served by the Water Department, without permission from the Water Department.
2. Cross Connections. No pipes or fixtures connected to the water supply of the Big Sandy Water Department will be connected, directly or indirectly, to pipes or fixtures containing water from any other source.
3. Waste of Water. Waste of water is prohibited, and consumers must keep their fixtures and service pipes in good working order and free of leaks at their own expense, and keep all waterways closed when not in use. Leaky fixtures must be repaired at once without waiting for notice from the Water Department. When the Water Department becomes aware of a leak in service pipe of a customer, notice will be given allowing **reasonable** time for repairs to be made. If the repairs are not made within the allocated time and no time extension has been granted or applied for, the water will be shut off by the Water Department without further notice.
4. Seasonal Service. Where water service is desired for only certain periods of each year, for such as vacation homes, pastures, gardens or where the customer wants the service discontinued for a period of time in excess of three months each year, the customer shall be considered receiving "seasonal service". When such service is desired, the customer shall notify the Water Department, in writing, stating the date of water shut off and the date of water turn on. During the full billing periods the water is off, the minimum base rate will be charged.
5. Irrigation Water. Residential customers shall receive water for irrigation of lawn and garden purposes. All usage of water for irrigation purposes shall be charged to said customer at the regular rates provided for water consumption within the Town of Big Sandy in excess of the monthly minimum charge.
6. Conservation Fee. In the interest of preventing waste and promoting conservation of water, the Water Department may, if conditions require, specify the hours and days during which customers may irrigate lawns and gardens. The Water Department shall publish ads in the local newspaper and post such notice in the Town Clerk's Office. The Water Department will make reasonable determination based upon existing facts whether a customer is using water in a wasteful manner or failing to observe the hours and days for sprinkling service and deliver such customer a copy of the notice of hours and days of sprinkling and shall advise the customer of the "conservation fee" which is to be charged if water is wasted or the specified sprinkling hours and days are not observed. If the

customer cannot be contacted at the time the Water Department discovers the customer's waste of water or failure to observe sprinkling hours, when the Water Department shall leave notice of the violation at the customer's door and it shall be deemed the customer has been adequately notified. If the customer is found to be wasting water or otherwise failing to observe sprinkling hours at any subsequent time in the sprinkling season, the Water Department may charge and bill the customer a "conservation fee" in the amount designated in the most current rate structure. If the customer does not pay the fee after a **reasonable time**, the Water Department shall discontinue service until paid. All expense incurred by the Water Department to discontinue service and subsequent reconnection shall be paid by the customer.

7. Turn-on Service. No charge will be made to new customers for turning the water on or to existing customers canceling their account or turning the water off if the turn-on or off is made during regular working hours. Turn-on service required at times other than regular working hours or under conditions other than stated above will be charged in accordance with the rate schedule. This no charge service does not apply to temporary service, seasonal service or service for sprinkling purpose.
8. Resale of Water. Water furnished by the Water Department shall not be resold or caused to be resold by any customer unless said customer is engaged in the business of distributing water as a public utility as approved by the Public Service Commission.
9. Fire. In case of fire or an alarm of fire and while water is being used for extinguishment of fires, the use of water for fountains, yard sprinkling, or nonessential use is positively prohibited.
10. Access to property. The Water Department Personnel shall, at all reasonable times, have access to meters, service connections, curb boxes, and any property owned by the Town, which is on the customer's premises, for the purpose of maintenance, operation and inspection. The Water Department also reserves the right to inspect all plumbing connected to and with the supply of water for violations of use or improper or illegal connections. Upon reasonable notice, the customer shall remove ingress or egress or interfere with the work of the Water Department personnel. Refusal on the part of the customer to allow access, remove obstructions, or contain pets for such purpose, shall be deemed to be sufficient cause for discontinuance of service. The customer shall have the right to verify the identity of the person seeking access.
11. Identification of Employees. Every employee of the Water Department whose duties require the entering of customer's premises shall carry and identification card which identifies the employee as a representative of the Water Department. The identification card shall contain pertinent information necessary to identify the employee including a photograph, together with the telephone number of the Water Department. The customer may deny access to the customer's premises while the customer calls the Water Department to verify the authenticity of the identification and that the employee is working for the Water Department on official business.
12. Interior Plumbing and Fixtures. All plumbing connected, directly or indirectly, to the supply or service of the Water Department shall conform to the installation requirements of the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical offices, known as the "Uniform Plumbing Codes".

RATE ESTABLISHMENT

1. Rates and Rate Adjustments. All rates and rate adjustments shall be adopted by the Town Council through the Hearing Process as provided by law. Rate increases for comparable classifications and zones outside the municipal boundaries may not exceed those set within the municipal limits as provided in Section 69-7-201 MCA.

2. Rate Charged Against Property. The water rate shall be charged against the property on which it is furnished, and for any cause any sums due therefore become delinquent, service may be shut off from the property and not turned on again until all such delinquencies have been paid in full. No change of ownership shall affect the application of this Rule.

METERING

1. Providing Meters. All water furnished by the Water Department, except as provided for by these rules and regulations, shall be metered. The Water Department shall provide, operate, and maintain all such meters up to 2" in size except as provided for by these rules and regulations. When a meter in excess of 2" is requested and approved for installation, the Water Department shall pay the cost of a 2" meter only and the customer shall pay the additional cost of the larger meter, together with all installation, maintenance, and testing thereof.
2. Size of Meter. The Water Department shall determine the size of any meter installed. Such determination shall be based on comparative usage of the facility to be served with other similar type facilities served or by the flow demanded of the facility to be served.
3. Replacement of Meter. The Water Department may replace or remove for testing any meter at such time as it may deem necessary.
4. Location of Meters. The customer shall provide adequate protection of the meter from frost or other damage and the meter must be located where it is easily accessible for reading and repair purposes. The meter must be located as nearly as practical to the point of entry to structure and shall be isolated by gate valves to facilitate removal for testing. Where the meter will be located outside of a structure, where would otherwise protect it from freezing or other damage, the customer shall install a meter box, provided by the Water Department and paid for at cost by the customer, in some cases the Water Department may approve certain meter boxes for installation but prior approval must be granted. The cost, of repairs to meters as a result of freezing or other damage, shall be paid by the customer. When a meter is located inside a house or building, the Water Department, at its own expense, may install a remote register, for meter reading, on the exterior of the house or building.
5. Meter Testing. The Water Department shall have apparatus equipment for testing the accuracy of all meters owned by the Water Department or other meters from which reading are taken for the purpose of billing customers for water used through 2" in size, for testing meters larger than 2", the apparatus and meters may be sent to a qualified shop or laboratory for such testing. The Water Department shall keep an accurate record of the date and results of testing of each meter.
6. Meter accuracy. Whenever a meter is found to exceed a limit of two percent (2%) fast or slow it must be either be replaced or adjusted so as to register as nearly one-hundred percent (100%) as commercially practical. A manufacturer's certified test will be acceptable for the accuracy of all new meters.
7. Sealing. All meters, which the Water Department deems to be within the prescribed accuracy, shall be sealed by the Water Department. The breaking of seals by unauthorized persons or tampering with any portion of the meter or meter piping shall be violation of these rules and regulations. If the seals of the meter, the meter seals, or the meter piping show signs of tampering, the meter shall be resealed by the Water Department and notice shall be given to the customer that the meter, meter piping, and/or meter seals have been tampered with and that such tampering is a violation of these rules and regulations. If the meter, the meter piping, and/or meter seals are further tampered with, the Water Department may charge and bill the customer a fee as established in the rate structure ordinance and for each subsequent violation. The fee shall represent the

estimated cost of the meter inspection, repair, testing, and resealing. The water will be shut off to the customer until the fee is paid and a reasonable estimate of water actually received has been charged and payment received by the Water Department. All expenses incurred by the Water Department to discontinue serve and subsequent reconnection shall be paid by the customer.

8. Metering of Multiple Unit Dwellings. In the case of mobile home parks, trailer courts, apartment houses, town houses, condominiums, rooming houses, emporium shops, malls or like where individual metering is not practical and a single owner or association of owners is primarily responsible for payment of water use, the Water Department may require only one meter to service all units and will send only one bill. In such cases, if payment is not kept current, the whole service may be disconnected as per these regulations. Metering under these conditions must be approved in writing by the Water Department on the merit of each case.
9. Separate Services. All separately metered services must be controlled by a separate curb cock and curb box.

BACKFLOW PREVENTION

The customer shall, when requested by the Water Department or when required by legally constituted authority, furnish, own, and install a backflow prevention device in the customer's piping or plumbing. Said device shall be acceptable to the Water Department and shall be installed, tested from time to time, and maintained by or at the customer's expense in accordance with the requirements of the Water Department.

FLAT RATES

No new flat rate users will be allowed by the Water Department. All new customers will be required to install meters.

SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS

1. Notification of Scheduled Interruption. Every customer affected by a scheduled interruption of service shall be notified in advance of all programmed work. Such notice shall be made at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance in the form of personal contact or a notification tag placed on the entrance way.
2. Emergency Interruption. The Water Department shall make diligent effort to avoid interruptions of service, and when such interruptions occur, shall re-establish service as soon as possible. When emergency repairs, such as main breaks, fire hydrant damage, etc., become necessary, an concerted effort shall be made by the Water Department to repair the cause without total disruption of service, except for that period when complete shut off may be required due to the nature of the damage. Notification of affected customers may not be possible. However, every effort shall be made by the Water Department to have an announcement sent over the electronic media if the period of total interruption of service is expected to last more than four (4) hours.
3. Liability. The Water Department shall not be liable to customers or others for failure or interruption of water service due to main breaks, act of God, governmental regulations, court or Public Service Commission orders, acts of public enemy, strikes or labor disputes, accidents, weather conditions, acts of third parties, droughts, or, without limitation by the foregoing, any other cause beyond the reasonable control of the Water Department or its personnel.

4. Adjustment of Rates for Interruptions. Interruptions of service due to any other foregoing reason or for frozen facilities of the customer shall not render the Water Department liable for any adjustment in the bill.

DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE

1. Vacation of Premises. Any customer, who is about to vacate any premises supplied with service by the Water Department or, for any reason, wishes to have service discontinued shall give at least twenty-four (24) hours notice to the Water Department. Such notice shall specify the date on which discontinuance is desired. Discontinuance will not be made on Saturday, Sunday, or Holidays unless the customer agrees, in writing, to pay the actual cost of such discontinuance. Until the Water Department receives notice of discontinuance, the customer shall be held responsible for all service rendered.
2. Temporary Discontinuance. Should the customer desire temporary discontinuance of service, the Water Department shall, when notified in writing, shut off the water at the curb stop. In the event the curb stop cannot be shut off, for reasons beyond the control of the Water Department, the Water Department shall notify the customer of reasons for not discontinuing service. The base rate shall be charged during the temporary discontinuance of service.
3. Discontinuance by the Water Department. The Water Department shall make diligent effort to induce the customer to comply with its rules and regulations including the paying of bills.
4. Water Shut-off Notices. Service shall only be discontinued for violations of these rules after written notice has been given to the customer by the Water Department that the violation of rules must cease, provided however, that where fraudulent use of water is detected, or where the Water Department's regulating or measuring equipment has been tampered with, or where a dangerous condition is found to exist on the customer's premises, the water may be shut off without advance notice, if the customer so notified does not comply with the notice within seven (7) days, the Water Department shall then place notice upon the premises that indicates the date when the water will be shut off. The Water Department shall not be liable for failure of the customer to see such notice or for the disappearance of such notice from the premises. The Water Department shall keep record of such notices. Services shall only be discontinued for non-payment of bills and after the bill becomes sixty (60) or more days delinquent. The water bills shall contain lines for Past Due Water. An amount due shown on this line shall be deemed adequate notice of a delinquent account. Ten (10) days after such notice, if the customer has not complied or made suitable arrangements with the Water Department for payment, The Water Department shall place notice upon the premises that indicates the date when the water will be shut off. The Water Department shall not be liable for failure of the customer to see such notice or for the disappearance of such notice from the premises. The Water Department shall keep record of all such notices. The Water Department will not discontinue service on Friday, Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays, or days prior to the Holidays, or if an emergency affecting health exists. A written statement from a physician or health agency must be presented to the Water Department within the ten (10) days or it will be assumed no such health condition exists and the Water Department cannot be held liable.
5. Charge or Reconnection. Whenever the supply of water is turned off for violation of these rules and regulations, including nonpayment of bills, dangerous conditions, or fraudulent usage, the offending situation shall have to be rectified

to the satisfaction of the Water System and payment for a turn-on charge, as set forth in the rate schedule, must be paid before the water will be turned on.

ADEQUACY OF FACILITIES

The Water Department shall construct, operate, and maintain its entire water supply system in such condition that it will furnish safe, adequate, and continuous service. The Water Department shall comply with the rules of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department Environmental Quality (DEQ) governing purity of water, testing of water and such other rules they may prescribe, pursuant to law, having as their ultimate end of the purity of water.

FIRE HYDRANTS

Fire hydrants, except those on private fire protection lines, are the property of the Water Department, which shall have the responsibility for maintenance and repair of said hydrants. Hydrant rental shall be charged in accordance with the rate schedule.

BILLING

1. Billing Periods. Meters for all customers shall be read at monthly or other regular intervals, except specific customers having other periods of reading due to unusual circumstances. The date of the month for reading any meter shall be as close as practical to the same date of the previous reading. The billing shall likewise be monthly or other regular intervals with the date of mailing of said bill as near as practical to the date of mailing of the previous bill.
2. Opening and Closing Bills. Opening and closing bills for water service rendered for periods of five (5) days more or five (5) days less than normal billing period will be computed in accordance with the appropriate rate plus amount of water used, on a pro-rated basis of the number days in the period water service was rendered to the number of days in the normal billing period.
3. Billing Information. Bills shall show the meter reading at the beginning and the end of the period for which the bill is rendered, the billing date, the number of gallons supplied, and the date upon which payment shall be due.
4. Multiple Unit Billing. All cases where more than one (1) unit dwelling commercial enterprise, or the like, as provided for these regulations referred to as "Metering of Multiple Unit Dwelling", is served through a common meter, one bill only shall be rendered for payment of water service. The bill shall be payable by the owner or association of owners and shall comply with the most current rate schedule. Failure to make payment shall subject the entire service to discontinuance as provided in these Regulations. No provision shall be made for empty units unless the box and the Water Department maintains absolute control of the turning off and one of said unit and the Water System has turned the water off at the request of the customer.
5. Adjustment of Bills. The customer, at the customer's request, will be instructed on how to read the water meter. If the customer believes the meter reading shown on the bill is incorrect by comparing previous billing and current readings, the customer shall notify the Water Department within five (5) days of the receipt of the billing in question. In case of a dispute as to the accuracy of the meter, the customer, upon depositing the amount set forth in the Rate Scheduled, may demand that the meter be removed and tested for accuracy and may demand that the testing be done in the presence of the customer. The customer who desires to be present for said testing shall bear any and all costs incurred by the customer for the customer to be present. If the meter is found to be registering correctly (within two percent (2%) of true

recording) or in favor of the customer, the deposited amount shall be forfeited to the Water Department. If the meter is found to be recording incorrectly (over two percent (2%) of true recording) against the customer, the Water Department shall refund the deposit and refund the overcharge, based on the true recording, for a period of six (6) months or for a lesser period, if the date of cause can be established from record related to the cause.

6. Error in Billing. If an error in billing or meter reading has been made, the Water Department may go back up to six (6) months to recover any under-charge or must go back six (6) months to refund any over-collection, if applicable.
7. Dead Meters: If a meter is found not to register for any period, the Water Department shall compute the water used as follows:
 - a. For customers who have been served for over one (1) year, the amount billed shall be based on the same consumption as that for the same period the previous year.
 - b. For customers who have been served for less than one (1) year, the amount billed shall be based on consumption for the previous billing period.Exception will be made to this rule if the facts reasonable show that either method does not yield the correct consumption for the period the meter is inoperative.
8. Flat Rate. No flat rate users.
9. Partial Payments. Partial payment of utility bill shall be divided equally amount the utilities owed to the Town of Big Sandy.
10. Deposits. Reserved

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Bills are due and payable in full within 25 days of billing date. A bill not paid in full after 25 days is considered delinquent, and service may be discontinued as per Discontinuance of Service Rule, unless a suitable payment schedule is made with the filing clerk, provided, however, that no outstanding balance shall be permitted to exceed the equivalent of three (3) months average bill on the property. All bills not paid within said 30-day period shall accrue interest at the rate of 1-1/2% per month until paid in full. The base rate (minimum charge) shall be charged regardless of occupancy.