



WE HEAR YOU!

Addressing Billing Concerns

Concern

Recently, the city of Rocky Mount has received calls and/or inquiries via social media regarding higher utility bills. Some concerns have included a recent spike in the cost of natural gas, the city's utility rate and if there is ever a misreading of residential or commercial meters.

Explanation

The weather, usage and rate are the three factors which drive utility bills. With low temperatures for many days on end, heating systems work extremely hard, using more energy to maintain the temperature inside the home. The more energy used results in higher than normal utility bills. Additionally, the city was faced with a spike in the wholesale cost of natural gas. We are still awaiting results from the NC attorney general who is continuing to investigate our concerns regarding the possibility of price gouging.

Suggestions

To counter the effects of low temperatures on usage, customers are encouraged to set the thermostat to 68 degrees. For homes heated with natural gas, 62 degrees is the recommended temperature setting at night or while away from home. To assist even further, Rocky Mount Public Utilities will perform a free energy audit upon request. During the audit, technicians will visit your home to recommend ways you can save energy.

The city's Load Management Program is an additional way to cut down on energy consumption and ultimately cost. During periods of high demand for power, load management switches are utilized to reduce demand and lower the city's wholesale power costs. Customers who participate earn up to \$225 per year in credits on their electric bills.

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Concern

The city receives approximately 15 calls per year regarding concerns with the accuracy of residential electric meters. After retrieving and testing the meters in question, technicians have not discovered a residential electric meter reading incorrectly because the city uses electronic residential electric meters that are extremely reliable. These types of meters were installed starting in 2005.

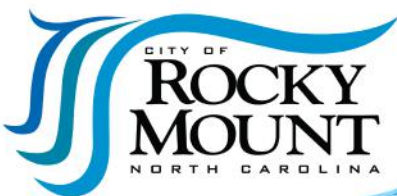
Explanation

Metering for large commercial and industrial customers often utilize current transformers (CTs). That's because the electric current usage by these customers is often too large to be registered by a residential type electric meter, so CT's are used to measure actual consumption. Site scans are performed periodically to test these types of electric meters for accuracy and to validate the results with information in our billing system. In the rare instance that there is an issue with the meters for our larger customers, the city will advise the customer of any over or under billing and work with them to resolve the issue.

Available Avenues for Assistance

Working with residents not only means finding solutions to assist those who cannot pay their utility bills, such as the Equal Pay Program, Due Date Option Program or Payment Assistance Programs, but it also means the city will improve processes and make sure measures are in place to catch any rare, incorrect instances. The city plans to have more direct communication with customers and a thorough training of front line staff to identify and provide assistance for any customer concerns that need further review.

For billing inquiries or questions about assistance programs, call 252-972-1250.



"We hear your concerns, and we are willing to do everything we can to help."
- Rochelle D. Small-Toney, City Manager