



Combes Municipal Utility Customer Service Policy

October 1, 2025

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Utility Customer Service Policy Schedule of Fees:

Attachment A: 2008-2 Utility Rates Ordinance

Attachment B: Application for Utility Services

Attachment C: Water and Cross Connection Policy

1. Overview

Policy

Purpose: The intent of this policy is to provide the customers of Combes Municipal Utilities (the Utility) and the employees of the City of Combes (the City) a helpful guide with uniform procedures for providing utility customer service. The City desires to treat its citizens and customers in a fair and indiscriminate manner while recognizing that each citizen and customer has distinct needs and requirements. This policy is not meant to be all-inclusive but offers direction and guidance for the City employees.

Applicability: This policy applies to every customer or applicant for utility service with the Utility.

Implementation: City employees are empowered and trained to use this policy to deliver the highest quality of customer service to the customer in a reasonable, equitable and nondiscriminatory fashion. Employees are expected to be prompt, courteous, and professional in each interaction with the customer. Employees are expected to deal with each decision with empathy and understanding, listening carefully to the needs and requirements of individual customers. Ultimately, the City Manager accepts the responsibility as the final authority on implementation of this policy. In instances where the strict enforcement of this policy would create an undue burden on an applicant or customer, the City Manager (or its designee) may waive all or a portion of any policy if the waiver of the applicable policy does not adversely affect the City, the Utility, other applicants, or other customers.

Adoption and Amendments: This policy is subject to approval by the Combes Commissioners and is subject to amendment by the Board and applicable state and federal laws and regulations. The Board shall make available any changes to the approved policies contained in this document.

Availability: This policy and all documents referred to in this policy shall be available at the Utility Customer Services office located at 21626 Hand Road, Combes, Texas 78535 and on the City's web site at www.cityofcombes.com

Rights

Customer's Rights

To request, free of charge, historic billing and usage information.

There will be a fee if customer requests a meter test. If the test results show an advantage to the Utility of more than two percent (2%) of usage the customer's account will be given a credit to their account for the amount of the meter test and for the time period and amount that appears to having been accounted for inappropriately but not to exceed six months or the testing difference. If the test results show an advantage to the customer of more than two percent (2%) of usage the customer's account will be charged for the amount for the time period and amount that appears to having been accounted for inappropriately but not to exceed six months or the testing difference.

City's Rights

To have access to the City's utility facilities at any time.

To receive notice of changes in address, status of utility service, or problems with utility service.

To receive timely payment for services delivered to a customer.

To discontinue service for non-payment, theft of service or returned checks.

To take legal action regarding equipment tampering or financial delinquencies.

Responsibilities**Customer's Responsibilities**

- To allow the City personnel access to property to set up and maintain service.
- To pay bills by due date shown on each monthly bill.
- To inform the City if someone other than the account holder should be notified prior to disconnection for nonpayment.
- To notify the Utility of questions, complaints, or changes regarding utility service.
- To notify the Utility of name changes on an account for the following events:
 - Marriage or other co-habitation additions to a service location with marriage license or driver's license.
 - Divorce by providing a divorce decree or letter signed by both parties turning over account to one party.
 - Death by providing a copy of a death certificate.
- To be aware of City owned property at the customer's property and safeguard it and/or report problems regarding it to the City.
- To ensure utility service provided is for sole use and convenience of the premises under contract for service.
- To adhere to conservation measures imposed by the Utility.

City's Responsibilities

- To provide prompt, professional, and courteous service.
- To apply the customer's deposit to their account balance when the customer closes their account and send any remaining balance to a forwarding address supplied by the customer.
- To provide and explain rate schedules, how meters are read, and other additional, reasonable information.
- To provide historic billing and usage information when requested by the customer.
- To provide usage and conservation information.
- To operate the Utility in an efficient manner.

Scope of Service

Services Provided: The city owns and operates Combes Water and Wastewater Systems, and Combes Solid Waste services to applicants requesting service and existing customers within the City's service areas as permitted, when existing infrastructure is available for service.

Services Billed: Fees on a customer's utility bill can include:

- Water Service
- Wastewater (Sewer) Service
- Sanitation Service-Garbage Can, Bulky and Brush Services
- Storm Water Fee
- Fire Protection Fee
- Sales and Use Tax where applicable and can only be waived if a customer has an Exemption Certificate (issued by the State of Texas) on file with the City.

2. **Service Initiation**

Residential Utility Account:

Utility deposits will now be the responsibility of property owners, not renters.

Property owners may request that bills be sent to tenants, but the account and deposit remain under the owner's name.

Property Owners must provide the following to Customer Service Department:

- Copy of valid driver's license or ID.
- Application for Service
- Water Agreement and/or Cross Connection
- Utility deposit as specified in Attachment A- Ordinance No. 2008-2 (*Deposit will remain on file until owner sells the home, new owners will require a deposit*)

Commercial Utility Account and/ or Fire Hydrant Traveling Meters

Property Owners must provide the following to Customer Service Department:

- Copy of valid driver's license or ID.
- Tax ID
- Application for Service
- Water Agreement and/or Cross Connection
- Commercial Utility deposit as specified in Attachment A- Ordinance No. 2008-2 (*Deposit will remain on file until owner sells the business, new owners will require a commercial deposit*)

Applicant with Delinquent Account with the City

Applicant must provide the following to Customer Service Department what is required with normal account initiation as provided by this section as well as:

- Payment of delinquent balance in full.
- Cash deposit or additional deposit. No letter of reference or co-signer is permitted on an account which has been delinquent.
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Denial of Service

The Utility can deny service if any of the following:

- The applicant has failed or refuses to fulfill the conditions necessary to initiate service as described in this policy.
- The applicant has failed or refuses to pay indebtedness to the City for previously provided service by the Utility [to the applicant](#) including payment plans, extensions, or other arrangements.
- The applicant's installation or equipment is known or appears to be hazardous or in such condition that service cannot be given, or the extension of service may endanger the public health, safety, or welfare.
- The applicant fails to comply with state or federal laws or regulations or City ordinances, rules, or regulations governing the requested service.
- The applicant's request for service is being made in another name in order to avoid or evade payment of a prior bill for utility service.
- When an applicant is refused for any of these reasons the City shall inform the applicant of the reason for the denial of service and shall advise the applicant on how to remedy the situation or how to file a complaint with the municipal or state regulatory authorities.

3. Rates

The City's published rate ordinance schedules, which state the conditions under which each schedule is available for utility service. Rate classification and assignment shall be made by the City in accordance with the availability and type of service provisions in the City's rate schedules. Rate schedules have been developed for the standard types of service provided by the City. If an applicant or customer request for utility service involves unusual circumstance, usage, or load characteristics not regularly encountered by the City, or if the applicant or customer qualifies for service under more than one of the City's available schedules, the City shall provide service under the rate schedule determined by the City to be most applicable.

If a customer changes the nature or character of the service requirements, the City may, upon review of the information available pertaining to the revised service requirement, reassign the customer to the appropriate rate schedule.

If an applicant or customer is eligible to receive service under more than one of the City's rate schedules, then the City shall assign the most appropriate rate schedule for service which considers, in the City's sole judgment, the various service requirements, potential impact on the City facilities, the potential relative costs of serving the customer, and other available pertinent information.

Rates are established through City ordinance approval by the Combes City Council (Commissioners) and may be amended or modified, at any time during the fiscal year. A customer's rate may be changed if there is a substantial change in the character or condition of the customer's service, or as otherwise mandated by the Council.

4. Billing and Terms of Payment

Billing Period: Bills for utility service shall be rendered monthly unless service is rendered for a period less than a month. The term "month" or "monthly" for billing purposes shall mean the period between any two consecutive readings of the meter, for the unmetered utility services, a period of time equal to approximately thirty (30) days. Meter readings shall be taken as nearly as practicable every thirty (30) days, but not necessarily at the beginning or ending of a calendar month. The actual period may vary depending on weekends, weather conditions, or other factors that would result in the billing period being somewhat less or greater than thirty (30) days. In rare cases a meter may be unable to be read on a monthly basis by City staff. In that case, an estimated reading will be used for bill calculation. A meter reading is not to be estimated for more than three consecutive months without being read and the account is trued up from any estimation adjustments to actual.

Billing Form: The following information will be included on the billing form or made available to the customer at the Customer Service office:

General account information including the account number, reading cycle number, the service address, the last payment date and amount, the service period for which this bill covers, the billing date, and the billing due date.

For metered activities the meter number, the actual or estimated previous reading, current reading, consumption, and dollar amount due for that meter.

For non-metered activities a description is given along with the dollar amount due for that item. The total account balance brought forward from the previous balance, total current charges and the final total account balance with due date.

Payment Due Date: Each bill for service is due ten (10) days after issuance regardless of the nature of the service, unless such day falls on a holiday or weekend, in which case payment is due the next business day. Failure to receive a properly rendered bill shall not entitle the customer relief from penalties for late payments. Second Notice is due fifteen days (15) after original due date- First notice due on the 10th, second notice is due on the 25th.

Payment Options: The City will accept the following form of payment:

- Cash
- Personal Checks with City of Combes as payee. If a customer has two returned checks within twelve (12) months the City will not accept personal checks from that customer until two (2) years of timely payments have been received.
- On-Line Payments www.cityofcombes.com <https://3.municipal.cc/CombesTX/Webportal/>
- Cashier's Check with City of Combes as payee.
- Money Orders with City of Combes as payee.
- Debit cards and/or credit cards including Master Card, Discover, or Visa.
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The City will NOT accept the following:

- Severely bent or mutilated Coins or Currency.
- Foreign Coins and Currency.
- Third Party Checks.
- Post Dated or Stale Dated Checks.
- Checks made for an amount greater than is what due unless it can be Applied to a Credit on the Customer's Account.
- American Express credit cards.

Payment Locations and Hours

- Utility payments may be mailed to City of Combes P.O. Box 280, Combes, Texas 78535-0280.
- Face to face transactions can be made at the Customer Service Office at City Hall 21626 Hand Road, Combes, Texas 78535 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on regular business days.
- Debit cards and/or credit cards including Master Card, Visa, and/or Discover transactions can be made on the City's web site at www.cityofcombes.com under utility tab, or over the phone by calling 956-423-2714 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- A night depository drop is located at City Hall 21626 Hand Road, Combes, Texas 78535. Payments made via this method should be clearly identifiable for application to a utility payment and for what account it is intended to be applied to.
- KIOSK Machine outside City Hall entrance- Check, Money Order, Cash, or Credit Card may be used.

Returned Checks and ACH Rejects

A service charge per Schedule A shall be assessed to any customer whose check is returned unpaid. The service charge shall be in addition to any late payment penalty if the payment is not made good and the service fee not paid prior to the delinquent date of the bill. If two or more returned checks are incurred on an account within twelve (12) months the account will be "cash" only until two (2) years of timely payments have been made on the account.

Delinquent Date: Each bill for service is delinquent after the tenth day (10) days after issuance regardless of the nature of the service, unless such day falls on a holiday or weekend, in which case payment is delinquent the next business day.

Disputed Bills: In the event of a dispute between the City and the customer as to the amount of a bill, the undisputed amount is payable by the due date, the remaining portion of bill is due and payable upon completion of dispute, if not sooner. A dispute is completed upon notification by the City of the results of the City's investigation, unless within five (5) days the customer files a complaint with City Administrator for remedy.

If Over Billing or Under Billing Occurs: If amounts billed for utility services are different than the City's approved rates, or if the City fails to bill the customer for services, a billing adjustment shall be calculated by the City.

Over Billing: If the customer was over billed, an adjustment shall be made for the entire period of the over billings up to six (6) months preceding the discovery of the billing error.

Under Billing: If the customer was under billed, the city may bill the customer for the under billed amount. The back billing shall not exceed a period of six (6) months preceding the discovery unless such billing is a result of meter tampering, bypass, unauthorized use of services, or theft of services.

5. **Unauthorized Use of Service/Theft of Service:** No Utility meters, equipment or property, whether on Customer's premises or elsewhere, are to be tampered with or interfered with for any reason. The Utility and the City are not liable for injury to customer, customer's employee, or others resulting from tampering with or attempting to repair or maintain any of Utility facilities, and customer agrees to indemnify and hold Utility and City harmless. Unauthorized use and tampering of the Utility services is a misdemeanor and will be fully prosecuted of the law. In the event of use or evidence of attempted use of equipment or by any other means, service may be discontinued. The customer shall also be required to pay for theft of services.

The charge for the estimated amount of water used without Utility authorization which may be estimated based on amounts used under similar conditions during preceding years. Where no previous usage history exists or is considered unreliable, consumption may be estimated based on usage levels of similar customers and under similar conditions.

- The cost of replacing or repair of any damaged meter associated equipment,
- The cost of installing protective facilities or of relocation of meter, if determined necessary by the Utility, and
- The cost of any personnel or equipment by the Utility to detect unauthorized use of service and disconnect or restore such service.

6. Discontinuation of Services

Any customer desiring to terminate utility service shall contact the Customer Service office in person, mail, e-mail, with the following information to schedule termination of service:

- Customer account.
- Service location where termination is desired.
- Date service is requested to be terminated.
- Forwarding address for further correspondence.
- The customer may not request that only specific services be disconnected.
- The customer is not held responsible for service after termination date given unless the customer continues to use service or the terms and conditions of an existing agreement have not been met.

City Initiated Disconnections

The City has full authority to, and may, disconnect any or all utility services immediately and without notice under the following circumstances:

- If the customer fails or refuses to pay all or any portion of a bill for utility service within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date the bill is due (delinquent date) or failure to comply with terms of a deferred payment agreement or average payment plan service may be terminated.
- When the customer fails to comply with requirements within this policy or city ordinances
- When, in the City's sole opinion, a hazardous, public health, or public safety condition exists in or on the customer's premises or equipment.
- When customers move-in RVs, Travel Trailers, and/or other buildings utilized to live in and connect to existing City services without proper city authority for the additional connection and/or Zoning and Subdivisions Rules.
- Where service is connected without City authority by a person who has not made application for service, or where service has been reconnected without City authority following termination of service.
- Where the City's meter or service facility which serves the customer has been bypassed or tampered with in any way or customer uses the utility service in a manner not authorized under City policy or there has been a theft of service.

Prohibited Discontinuance: The City shall not discontinue service to a customer under the following circumstances:

Delinquency in payment for utility services by a previous occupant of the premises who no longer resides at the address at any time during the billing cycle.

Weather: Delinquency in payment for utility service when **Extreme heat** (e.g., heat index above 100°F) **Freezing temperatures and Natural disasters** (hurricanes, floods, etc.)

Moving / Transferring of Service: Utility deposit and up-to-date account balances are transferable from one service address to another.

The customer shall pay for reconnection at the applicable transfer fee for current customers, see Schedule A, for the new service location.

Final/Closed Account and Return of Utility Deposit: After an account has been closed by either customer request or policy of the Utility, all funds, including utility deposit, refunds, and overcharge credits will be used against amounts owed the Utility on the closed account first. Remaining funds will then be used against any amounts owed the Utility on any other accounts the customer may have with the Utility.

After accounts have been cleared up and closed, a check for the remaining money will be issued to the customer for any net credit or collection procedures utilized by the Utility will be instituted for any net debit balance (this may include submission to a third party and credit bureaus).

7. **Payment Plans:** The customer should contact the Customer Service Office to make/request any payment plan modifications.

Deferred Payment Arrangement: Utility offers, upon request, a deferred payment plan to any residential customer who has demonstrated good faith ability to pay a reasonable portion, but not all the utility bill if the customer has not previously been delinquent in payment of a bill/deferred payment arrangement at any time during the preceding twelve months. No more than two arrangements will be allowed per account per twelve-month period from date of first incident. No account can go three months passed due without approval from the Chief Financial Officer, and an active payment arrangement plan in place.

Account Confidentiality: The Texas Utility Code 182.052 states that a government-operated utility may not disclose personal information (which is an individual's address, telephone number, and/or social Utility number) in a customer's account record, or any information relating to the volume or units of utility usage or the amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage. In 2021, Texas law changed regarding confidentiality for utility customer information. Under **Texas Utilities Code § 182.052**, customer information, including address, telephone number, and usage data—is now **automatically kept confidential** by a government-operated utility **unless the customer opts out** and requests disclosure. Customer Service may share general information about high, low, or average bills for a given service location upon request.

Re-Reads: The Utility performs reasonable checks on meter readings, but a customer can request a re-read of their meter. A customer can receive two free re-reads every twelve months. If at a re-read the reading is not within reason of the prior reading, then the re-read will not count against the two free re-reads per 12 months. After those two re-reads per twelve months if more re-reads are requested by the customer and if the prior reading is verified within reason a fee as established on Schedule A will be applied to the customer account. Requests should be made through the Customer Service Office.

Service Calls / Work Orders:

Non-Emergency: Non-emergency service calls / work orders should be directed to the Customer Service Office. The Utility should be given at least a 24-hour advance notice and should be consulted regarding a proposed route for the move. The customer may be billed for the cost, direct cost of labor and materials, of services not the responsibility of the Utility as follows:

- Service calls requesting the relocation of facilities belonging to the Utility.
- Service calls requesting the temporary relocation of facilities belonging to the Utility.
- Service calls requesting installation or relocation of facilities belonging to the customer.
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Emergency: Emergency service calls / work orders should be directed to the Customer Service Office during regular business hours to 956-423-2714, or after hours to the Utility Service Dispatch Office 956-425-7131-County will dispatch Officer.

Leak Adjustments: A customer may request an adjustment be made, no more than one time every thirty-six-month period of time, and if the customer has documentation, such as a plumber's bill or receipt, that a leak did exist, the leak was sufficient in size to use an excessive amount of utility service, and that the leak has been fixed. Upon receipt of such documentation, the Utility shall determine whether to allow a leak adjustment. The leak adjustment will be applied to the overage of utility service above average usage and any related fees such as sewer adjustments during the winter averaging months. Sewer adjustments will also be made on commercial accounts no matter the time of year. The leak adjustment will be to the lowest conservation rate as permitted by Ordinance.

Adjustments for Unexplained High-Water Usage: There are situations when neither the customer nor the Utility can explain abnormally high-water consumption. An unexplained high consumption, if approved by the Director of Water Utilities, may be adjusted to the seasonal appropriate average based upon the customer's previous consumption history. A customer may request an adjustment be made, no more than one time every sixty (60) month period, for unexplained high-water consumption. The customer shall submit a detailed letter to the City indicating that, after the customer conducted a reasonable investigation of the customer's consumption and possible leaks, the amount of water billed was not used by the customer. Prior to consideration of an adjustment, the Water Utility shall inspect and test the customer's water meter to ensure the meter is operating properly, and the Water Utility shall interview the customer and inspect the premises to determine if there is a reasonable explanation to account for consumption billed. An adjustment will not be made if a leak adjustment has been applied for and approved within the prior 12 months.

Text Notifications: The City offers Text message services to customers upon their request. This service is free to customers of the Utility and allows the Utility / City to rapidly disseminate time-sensitive messages to every telephone number stored in the notification database. With the Blackboard Connect service, authorized Utility / City officials can send thousands of messages in minutes. Any messages regarding the safety or welfare of our community would be disseminated using this system. Example messages may include severe weather warnings and updates, potable water warnings, hazardous traffic or road conditions inside the City or affecting local routes, and any other situation that could impact on the safety, property, or welfare of our community. A customer can sign up for these notifications by calling waterworks department to 956-423-2714 and provide your cell phone number to clerk where text messages may be received.

8. Complaint Procedures: Initial contact by a customer should be directed to the Customer Service Office. The complaint may be pursued with the appropriate supervisor or manager, in that order, if the customer is not satisfied with the handling of the complaint. Complaints concerning the charges, practices, facilities, or service of the Utility shall be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The Utility shall keep records of written complaints sufficient to enable review and analysis of its procedures and actions. Based on Utility staff judgment, a customer may be asked to submit a complaint in writing. A written complaint should contain name of complainant, services location, contact information about the customer, the nature of the complaint, and the relief sought by the customer. A written complaint may be filed with the Combes City Secretary's Office for consideration by the Board if the customer is not satisfied with the final actions of staff.

9. **Contacts: Emergency and Non-Emergency:
Customer Service Office (Monday-Friday 8
am to 5 pm)**

21626 Hand Road
Combes, Texas 78535
956-423-2714 (Monday-Friday 8 am to 5 pm)

Utility Service Dispatch Office after 5:00 pm

21626 Hand Road
Combes, Texas 78535
956-425-7131 (County will dispatch PD)