

Athens Utilities Board

AUB Policies and Procedures Manual Standard Policies and Procedures	
Policy Number – AUB-01	Revision Number: 8
Subject Customer Service Policy	Effective Date: 10-01-2023
	Superintendent Approval:
	General Manager Approval:

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements associated with obtaining water, wastewater, gas and electrical services from AUB.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all residential and industrial users who are physically connected or have the potential to be physically connected to the associated AUB utility distribution systems.

3.0 REFERENCES

- (1) Athens Utilities Board, Schedule of Rates and Fees, AUB-03
- (2) Athens Utilities Board Division of Power, Policies and Procedures
- (3) Athens Utilities Board Division of Gas, Policies and Procedures
- (4) Athens Utilities Board Division of Water, Policies and Procedures
- (5) Athens Utilities Board Division of Wastewater, Policies and Procedures

4.0 GENERAL

Application for original or additional service must be made at the offices of AUB or with a duly appointed agent of AUB and be duly approved before service connection. A meter will not be set or service connected before payment of the service line installation charge and any additional applicable charges or deposits are made.

Any exceptions to this policy will be made at the discretion of the responsible AUB representative.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

AUB – means the Athens Utilities Board and its duly authorized employees, agents, and representatives

Board – means the Chairman and all Commissioners but does not include any employees

Customer – Any person, business, or other entity that receives utilities from Athens Utilities Board, any division

Division – The Athens Utilities Board, Division of Power, Gas, Water or Wastewater

Local Control Authority – Superintendent, director or manager of the responsible division or duly authorized representative

Service Connection – Shall mean the point of connection between the customer's termination point (weather head or meter base) where AUB makes the physical connection to his/her facilities. For meters located elsewhere on private property the service connection is considered to extend from only the tap of the main to the property line, plus the meter and meter installation.

6.0 PROCEDURES/POLICY

6.1 Application and Contract for Service

Each customer or prospective customer desiring original or additional service shall make a formal application with a duly authorized employee of AUB. Residential customers shall provide the following information:

1. Picture Identification
2. Complete Service Address and mailing address
3. Telephone Number and
4. A rent receipt from owner or lease agreement name all adults who will be living at the location for which AUB services are sought from owner (if renting; subject to verification).

Commercial customers may be required or want to execute a formal written contract for the utility service required. Contracts will be written in conjunction with **Section 6.2** of this policy and the specific utility requirements as listed in the appropriate division's Policies and Procedures.

6.2 Contracts

AUB's standard form of application for service is the basic contract for utility service. However, large commercial or industrial customers may be requested to execute a General Utility Contract, which shall contain provisions and stipulations as may be desirable to protect the interests of AUB and the customer. The use of utility services by a customer shall be interpreted as binding the customer by the terms of the applicable standard contract even though such contract may not actually be signed.

If the customer has fulfilled their contract terms and wishes to discontinue service, he/she must give at least three (3) written days notice to that effect, unless the customer contract specifies otherwise. Notice to discontinue service prior to expiration of contract term will not relieve customer from any minimum or guaranteed payment under any contract or rate.

6.3 Termination of Service

Termination of utility services may be performed at the request of the customer or at the discretion of the duly authorized AUB agent. Any customer may order service discontinued at any time upon fulfillment of the service agreement or contract per **Section 6.2 requirements**. Termination of service for any reason shall not relieve the customer of any obligation due AUB under the terms of the service agreement or contract.

When prospective customers apply for AUB service, AUB Customer Service Representatives check AUB's accounts database for the subject property for several parameters, one being the existence of any debt owed to AUB by the applicant or by the owner/Landlord of the property.

If an applicant owes AUB money for previous utility services at any location or for other reasons (such as but not limited to fees, property damage, tampering, etc.), the applicant must pay all outstanding debt to AUB in full before an account can be established for the prospective customers.

In the event the Landlord or owner of the rental property has current or previous debt to AUB at any location that he/she is attempting to rent, the Landlord shall pay all monies owed to AUB regarding any location before AUB will establish an account for the prospective renter.

Only the person in whose name the account is carried may order service discontinued unless specified below. Spouses and children (over the age of 18 acting as primary caretakers of elderly citizens) may also be permitted to order discontinuation of service.

In the event the customer in whose name the account is carried does not occupy the premises and service is ordered discontinued by the customer, AUB reserves the right to permit the occupant of the premises to apply for service at that location such that the occupant will then become the customer. The occupant will then be responsible for all obligation for service rendered at the location effective the date such service was ordered discontinued. The occupant must complete an application for service prior to service connection.

Under no circumstances will AUB become a party to owner-occupant relationships, but shall consider each as individual customers or applicants.

If the customer requests utility services to be terminated, pertinent information such as the customer's name, address, telephone number must be provided in order to verify that the authority to discontinue service is credible. Termination of utility services can be performed over the telephone by calling **745-4501**.

AUB may refuse to connect or may discontinue service for the violation of any of its Rules or Regulations, or for violation of any of the provisions of the Schedule of Rates and Fees, AUB-03 or of the application of customer or contract with customer. AUB will use reasonable diligence in supplying utility services, but shall not be liable for breach of contract in the event of, or for loss, injury, or damage to persons or property resulting from interruptions in service.

If the customer has received an overdue-payment notice, he/she has a total of 5 (five) days (including weekends and holidays) to remit the payment in full before termination of services is initiated.

AUB may also discontinue service to a customer for the theft of utility services or the appearance of theft devices on the premises of the customer. The discontinuance of service by AUB for any cause as stated in this policy does not release the customer from his/her obligation to AUB for the payment of minimum bills or outstanding balances as specified in application of customer or contract with customer.

Utility services terminated by AUB and/or the customer shall be subject to the appropriate reconnection fees listed in **Section 6.10**, before service is reinstated.

6.4 Billing

Bills will be rendered monthly and shall be paid at the office of AUB, via U.S. Postal Service, by phone using accepted credit/debit cards, online at www.aub.org, or at these other locations designated by AUB:

- Capstar Bank
- People's Bank
- Simmons Bank
- Southeast Bank
- Englewood City Hall

Please note that banks will not accept payment after the due date has passed on the applicable bill. Failure to receive a bill will not release the customer from payment obligation. If payment is not made by the due date specified on the bill, AUB may discontinue service after a minimum seven (7) calendar days pursuant to AUB Policy AUB-05-06 Pay Agreements and Collections, sections 8.1 and 9.

AUB's standard net payment period for all customer classes shall be not less than 15 calendar days after the billing date.

Bills paid after the due date specified on the bill may be subject to additional charges. Such late-payment charges will be no more than five (5) percent of the unpaid current due balance on the account. Should the due date of the bill fall on a weekend or holiday, payment may be made without penalty on the following business day. Remittance received by mail after the due date will not be subject to additional charges if the incoming envelope bears United States Postal Service postmark of the due date or any date prior thereto.

6.5 Minimum Bill Contract

Prior to construction, AUB may require an applicant for service to sign a minimum bill contract for such amount and for such period of time as may be reasonably necessary to support the utility's investment required, but nothing contained herein shall authorize a minimum bill contract that is prohibited by the applicable rate schedule.

6.6 Estimated Bills

If the employees of AUB are unable for any reason to obtain access to the billing meter, or if AUB has reason to doubt the registration of the meter, or if an error has been discovered in the computation of the bill, AUB reserves the right to render an estimated bill to the customer based on the best information available. If after investigation of the condition, or if subsequent meter readings indicate the estimated bill was incorrect, AUB at its option will either make a compensated adjustment in a later bill, or adjust the estimated bill to compensate for the error.

6.7 Customer's Obligations

If for any reason the customer, after signing a contract for service, does not take the service by reason of occupying the premises, or otherwise, he/she shall reimburse AUB for the total expense incurred by reason of AUB's endeavor to furnish said service.

6.8 Taxes

All taxes imposed by governmental agencies applicable to service to customers of AUB shall constitute an additional charge to the amount billed to any customer under any rate schedule, minimum billing, or other charges for service in accordance with the applicable rate schedule(s).

6.9 Customer Responsibility

The customer(s) whose name(s) appears on the Application for Service shall be responsible for all charges for utility service until a notice is received at the office of AUB ordering the service disconnected. Failure to notify AUB shall not release the customer of any obligation due AUB for any service rendered or made available.

6.10 Reconnect Fees

In the event utility services are disconnected due to nonpayment by the customer, the applicable reconnection fees listed in policy AUB-03, Schedule of Rates and Fees, will apply to reestablish utility service to the customer.

AUB is unable to reconnect any service after 10 p.m., on weekends, or holidays.

6.11 Customer Complaints

AUB strives for 100% customer satisfaction and therefore welcomes all comments regarding the operations and delivery of utility services provided. On occasion, there may be delays or an interruption in utility services due to acts of nature, normal system maintenance or vehicle accidents. If the customer wishes to express positive or negative feedback regarding the quality of services supplied by AUB beyond discussions with a Customer Service Representative, they may do so by contacting an appropriate AUB management representative at 745-4501, in written form, via electronic mail at aub@aub.org or by visiting the main AUB offices located at 100 Englewood Road in Athens, Tennessee.

In general, the goal of each member of the AUB organization is to expedite the handling and successful closure of any customer complaint, regardless of the “level” of complaint, the customer’s history, industrial/residential/commercial status, or any other factor. That is not to say that resolution of the complaint will always be exactly what the customer wants. For example, a customer complaining that AUB disconnected their services will not necessarily be reconnected simply in response to a complaint if our records show that the customer failed to honor a pay agreement to keep their services on. However, the complaint should be handled with calm respect and helpful explanation of the situation, why actions had to be taken, and how it could be bettered.

6.11.1 In the Field

When a customer voices a complaint to an AUB crewmember in the field, a decision should be made by that crewmember regarding the handling of the complaint based on his/her role, current knowledge and on other protocols outlined in this policy.

If the complaint is the type that can be fully handled to successful closure on the spot by the field rep then he or she should handle it by answering questions, giving helpful information, and/or noting any follow-up that will need to be done by others within AUB and then ensuring the follow-up needs are communicated to the proper people. For instance, crewmembers should try to take care of complaints pertaining directly to the work area of the crewmember; complaints addressed in handout material carried in crew vehicles; complaints of subject matter on which the crewmember is fully knowledgeable; etc. AUB field personnel cannot make commitments that would financially bind AUB to customer corrective actions. Only the appropriate Local Control Authority or General Manager can authorize financial commitments.

If the complaint cannot be handled fully in the field, he or she should decide who within AUB can most promptly and accurately handle the issue and then communicate the need to that person or his/her supervisor for handling. At no time should a crewmember give answers as definitive if he/she does not truly know for certain, nor should a crewmember simply leave “I don’t know” or “I can’t help you” or similar non-closure responses as an answer for the customer. Likewise, if the complaint needs to be handled by someone in the organization other than the field rep, the field rep should offer to contact that person for the customer, not tell the customer “you have to call so-and-so.” Further, the field rep should fully brief the AUB colleague on the complaint and current status to facilitate a successful and quick response and closure.

Regardless of whether the complaint is handled on the spot or referred back to the office, the best practice would be for the crewmember to communicate the nature of the complaint back to the AUB management

staff, so that all pertinent AUB personnel are aware of the issue. This will put AUB in the best position to help the customer if the customer calls back some time later to follow up, ask more questions, etc.

6.11.2 In Customer Service

When complaints come in through Customer Service, whether in person, in writing, or on the phone, a Customer Service Representative (CSR) shall handle the complaint to closure when at all possible. CSRs are empowered to work to the full extent of their ability to gather information from outside entities if applicable, within AUB, the AUB website, policy and procedures manuals, radio calls to the field, or other avenues of information.

Customer complaints should be elevated to a higher level, such as a supervisor or superintendent, only after all avenues of explanation and closure have been worked and where the customer insists on speaking with a superintendent. The CSR should have handled the complaint in a manner that comfortably assures them that the manager's handling of the complaint will be consistent with what the CSR has already conveyed to the customer.

An exception to a Customer Service policy can be made by the AUB General Manager, the Superintendent of Accounting or designee as is pertinent to the subject of the complaint.

Customers can also file comments and complaints via the AUB web page at www.aub.org under the "contact us" section.

6.11.3 In Other AUB Offices

Customer complaints made to other offices within AUB, e.g., a divisional office, the cashier's desk or drive-thru window, the switchboard, or dispatch, should be handled in a manner like that of complaints in the field. If the complaint is the type that can be handled on the spot by AUB representative to whom the complaint has been made, he or she should handle it by answering questions, giving helpful information, and/or noting any follow-up that will need to be done by others within AUB and then ensuring the follow-up needs are communicated to the proper people. Otherwise, the complaint should be passed along to the AUB communications for dispensation to a CSR or other AUB representative through the appropriate area superintendent.

As with complaints in the field, if the person receiving the complaint cannot handle it fully to closure, he or she should offer to contact the appropriate AUB personnel for the customer. They should not tell the customer "You have to call so-and-so." Further, the AUB representative should fully brief the AUB colleague on the complaint and current status to facilitate a successful and quick response and closure.