



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Utility Bills

- 1) **What services are included in my monthly utility bill?** The majority of City of Albemarle residential utility customers have charges for multiple services within their monthly bill such as electricity, water, sewer, solid waste, and recycling.
- 2) **If I compare my utility bill to other electric providers in the area, should they be the same for the same size home?** As stated in the previous question, City of Albemarle customers have several services itemized out within one utility bill. Many people perceive the total bill as the total cost for electric, but each service is charged separately. An average customer using 5,000 gallons of water per month will have approximately \$38.00 in water and sewer charges and \$18.00 solid waste and recycling. It is advisable for customers to look at each charge on their account in determining how much is actually being charged for electric services when comparing to another electric provider.
- 3) **How is the electric portion of my bill determined?** Total electric cost is based on consumption of the individual household. Each residential dwelling is metered separately and billed accordingly. Consumption is in the control of the tenant and/or property owner and there are many factors impacting consumption such as use of thermostat, household weatherization, appliances and electric powered devices, and the age and energy efficiency and condition of appliances.
- 4) **What makes my electric consumption so high?** The single biggest factor is household weatherization. The energy efficiency of a structure plays a significant role in energy consumption. This means two identical structures with identical thermostat settings can use drastically different amounts of electricity based on the weather-proofing. Many cost savings tips are available on the Electricities website at <http://c03.apogee.net/mvc/home/hes/tips?utilityname=electricities> and throughout various other sources on the internet.
- 5) **How does the City of Albemarle help with my utility bill if I cannot afford to pay it now?** The City offers many ways to assist customers. We employ a utility customer service staff who can review and discuss bills. Due to the many variables mentioned above affecting overall costs, each customer situation must be analyzed individually to determine the best course of action. We encourage customers with questions to contact our customer service staff at 704-984-9615. We also have various payment options including an equal payment plan designed to level utility payments throughout the year and lessen the impacts of during higher usage months in winter and summer.
- 6) **My bill is higher this year, how much have rates increased in the last couple of years?** Rates have actually decreased over the last 3 years; if a customer is seeing an increase from a previous year, this demonstrates issues related to weather and/or potentially issues under the control of the customer. The following is a history of electric rates over the last three budget years for the City:
 - FY 17/18 – No increase
 - FY 16/17 – No increase
 - FY 15/16 – Rate decrease

- 7) **Does this City buy power and then mark up rates?** The City owns and operates its own system and is not a customer of Duke or any other electric provider; therefore the City does NOT buy from an electric provider and mark up and resell electricity. The electric system is operated as a not for profit, meaning revenues generated go back into the maintenance and upkeep of the system, not to investors or shareholders. Because the City operates its own electric system, there are great benefits to residents such as faster local response and reduce down-time in power outages.
- 8) **How are the downtown tree lights paid for? Does a portion of my utility bill pay for these?** Consumption of energy used to light the street trees within the downtown district are all metered separately and charged to the City as a part of the City's utility bill; there is no way for the City to itemize charges on individual utility bills for these costs. There are approximately 117 street trees that are illuminated from dusk until midnight. The lights are LED and the estimated cost is less than \$1.00 per hour.

For immediate release.

**For additional information please contact:
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