

**UTL-3.06 - Water/Sewer Bill Inserts - [Printable Version](#)****WATER/SEWER BILL INSERTS**

*Administrative Rule Adopted by Water Bureau Pursuant to Rule-Making Authority*  
ARB-UTL-3.06

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**PHILOSOPHY**

Inserts in the water-sewer bill are a cost-effective way to provide water-sewer customers with information on programs, federal regulations, changes in policy or procedure, and educational materials. Sending written utility information with the water-sewer bills avoids duplicate processing, mailing, and postage costs. Research shows that about 50 percent of utility customers read bill inserts, and that customer recall of particular brochures is quite high.

Through Resolution No. 34473 (Appendix A), passed on September 29, 1988, City Council addressed conditions and requirements of inserting non-utility information developed by non-utility City bureaus. This policy implements the requirements of Resolution No. 34473 (Appendix A).

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**POLICY**

Typically, the Bureaus of Water Works and Environmental Services each send a bill insert with the original billings of water and sewer accounts. Federal or state regulators may require either bureau to send specific messages to their customers with billings. Under certain conditions, other City bureaus may use the water-sewer bill insert process. See Appendix A, City Council Resolution 34473, for details.

All bill inserts must meet basic criteria:

1. Bill inserts must be coordinated through the Public Information Managers at BES and the Water Bureau. Managers of these programs coordinate annual calendars of planned inserts. Bill inserts should be applicable to all customers throughout the City of Portland. Inserts are distributed to the party legally responsible for paying water and sewer bills. Individual households in multifamily dwellings do not receive utility bills.
2. Inserts must contain information appropriate to the time limitations of the format. Inserting messages in water and sewer bills takes 13 weeks. Quarterly bill insertion cycles begin on the first billing dates of December, March, June, and September. Distribution during each cycle requires a minimum of 195,000 brochures. Messages that must be delivered in a shorter timeframe should not use this distribution method.
3. Public Information Managers, Water/Sewer customer service, and relevant Commissioner's offices must be included in bill insert content review to ensure that the bill insert meets the provisions of Resolution 34473. Work groups or bureaus initiating a bill insert may be asked to provide training to Customer Service staff or staff in other bureaus whose workload may be affected by the bill insert.
4. Bill inserts must meet strict guidelines on paper stock, number of folds, and size to avoid additional postage costs. Those guidelines will include meeting paper specifications for recycled content specified by the City of Portland. The inserts must be printed in sufficient number to

allow for inserting in all water and sewer bills. Bill insertion procedures cannot target messages to certain zip codes or areas of the City.

5. Non-utility Bureaus may insert materials into the water-sewer bill under the policy established in Resolution 34473, September 29, 1988. Any Bureau requesting non-utility inserts must contact the Water Bureau and the Environmental Services Public Information Managers to discuss the request and feasibility of using water/sewer bills for distribution no later than 60 days before the insertion date based on the quarterly schedule. The Public Information Program Managers will evaluate the request and make recommendations to City Council as described in Resolution 34473 (Appendix A).
6. The sponsoring bureau for a bill insert pays all costs of designing and printing them. When inserting a brochure results in additional postage costs, the sponsoring bureau is responsible for paying for that cost. Water and sewer bills are sent first-class.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION**

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 34473**

Establishes a policy to allow the Water Bureau to include information in the Water Bureau bill mailings upon Council review and approval and under special circumstances. (resolution)

WHEREAS, present Water Bureau policy only allows utility-related. information to be inserted into the water bill mailings; and

WHEREAS, the City has found that inserting non-water bill related City information is a cost-effective way to notify the citizens of Portland about items affecting all sectors of the City, and

WHEREAS, the only comparable form of direct resident notification, direct property owner mailing, is costly and often exceeds the relevant Bureau's financial resources; and

WHEREAS, it is in the City's best interest to minimize unnecessary mailing costs by combining mailings where it is cost effective; and

WHEREAS, insertion of a flyer or flyers in water bill mailings need not increase the mailing costs of the water bills, and

WHEREAS, the Council needs a policy to deal expeditiously with any request it receives to include notices about issues of citywide concern in bill mailings, and

WHEREAS, all Bureaus need a clear Council policy which establishes a mechanism for use of this notification technique.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of Portland. Oregon directs the Water Bureau to include City of Portland developed information in Water Bureau mailings under special. circumstances, and

BE IF FURTHER RESOLVED, that non-utility related information in bill mailings will conform to the following criteria:

1. There shall be no more than two pieces of non-utility related information in the bills at any one time, and
  2. Information placed in the billings must not be removed, replaced or modified during the 90 day bill cycle and cannot be replaced by other non-utility mailings during the 90 day cycle, and
  3. Water and Environmental Services related information has preference over non-utility related information requests for bill inclusion, and
  4. The Water Bureau is not responsible to pay for any design or printing cost associated with non-utility related information, and
  5. The Bureau or City Agency requesting to include information in the Utility bill mailings will be apprised of any incremental increase in mailing costs and will agree to pay the proportionate share of said increase or rescind its request, and
  6. The material submitted will not contain political content such as names, pictures or statements of City Commissioners, and
  7. The material submitted for inclusion will contain an address and phone number of the originating Bureau to enable citizens to obtain additional information, and
  8. The Water Bureau may specify dimensional requirements for inclusion in bill mailings, and
  9. A Bureau requesting material to be included in utility mailing will place the request before Council through its Commissioner, and
  10. Requests for inclusion in utility bill related mailings will be analyzed for conformance with this policy by Council and any non-utility related information will be approved by Council for inclusion in bill mailings, and
  11. The Administrator of the Water Bureau will not accept requests from other governmental entities, requests from City Bureaus which are geographically limited, or requests which have not been approved by Council, and
  12. The Administrator of the Water Bureau will report to Council in six (6) months on any problems associated with this policy and will suggest any changes at that time.
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## **HISTORY**

Filed for inclusion in PPD April 12, 2004.

Adopted by Water Bureau. Document dated March 3, 2004.