

## **Catawba County - Utilities and Engineering Charge (Billing) Account Policy and Procedures**

The Utilities and Engineering Department functions for billing include Building Services, Plan Review, Permit Center, Erosion Control, Landfill, and Water and Sewer.

- The applicant must complete an application for a charge account providing all required information.
- The Utilities and Engineering Department shall securely maintain all completed applications, other account holder and personal information in accordance with Catawba County Identity Theft Red Flags Policy.
- The Social Security Number of the License Holder and/or Business Owner, or the Corporate EIN if applicable, will be used, in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes §132-1.10 and §105A-3, the Debt Setoff Clearinghouse Program, for the purpose of garnishment should a debt become delinquent. The disclosure of the Social Security Number or Employer Identification Number is voluntary.
- References must be verified by the County and the account either approved or rejected. If an account is rejected the applicant must be notified in writing.
- Account balances are due within 30 days or less from the date of the statement or as indicated on the statement.
- Absent written legal authorization to do so, no entity may put charges on another entity's account.

### Opening and Maintaining an Account

A charge account application associated with the area of billing; i.e. permit center/building services, erosion control, landfill, septage hauling, etc. must be completed prior to assessing charges. Applications may be obtained at [www.catawbacountync.gov/ue/admin.asp](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/ue/admin.asp) or contact the Utilities and Engineering Office at 828-465-8261.

Permit Center applicants must be associated with at least one project<sup>1</sup> prior to becoming eligible to apply for account privileges.

Landfill applicants must be associated with at least one project<sup>2</sup> prior to becoming eligible to apply for account privileges.

### Collection Actions:

Account privileges will be permanently revoked if any of the following actions are taken to settle a delinquent account:

- ♦ Formal legal action
- ♦ Submission to the NC State Debt Set-off program
- ♦ Delinquent balance is written off
- ♦ Payment by worthless check as stated above

All fees associated with the collection of an account through the Catawba County Legal Department must be reimbursed to Catawba County; fees associated with the collection of an account include but are not limited to: filing charges, court costs, and attorney fees.

Any monies received by Catawba County from an account holder with a delinquent account will first be applied to the oldest past due balance of his/her account(s), regardless of the implied direction of payment.

A delinquent or past due account paid by worthless check shall immediately be suspended and the account holder shall make all future payments by cash, money order, certified or cashier's bank check. If legal action is required to collect on the worthless check, all check writing abilities and account privileges shall be permanently revoked. Catawba County will seek criminal charges against anyone who writes a worthless check as payment to their delinquent account. The process of seeking a criminal warrant for their arrest will be carried out by the Catawba County Legal Department.

### Overdue Accounts:

When an account becomes overdue the following limitations or restrictions are imposed on the account and the account holder:

- The account is placed on hold
- No inspections will be scheduled for which permits have been issued
- No new permits will be issued
- Landfill usage must be paid in full at the time of disposal

Also, when an account becomes overdue, the following collection procedures will be implemented:

1. A letter will be sent via first class mail reminding the account holder that the account is overdue, unless the account has a slow-to-pay history; then see the Slow to Pay Section below.
2. If payment is not made before the next billing cycle, a second letter will be sent via first class mail informing the account holder that their County account privileges are suspended and full payment of any delinquent amount must be paid within 15 days of the date of the letter.
3. If the account continues past the 15 days of the date of the letter, the account will be turned over to the Catawba County Legal Department for collection and account privileges suspended.

### Slow to Pay Accounts:

When an account becomes overdue that has a history of making late payments resulting in multiple collection letters being mailed, the account will be flagged as slow-to-pay and the following procedures will be implemented:

1. A letter will be sent via first class mail informing the account holder that their County account privileges are suspended and payment of any amount overdue must be made within 15 days of the date of the letter and any current amount must be paid on or before the due date as listed on the statement.
2. If the account continues past the due date and/or the overdue amount is not paid within 15 days of the date of the letter, the account will be turned over to the Catawba County Legal Department for collection and account privileges suspended.
3. If an account is continually slow to pay, account privileges may be suspended or revoked.

When payment is received and posted, the account will be reactivated immediately provided that a Collection Action, as listed above, was not executed to settle the account which would permanently revoke an account.

Once an account has been turned over to the Catawba County Legal Department for collection, all communication regarding the account must be addressed to the Legal Department at 828-465-8483.

### **Septage/Sludge Hauling Accounts**

When an account associated with Septage/Sludge Haulers becomes overdue the account is placed on hold. Immediately, a letter will be sent via first class mail informing the account holder that the account is overdue and must be paid within 15 days of the date of the letter. If the account continues beyond 60 days, in accordance with Catawba County Code of Ordinance Sec. 16-99, the permit to operate a Septage Management Firm in Catawba County will be revoked by the Environmental Health Department, and notification sent to the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources requesting the revocation of the State Septage Hauling Permit. The account will be turned over to the Catawba County Legal Department for collection.

Questions concerning these policies and procedures may be directed to the Utilities and Engineering Department at 828-465-8261 located at the Government Center in Newton, NC.

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<sup>1</sup> Project, in association with Permit Center customers, is defined as “the completion of the financial obligation (*check clearing, credit card approval*) shall be based on the customer’s occupational discipline (*developer, trade contractor, realtor, well driller, grading contractor, etc.*) for a permit or group of permits that are associated with a phase of building construction or land development.”

<sup>2</sup> Project, in association with Landfill customers is defined the same as Project<sup>1</sup> with the exception of “...the customer’s occupation (*hauler, land clearing contractor, etc.*) that are associated with solid waste hauling, land clearing, demolition, etc.”