

Estimating Meters Policy and Procedure

Estimating Meters Policy

Gascoyne Water Co-Operative Ltd (GWC) will treat all customers fairly and equitably when determining estimates of water usage when a meter is broken, blocked or defective, or the meter cannot be read due to access difficulties.

GWC will ensure that a fair approach to the estimating process is carried out by its' administration staff and that all staff have a procedure to enable them to carry out estimate calculations.

GWC will ensure transparency of the methodology used to derive an estimate. It's methods used to obtain an estimate will be made available to customers publically on our website and at their request.

GWC will ensure accurate records are kept when an estimate is calculated and that a deduction is made to the following usage bill when an accurate meter reading is obtained.

Estimating Meters Procedure

Instances where a meter estimate can be used:

GWC administration staff will calculate an estimate at such times when the Operations Staff advise that a meter is not operating correctly (a notation will be made on the meter reading schedule), stopped or broken and unable to be read.

In some instances the Operations Staff are unable to access the meter e.g. due to a locked gate or a dog in the yard so an estimate can be calculated. It is preferable however for the Operations Staff to try and read the meter again (even the following day) after contact has been made with the customer to ensure gate is open or dog detained.

Methodology for Calculating the Estimate

Obtain the last three readings for the particular month that you have been unable to read the meter e.g. can't read meter in January 2014 – obtain the meter readings over the last three years for the month of January.

Example: Say Mr Example's meter stopped working sometime in January 2014 and was unable to be read at the end of January. An average usage for January will be obtained by calculating the average usage over the last three January's using the supposition that most people use a similar amount of water in the corresponding month each year.

The readings for January 2013, 2012, & 2011 will be added together and divided by three to obtain the average kilolitres of water that will be used for the estimate:

Jan 2013	4240
Jan 2012	2384
Jan 2011	<u>3100</u>
Total	9724 divided by 3 = 3241 kilolitres

Make an entry in Reita (current program for recording meter readings at time of writing) in the **estimated** column. This will appear on their water statement indicating an estimate has been used. Briefly note how the estimate was obtained in the check msg column in Reita.

Complete a "Record of Estimated Meter" form (Appendix A – form located at: P:\001Gascoyne Water Co-Operative Ltd\Policies & Procedures (PAP)\GWC Policies & Procedures Manual\Section 4 - WS-Water services\Estimated meter record.docx) and place in the front of the meter reading file as a reminder to carry out the deduction in the following month.

Bill the customer for the estimated kilolitres as you normally would through the accounting program.

Use the record of estimated meter form to ensure the kilolitres previously estimated are deducted from the next bill.

In the month following an estimate deduct the estimated usage off the usage calculated.

e.g. January 2014 – estimated usage was 3241 Kl

the actual meter usage obtained from meter reading is 6742 kl. Deduct 3241 from the new usage.

6742 –

3241

3501 kilolitres to be charged for February.

If you do not do the deduction in the following month you are overcharging the customer so a deduction must be calculated and the correct kilolitres charged.

Once the deduction has been made in the following month, file the "record of estimated meter" in the meter reading file in the month that the estimate was calculated (above example January).

Variations to methodology used to obtain estimate

In some instances the above methodology doesn't obtain an accurate estimate e.g. if no usage has occurred in the previous months used to calculate the estimate.

Alternatively you can obtain an estimate by averaging the kilolitres used for the previous three months and use this figure as the estimate.

Whatever methodology is used it needs to be recorded so that should the customer request an explanation about the basis of and the reason for the estimate, one can be given.

Entitlements of the customer

The customer is entitled to an explanation about the basis of and the reason for the estimate.

The customer is entitled to an adjustment on the next bill to take into account the actual meter reading.

If the customer has a dispute over an estimate on which a bill is based, the customer is entitled to a meter reading and a revised bill upon request provided applicable fees are paid.

The customer is also entitled to claim that the normal estimate methodology doesn't apply or isn't suitable and substantiate that claim. Reasonable negotiations with the customer to the most suitable methodology and outcome will be conducted to enable an estimate to be calculated suitable to both parties. The reasonable negotiations will be carried out in liaison with the Office Manager or General Manager.

Review Frequency

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix A – Record of Estimated meter form



Record of Estimated Meter

Property ID #	GW #	Customer Details (name, property address)

+	Reason for estimate e.g. locked gate, dog, blocked meter	
	Methodology used to calculate estimate (note down details pertaining to your calculations)	
	Estimated usage (kilolitres)	
	Name of person who calculated the estimate	
	Deduction to be made in following month – carried out	

(This record is to be filed in the corresponding month the estimate was given in the meter reading file)