**Section 280.80 Budget Payment Plan**

a) Intent: This Section provides a process to equalize payments for utility service, based upon the customer's average bill instead of the actual fluctuating amount for each separate billing period.

b) Applicability: The requirements of this Section shall apply to residential customers and small business customers. Nothing shall prevent a utility from offering a budget payment plan to non-residential customers that are not small businesses.

c) Eligibility:

1) No past due amount owing: A customer whose account balance is current may enroll in a budget payment plan at any time of the year.

2) Past due: In order to establish eligibility for a budget payment plan, a customer owing a past due amount must either pay the entire past due amount or enter into a DPA with the utility to retire the past due debt.

d) Offering: The utility shall inform its customers of the availability of its budget payment plan and encourage its use.

e) Enrollment: Upon inquiry from the customer, the utility shall calculate and advise the customer what the projected budget payment plan amount will be for the customer's account. If the customer accepts the offer to enroll in budget billing, the utility shall begin the plan for that account.

f) Bill Itemization: In addition to the regular billing requirements of Section 280.50, the bill statement for an account enrolled in the budget payment plan shall contain separate line items for:

1) The budget payment amount; and

2) The amount of the accrued credit or shortfall.

g) Periodic Adjustments:

1) If the customer's usage and regular billing changes so that the budget payment plan will not be successful if left at its current level, the utility shall review and adjust the budget payment plan amount.

2) If the budget payment plan amount must be altered, the utility shall notify the customer of the change in writing. Notification may be included with the bill statement or by separate delivery.

h) Reconciliation: Unless another time frame is requested by the customer in writing, utilities shall review each budget plan at least once between the 4th and the 7th month of the term of the plan to ensure that significant shortfalls or credits do not accrue. If a customer's budget payment plan shortfall or credit becomes so large as to necessitate a reconciliation, the utility shall:

1) In the case of a shortfall, offer the customer the option to pay off the shortfall or have the budget amount adjusted to accommodate the shortfall; or

2) In the case of a credit, offer the customer the option of a refund or have the budget amount adjusted to accommodate the credit balance.

1. Late Payments: No late payments charge shall be assessed on a budget payment plan unless there is an overall budget deficit balance in an account when the late payment occurs. The late payment charge shall be computed on the late installment only, not on the accumulated budget deficit in the account.

j) Transfer of Service: When a customer on a budget payment plan informs the utility that the customer will be transferring service with that utility from the current location to a new location served by the same utility, the utility shall advise the customer what the projected budget payment plan amount will be at the new location and that the customer may choose to either remain on the budget payment plan at the new location or cancel the plan.

k) Cancellation:

1) A customer may cancel a budget payment plan at any time.

2) A utility may cancel a customer's budget payment plan when the customer either submits a payment that is less than the full budget payment plan amount or the customer's payment is 21 days in arrears. Late fees may be assessed on undisputed budget installment amounts owing on a budget payment plan as an alternative to termination of participation in the plan.

3) Any shortfall amount owing to the utility at the time of cancellation shall be included and payable as current charges on the next bill statement.

4) Any credit amount owing to the customer at the time of cancellation shall appear as a credit on the next bill statement. After the issuance of that bill statement, Section 280.110 shall apply to the credit balance.