

CLEARWATER CUSTOMER SERVICE

Mission

Clearwater Customer Service provides courteous, understanding, efficient service to customers of the City of Clearwater utilities, and to the internal departments that we are privileged to serve.

Department Description

Clearwater Customer Service (CCS) is responsible for providing centralized customer service functions to customers of the seven (7) city utilities: Gas, Water, Sewer, Solid Waste, Recycling, Reclaimed Water, and Stormwater.

The major areas associated with this responsibility include Meter Reading, Customer Accounting, Collections, and Customer Care.

Meter Reading representatives are responsible for securing accurate and timely meter readings. Metered services include: Water (Potable, Lawn, Reclaimed), Gas and Wastewater (based on metered potable water usage). Each month Meter Reading representatives visit each service location and record meter readings in a hand-held device that interfaces with our Utility Management System. Meter reading is the first step in a billing process that optimizes “read-to-bill” time and ensures that each account is billed each month. The Field Service section also performs special readings, leak notifications, and initiates service orders based on field observations.

The Customer Accounting section is responsible for calculation and preparation of customer bills, resolving billing exceptions, processing service orders and special/final bill requests, and generating reports. Each day, the Customer Accounting section is responsible for reviewing account billing based on the previous day's meter readings as well as billings for non-metered utility services. Customer Accounting reviews all utility bills before they are mailed to customers.

The Collections section is responsible for managing utility customer accounts receivable in a fiscally responsible manner that respects customers while limiting the exposure of the City of Clearwater to delinquent accounts. Active accounts with past due balances are noticed and measures are undertaken to secure payment. Services are disconnected for non-payment when necessary. The Collections area also manages inactive accounts receivable, seeking payment of final bills, performing skip-tracing and filing property liens as appropriate.

The Customer Care section is responsible for receiving and processing payments on a daily basis, responding in a timely, courteous, and professional manner to customer requests received via telephones, mail (postal or e-mail) or from walk-in customers. Accounts are opened or closed, requests for information are responded to, and inquires are researched and resolved.

Customer Service is located on the first floor of the Municipal Services Building, 100 S. Myrtle Avenue. Customers may reach Customer Service either by phone at 727-562-4600, in-person Monday – Friday (except for observed holidays), or on the web at www.MyClearwater.com/services/customer_service.

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Performance Measures

<u>Measure</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Number of utility meters read	725,477	730,286
Percentage of meters read accurately	99.82%	99.93%
Total number of bills issued	590,475	593,219

Department Summary					
	<i>Actual</i> <i>2002/03</i>	<i>Actual</i> <i>2003/04</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2004/05</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2005/06</i>	<i>%</i> <i>Change</i>
Personnel	1,660,025	1,878,534	1,976,730	2,025,630	2.5%
Operating	480,747	435,356	551,950	581,130	5.3%
Internal Services	435,453	419,536	437,230	468,710	7.2%
Capital	15,000	-	-	-	n/a
Debt	25,252	13,908	3,330	15,190	356.2%
Transfers	-	-	<u>130,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>	-23.1%
Total	<u>2,616,477</u>	<u>2,747,335</u>	<u>3,099,240</u>	<u>3,190,660</u>	2.9%
Department Full-Time Equivalent Positions	44.0	44.0	44.0	44.0	

Program Highlights

- ❖ The Customer Service program is an internal service function supporting all City utility functions. All costs of operation are passed back to the City utility departments based upon services provided.
- ❖ The Clearwater Customer Service program is supported by 44 full-time equivalent positions, the same staffing level as in the 2004/05 budget.
- ❖ Personnel costs support all Customer Service functions, including billing, collection, accounting, meter reading, administration and customer service, for approximately 48,000 monthly billable accounts. For FY 2003/04, Clearwater Customer Service billed revenues of over \$105 million.
- ❖ Operating expenditures have increased by 5.3% primarily due to anticipated increases for armored car service and postage, as well as a \$9,000 increase for insurance.
- ❖ Internal Service expenditures, up by 7.2%, reflect increased costs for garage services, and telephone services for a replacement automated call distribution system.
- ❖ Debt expenditures have increased substantially due to the replacement of electronic meter reading equipment, which will be funded with lease purchase revenue.
- ❖ Transfers include \$100,000 to continue to fund a Capital Improvement project, Customer Information System (CIS) Upgrades and Replacements, which provides funding for future enhancements and maintenance of the computer resources.
- ❖ There have been no other significant changes to the program in this fiscal year. The 2005/06 budget for this program reflects a increase of 2.9% over the previous year's budget.