



UNIT 13: HIGHER THAN EXPECTED BILLS

Introduction

Representatives receive high bill calls when customers disagree with the dollar amount or usage shown on their water bill. High bill calls can be received in the form of a concern or an inquiry, but always emerge when the customer believes their bill is too high. One of the following four situations causes most high bills: additional billed charges, consumption or usage, customer leaks, or problems with a meter.

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate effective investigating and handling a high bill concern
- Understand the options that are available to you to resolve high bill concerns
- Provide accurate information and offer solutions when necessary
- Explain the role of Account Resolution Team in the Billing Department

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Key Terms

The following new terms and concepts are presented in this unit:

- Estimated Read
- Leak Adjustment
- Service Line Leak
- Account Resolution Team (ART)
- In-Line
- Outlet Coupling Leak
- Public Utility Commission (PUC)
- Out-Of-Line
- Hidden Leak
- Homeowner Services

I. Higher Than Expected Bill Calls

Customers may call when there is a perceived inaccuracy in their current billed amount. The bill is generated based on the usage that has registered through the meter. As increased usage registers on the meter, a higher balance will result. First, let's determine how much a customer typically uses.

Water usage varies from individual to individual. Cooking can require 1-2 gallons of water, a sink faucet runs 2-3 gallons per minute and an outside faucet runs 3-5 gallons per minute.

Typically, each individual in the average residence uses about 100 gallons of water every day or 3000 gallons a month. Here is a summary of how much water is used, on average, for common household appliances.

Appliance	Water usage in Gallons
Washing Machine	25-50 per load
Hand washing dishes	10-20
Dish washing machine	12-20 per load
Bathtub	20-40
Shower	25-50 per 3-5 minutes
Toilet	3-6
Faucet	2-3 per minute
5/8" Garden Hose	11 per minute /660 per hour
1/2" Garden Hose	6 per minute/360 per hour
3/4" Garden Hose	23 per minute/1,380 per hour.

When handling a high bill concern, you will perform three primary tasks:

1. Investigate
2. Probe
3. Take Action

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First: Investigate

When a customer calls with a high bill concern, open the invoice in question and keep the image available on your second monitor. You may find it helpful to refer to it and follow along as the customer is describing the issue.

Once the invoice is accessed, use your billing and investigation skills to quickly check for any logical causes of a higher than expected bill. For example:

- Balance carry over from another invoice
- Returned payment
- Missing payment
- Back billed amount
- Addition of fees such as reconnect, after hours, returned payment
- Transferred balance from another account

Second: Probe

If after reviewing the customer's bill, you determine that it is higher than normal and you are unable to determine a reason for this, run the **High Bills Complaint Script**. The Script will take you through a series of questions to determine if the customer used the water or if they have a leak. Based on the customer's responses to the questions, SAP will determine what needs to be done or if a service order needs to be generated.

Common Types of Leaks

The table below describes the most common types of leaks that a customer may have.

Inside Leaks	Occur inside the customer's home, typically at one of their fixtures, i.e., toilet, sink, or hot water heater. These leaks are the responsibility of the customer to repair.
Hidden Leaks	Cannot be easily detected and typically occur in the pipes in a customer's home. A toilet leak is not considered a hidden leak.
Service Line Leaks	Occur in a customer's service line, typically in the front yard. These leaks are the responsibility of the customer to repair, unless the customer has signed up for the Customer Protection Plan service agreement.
Outlet Coupling Leaks	Occur in the outlet coupling on a customer's meter. These leaks are the responsibility of American Water. A technician inspecting the meter can only determine an outlet coupling leak.

Third: Take Action

The action that you take to handle a high bill concern depends on the result of your investigation and probing. If after running the Script, you determine that the bill is correct, it must be paid. In the case of a high balance, you can determine if the customer qualifies for an installment plan to allow time to pay off the balance.

If the bill is high due to an estimated read:

The customer has two options:

1. The customer can pay the bill in full, with an automatic adjustment applied when an actual read is taken. The next bill will be adjusted, depending on whether the initial bill was over-estimated or under-estimated.
2. The customer can pay their average bill with an adjustment applied after an actual read is taken.

Note: In either case, the customer must continue to make payments. Determine why the bill was estimated, and create a service order if it is due to equipment malfunction.

The Importance of Tone of Voice

Regardless of the actions taken, it is important to communicate the results of the investigation confidently. Offer the customer all the available options. In most cases, the customer will be frustrated and upset with the bill. Your tone of voice may determine whether the customer is pleased or if the call ends as an unpleasant escalated call to your Supervisor.

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High Bill Investigation – Using the High Bill Script

The use of the High Bill Script is a requirement on all high bill calls prior to the creation of an ILK service order. It provides a series of questions in a logical sequence so that we can better assist our customers with determining a reason for increased consumption.

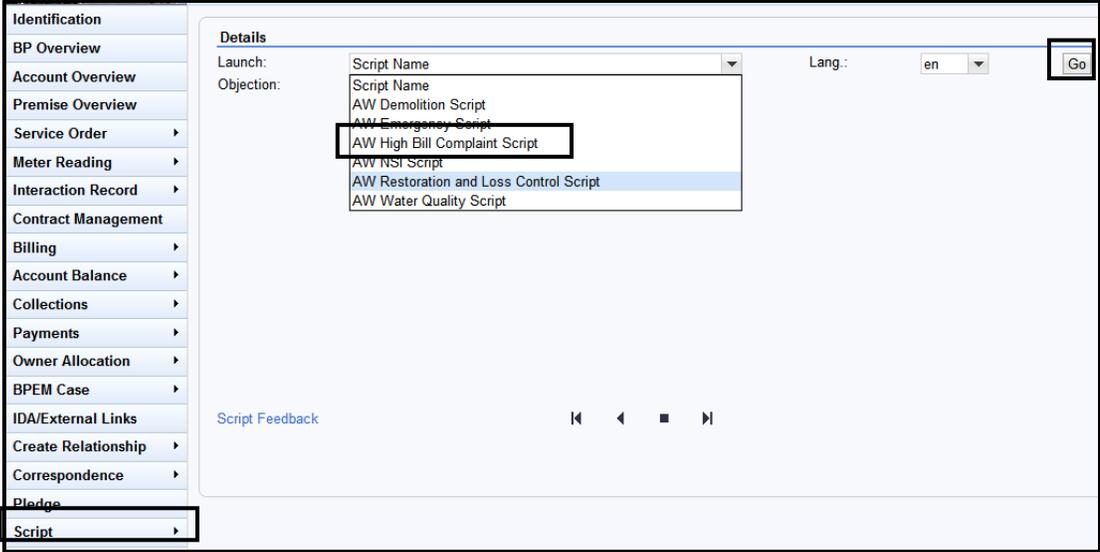
When talking with a customer about a higher than expected bill amount, please refrain from referring to the amount as a “high bill”. In actuality, the bill may be in line with historic usage, or an explanation may exist for the increase. We don’t want to give the perception that we agree that the bill is high or may contain an error. The scripting often refers to the “higher than expected bill”.

The Script includes an analysis of the customer’s billing history and offers probing questions and responses in an attempt to determine the reason for the perceived bill increase.

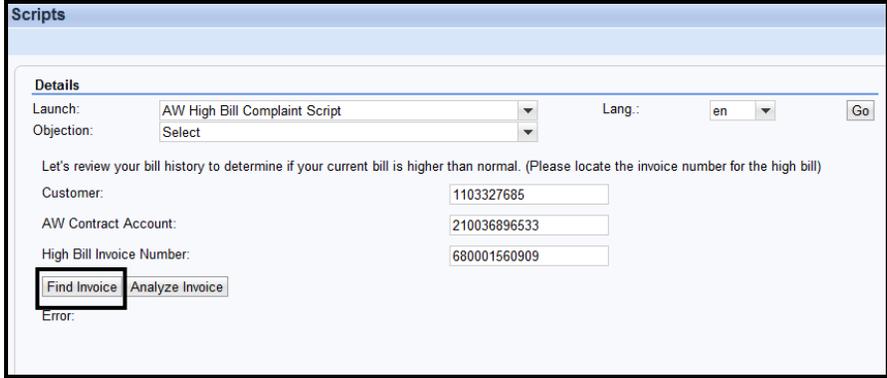
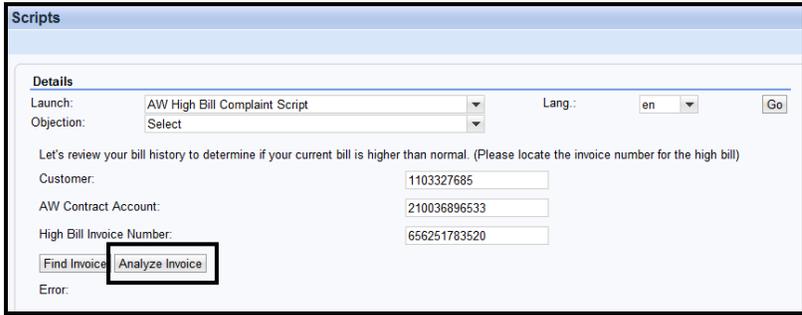
As the Script analyzes the customer’s invoice and billing history, each screen provides helpful information in the form of Talking Points. The Talking Points will provide you with information to provide the customer regarding their inquiry. Some information will appear in the form of quotations, which is suggested scripting for you to read directly to the customer. Try to avoid sounding “robotic” when reading the questions; use normal voice tone and inflection. This scripting is designed to assist you in facilitating a conversation between you and the customer. Other information is provided simply based on the Script’s evaluation of the customer’s account and is considered to be informational content only.

At the bottom of each screen a “Is the customer satisfied with the response?” question appears. If, at any point, in the Script the customer is satisfied with the explanation provided, clicking “Yes” will end the Script and will allow you to create your Interaction Record. If the customer would like the analysis to continue, clicking “No” will prompt the next step in the investigation.

To investigate the customer's account, complete the following steps. Remember to open the customer's higher than expected bill and keep it in view for reference during the call.

Step	Description
1.	<p>Click Script from the menu options on the left. Choose AW High Bill Complaint Script from the Launch dropdown menu and click Go.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a software interface with a left-hand navigation menu and a main content area. The 'Script' menu item is highlighted with a red box. The main content area has a 'Details' section with a 'Launch' dropdown menu. The dropdown menu is open, showing a list of script names: 'Script Name', 'AW Demolition Script', 'AW Emergency Script', 'AW High Bill Complaint Script', 'AW NST Script', 'AW Restoration and Loss Control Script', and 'AW Water Quality Script'. The 'AW High Bill Complaint Script' is highlighted with a red box. A 'Go' button is visible in the top right corner of the main content area.</p>

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2.	<p>The Script will auto-populate the customer's BP Number, Contract Account Number, and the Invoice Number of the <u>most recent bill</u>, most customers call when they receive the current higher than expected bill.</p> <p>If the customer is calling about a prior bill, click Find Invoice to find the invoice the customer is calling about.</p> <div>  <p>The screenshot shows the 'Scripts' window with the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch: AW High Bill Complaint Script Objection: Select Lang.: en Customer: 1103327685 AW Contract Account: 210036896533 High Bill Invoice Number: 680001560909 Buttons: Find Invoice (highlighted), Analyze Invoice </div> <p>The Billing View screen displays. Highlight the invoice number in question and use Ctrl + c on your keyboard to copy the invoice number. Click Back and paste (Ctrl + v) the invoice number in the High Bill Invoice Number field.</p> <div>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Invoice Number</th> <th>Doc Type</th> <th>Document Ha...</th> <th>Due Amount</th> <th>Service</th> <th>Bill Period</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>680001560909</td> <td>INV</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>58.44 USD</td> <td>Domestic Water</td> <td>2017/02</td> </tr> <tr> <td>656251783520</td> <td>INV</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>109.03 USD</td> <td>Domestic Water</td> <td>2017/01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>648751351223</td> <td>INV</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>93.91 USD</td> <td>Domestic Water</td> <td>2016/12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>653751702934</td> <td>INV</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>21.03 USD</td> <td>Domestic Water</td> <td>2016/11</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Invoice Number	Doc Type	Document Ha...	Due Amount	Service	Bill Period	680001560909	INV	<input type="checkbox"/>	58.44 USD	Domestic Water	2017/02	656251783520	INV	<input type="checkbox"/>	109.03 USD	Domestic Water	2017/01	648751351223	INV	<input type="checkbox"/>	93.91 USD	Domestic Water	2016/12	653751702934	INV	<input type="checkbox"/>	21.03 USD	Domestic Water	2016/11
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3.	<p>Click Analyze Invoice.</p> <div>  <p>The screenshot shows the 'Scripts' window with the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch: AW High Bill Complaint Script Objection: Select Lang.: en Customer: 1103327685 AW Contract Account: 210036896533 High Bill Invoice Number: 656251783520 Buttons: Find Invoice, Analyze Invoice (highlighted) </div>																														

Step	Description
4.	<p>The Billing Evaluation Screens provide an analysis of the billing period of the invoice selected and compares it to previous billing periods.</p> <p>Tip: In the example provided, while the “prior period usage comparison” shows that the usage is more than 2 times higher, to understand if the selected bill’s usage is out of line, divide the prior bill’s usage by the number of days in the billing period to arrive at a per-day average. Do the same with the current bill’s usage and days in the billing period. If the per-day average is similar for both bills, the increase can be attributed to extra days in the service period.</p> <p>Review the appropriate Talking Points with the customer.</p> <p>Click Yes if the customer is satisfied with the explanation(s) provided in the Talking Points.</p> <p>Click No to continue with the Script.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: AW HighBill Complaint Script latest Lang.: en <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> <p>Objection: Select</p> <p>BILLING EVALUATION</p> <p>Selected bill period usage: 7,480 gallons</p> <p>Same time last year usage: 0 gallons</p> <p>Same time last year usage difference: 0 gallons</p> <p>Selected period use more than 2 times higher: NA</p> <p>Prior billing period usage: 1,496 gallons</p> <p>Selected bill to prior period usage difference: 5,984 gallons</p> <p>Selected bill period use more than 2 times higher: Yes</p> <p>Number of days in current invoice: 63</p> <p>Number of days in prior period invoice: 18</p> <p>Difference is greater than 5 days: Yes</p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Same time last year comparison usage difference: NA NA - Customer not active last year same time.</p> <p>Prior period usage comparison difference: Yes "Your usage from the questionable bill is more than double the amount of your prior bill period. Let's walk through some of the common causes for higher water use and see if any of these provide explanation for the higher than expected usage"</p> <p>Difference is greater than 5 days: Yes "In reviewing the number of service days for the questionable bill in comparison to the prior billing, it appears you have more than 5 additional days of service in the questionable bill period. This is almost an extra week of water usage and could be the result of the higher than expected bill."</p> <p>**CSR, divide the usage in the questionable bill by the number of days in the bill period. Do the same for the comparative bill period and compare the "per day" usage. If the per day usage is close, then the higher than expected bill is the result of additional days in the service period.</p> <p>If customer questions why the number of service days change: Even with a set billing frequency (e.g. monthly, quarterly), the number of days in a normal billing cycle can vary based on the scheduled meter reading date, weekends and holidays. CA = monthly service period, 27-33 days All others – monthly service period, 26-35 days</p> <p>Is customer satisfied with response?</p> <p><input type="button" value="Yes"/> <input type="button" value="No"/></p> </div>

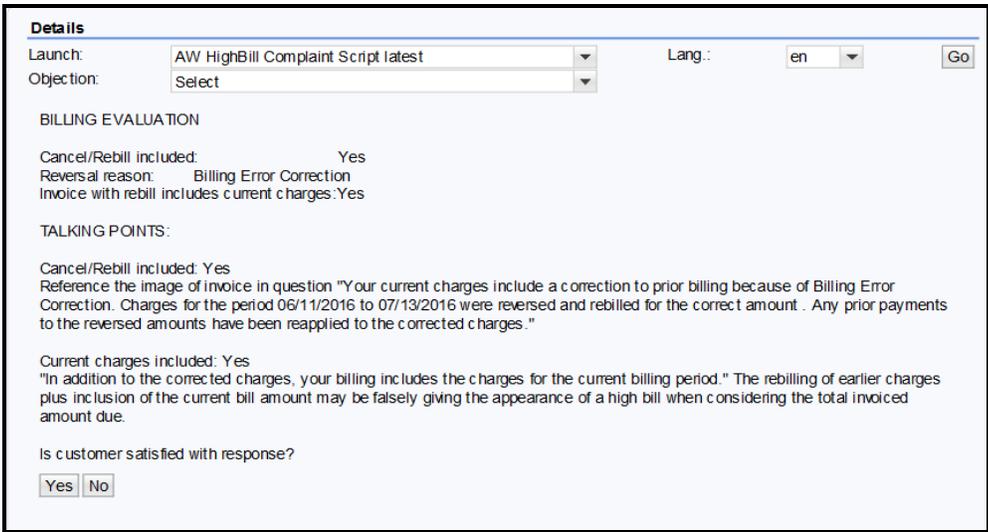
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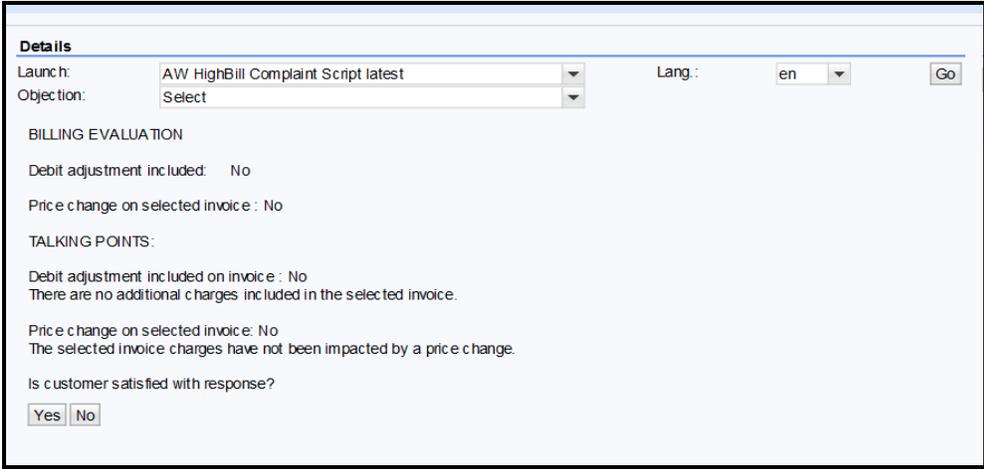


Step	Description
5.	<p>The Rate Structure Evaluation screen analyzes the customer's rates. The system checks for estimated reads and analyzes the customer's rates against the impact of one or more underestimated readings. When this scenario occurs, the customer ends up with a higher proportion of water usage in the current bill period.</p> <p>If the reading was estimated, the Script will include the reason for the estimate. In the screen shot below, if a service order has not yet been created to repair or replace the meter, you will create the appropriate service order.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>BILLING EVALUATION</p> <p>Current reading estimated: Yes</p> <p>Reason for estimate: Broken Meter - Field Action Required</p> </div> <p>Tip: Certain rate structures will lead to bill variances as a result of under-estimated reading followed by an actual reading. More of the usage may be allocated to the current billing period rather than being spread over multiple periods. The system will flag when any of these rate structure components may have influenced the current bill amount. The Billing Department will need to evaluate the specific impact and may make billing adjustments to evenly spread the total usage across the affected billing periods.</p> <p><u>Definitions for the rate structure evaluations:</u></p> <p>Minimum Allowance – A specific number of gallons are included in the basic service charge. Each bill period takes into consideration that the first xxxx gallons are included in the basic service charge. For example, in WV, the first 1,500 gallons of water used during the billing period are included in the service charge.</p> <p>Inverted Rate Tiers – California uses an inverted rate tier concept, which means that the more water a customer uses, the more expensive the price. This structure is used when water conservation is encouraged.</p> <p>PA 150% higher following estimates – This regulation prevents a customer from being responsible for significantly underestimated water usage. If an actual bill following estimates is 150% higher than the customer's average bill, an evaluation by the Billing Team is needed. If this is the case, the Script will prompt you to create a Billing Follow up BPEM, and will include notes for the Billing Department to review the account.</p>

Step	Description
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Rate Structure evaluation is Yes to any of the 3 scenarios (Minimum allowance, Inverted rate tier, or PA 150% higher) AND Current reading is actual, previous is estimated : "The high bill may be caused by an excess amount of usage being billed in the current period since this bill is based on an actual meter reading, but the prior billing was estimated. This may occur when your prior billing has been estimated at lower than your actual use . Since we don't know exactly when the water was used, it could be that more usage was allocated to a specific period and not evenly spread across each billing period. I will have billing team evaluate to see if an adjustment is needed. In the meantime, Please pay the undisputed portion of your bill. "</p> <p><input type="button" value="Create Billing Followup BPEM"/></p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>07/12/2017 14:34 Jennifer Oleson</p> <p>Please review for reallocation of charges from the last Actual reading to the Current actual reading.</p> </div> <p>Review the appropriate Talking Points with the customer. Click Yes if the customer is satisfied with the explanation(s) provided in the Talking Points. Click No to continue with the Script.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Scripts</p> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: <input type="text" value="AW HighBill Complaint Script latest"/> Lang.: <input type="text" value="en"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> <p>Objection: <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>BILLING EVALUATION</p> <p>Current reading estimated: No Reason for estimate:</p> <p>If current is actual, were previous bill periods based on estimate(s)?: Yes</p> <p>RATE STRUCTURE EVALUATION</p> <p>Minimum Allowance: No Inverted rate tiers: No PA 150% higher following estimates: No</p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Estimated reading evaluation: Yes "The invoice selected is based on a current actual reading with prior estimated reading(s). Estimates are based on prior history for your account but water use can be over or under estimated. When 3 or more consecutive estimates occur, it's best to get an actual reading. We make every effort to get a reading from your meter each billing period, but there a number of reasons why your billing may be estimated. The next actual meter reading will be used to true up the estimated billing. If underestimated, you may see a higher than a normal bill amount. If over estimated, a bill correction will occur."</p> <p>Reason for estimate populated: No NA - no problem with obtaining the reading is indicated.</p> <p>Is customer satisfied with response? <input type="button" value="Yes"/> <input type="button" value="No"/></p> </div>

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Step	Description
6.	<p>The following Billing Evaluation Screens provide details regarding possible cancel/rebill situations, manual bill situations, and possible rate (price) changes.</p> <p>Review the appropriate Talking Points on each screen.</p> <p>Click Yes if the customer is satisfied with the explanation(s) provided in the Talking Points.</p> <p>Click No to continue with the Script.</p> <p>Tip: Use of cancel/rebill is easy to see on the invoice, but harder for the customer to understand. The bill correction concept reverses the prior billing history and recalculates the bill for the same service period once changes are made (such as allocation of usage, correction of a misread meter, new rate, etc.) In the reversal section of the invoice summary, the reason for the bill reversal is included. Note that during the bill correction process, the current bill charges may also be included when the corrected bill is generated.</p> <p>A reverse move-in will have the same effect on a customer's billing. Previously billed charges may be reversed in order to change the move in/out date. When rebilling occurs, the service dates are usually different.</p> <div>  </div> <p>Debit adjustments refer to additional charges that may be included along with the periodic billing charges. Reasons for additional charges may be related to back billing, transferred balances, activation fees, reconnect fees, returned payment fees, etc. Refer to the invoice image for a description of the reason.</p> <p>When price or rate changes occur, refer to the IDA Talking Points to assist the customer with understanding the impact. The invoice will show what portion of the usage billed at the old rate, along with the portion billed at the new rate.</p>

Step	Description
	 <p>The screenshot shows a 'Details' window with the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch: AW HighBill Complaint Script latest Objection: Select Lang.: en Go button BILLING EVALUATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debit adjustment included: No Price change on selected invoice: No TALKING POINTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debit adjustment included on invoice: No There are no additional charges included in the selected invoice. Price change on selected invoice: No The selected invoice charges have not been impacted by a price change. Is customer satisfied with response? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No
7.	<p>The Script will display any billing-related service orders that have been created since the bill was issued, and will include the details such the reading and activity since the billing read.</p> <p>Tip: If there has been service order activity since the meter reading taken for billing was recorded, and the reading obtained during that service order is higher than the last billed meter reading, it means that the volumetric calculation of the billing is accurate. Check the service order results from another CRM session and read the service order notes. Once you are finished, close the second session before moving on in the Script on your first screen. If water usage is high, be sure to point the customer to leak detection information unless the service order results provided explanation for the higher use. Generating another service order in this scenario will not help the situation.</p> <p>If the read was investigated during the billing process, it indicates that a review of the account and usage was performed and the bill was released for invoicing. This step should provide a level of confidence that the situation was reviewed and the amount of the bill was deemed acceptable based on historic use or validated through investigation and service order results.</p>

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Step	Description
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: <input type="text" value="AW HighBill Complaint Script latest"/> Lang: <input type="text" value="en"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> <p>Objection: <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>BILLING EVALUATION:</p> <p>Has investigative service order been completed since the billed meter read was obtained: Yes</p> <p>Reading being questioned: Read: 0742 Date: 08/12/2016 Activity since read being questioned: Read: 0742 Date: 08/14/2016 Investigated during billing process: Yes</p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Service order completed : Yes "During the billing process the high usage was reviewed and meter reading validated through a service order. The service order results indicated the amount of water billed was accurate. You may want to check your internal and external plumbing for leaks. To assist with leak identification, please reference our website https://amwater.com/tnaw/water-information/detecting-leaks/leak-detection-kit of the page for information on Leak Detection Kit. "</p> <p>If order completed : Yes and Investigated during billing process : Yes NA</p> <p>Is customer satisfied with response? <input type="button" value="Yes"/> <input type="button" value="No"/></p> </div>
8.	<p>The final Billing Evaluation screen provides information regarding a recent meter change following consecutive zero usage and number of interactions regarding high bills in the last three months.</p> <p>Tip: A recent meter change following one or more instances of zero usage billed typically indicates a malfunction with the meter or reading equipment. It is important for the customer to understand that while water was being used, it wasn't registering on the meter during that time and was not included in the prior billing. The higher than expected billing is a true up of the unbilled prior usage and a return to normal usage and billing.</p> <p>Back billing for a stopped meter varies based on State business processes and regulations. The back bill could appear on a future invoice, as these adjustments are typically processed manually by the Billing Department.</p> <p>Frequent contact about perceived high billing may warrant an escalation. When investigation service order results provide no explanation for the higher usage, use your skills to assess if an escalation is needed. Bill disputes are handled by the Account Resolution team via a CS – Account Resolution Follow Up BPEM case.</p>

Step	Description
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: <input type="text" value="AW HighBill Complaint Script latest"/> Lang.: <input type="text" value="en"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> <p>Objection: <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>BILLING EVALUATION</p> <p>Recent meter change following consecutive zero use: No</p> <p>TALKING POINT: "Your meter appears to be functioning correctly and recording a meter reading each billing period."</p> <p>Device Location: Outside - Appointment not Required</p> <p>One or more interactions regarding high bills in the last 3 months without an investigative service order: No</p> <p>TALKING POINT: Continue investigation and include leak questions prior to generating a service order</p> <p>One or more interactions regarding high bills in the last 3 months with an investigative service order: No</p> <p>TALKING POINT: Continue investigation and include leak questions prior to generating a service order</p> <p>Is customer satisfied with response?</p> <p><input type="button" value="Yes"/> <input type="button" value="No"/></p> </div>
<p>9.</p>	<p>The next set of screens provide probing questions to determine the possibility of a leak at the customer's premise.</p> <p>Select an answer for each question and click Process Leak Answers. Review the appropriate Talking Points with the customer and click Next.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>I will now ask some questions that will help determine if there is a leak at your property.</p> <p>A. Have you checked all the faucets inside and out for leaks ? <input type="text" value="No"/></p> <p>B. After flushing do you continue to hear the sound of water running or need to jiggle the Toilet handle? <input type="text" value="No"/></p> <p>C. Have you noticed any wet areas on your lawn between Meter and the Street? <input type="text" value="Yes"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="Process Leak Answers"/></p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Response for "A" : No Besides checking the faucets you may want to check additional items that you may have in your home. As an example, a water softener system. Additional water is used when water softeners "recycle" or "regenerate". If malfunctioning this can lead to excess water use. If you use a water softener, refer to the Owner's manual for assistance on adjusting the regeneration frequency. You may have a toilet leak or malfunction. This type of leak is very common and can result in excess water use of 200 gallons per day.</p> <p>Response for "B" : No NA</p> <p>Response For "C" : Yes "Areas of your lawn that stay wet or damp may be an indication of service line break. We will send a field representative to check for that possibility. Depending on the location of the leak, it may be your responsibility to repair."</p> <p><input type="button" value="Next"/></p> </div>

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Step	Description
	<p>Note: If a PA account is confirmed, a reminder will appear to ask the customer if they have an expansion tank and check valve.</p> <p>Additionally, for customers subscribed to HOS, Talking Points will advise to schedule a service order for field verification. Create an ILP service order with detailed S/O comments concerning the leak and include that the customer is enrolled in a protection plan to verify that it is in fact a service line issue. (For KY, IL, CA, and St Louis County, create an Emergency Notification).</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Response for "A" : No Besides checking the faucets you may want to check additional items that you may have in your home. As an example, a water softener system. Additional water is used when water softeners "recycle" or "regenerate". If malfunctioning this can lead to excess water use. <u>If you use a water softener, refer to the Owner's manual for assistance on adjusting the regeneration frequency</u></p> <p style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">If this is a PA account, ask customer if they have an expansion tank and a check valve. If they have an expansion tank and the answer to the check valve is "no", or "I don't know", exit the Script and create an ILK service order. Note in comments to "Check for expansion tank and/or check valve". Customer must be present to provide access. If the customer provides any other answers, continue with the Script.</p> <p>Response for "B" : No NA</p> <p style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">Response For "C" : Yes "I see you are covered by a Protection Plan Service from American Water Resources. We will send a field representative out to check the situation. If a leak is found and covered under your program, American Water Resources will be notified and they will be in contact with you concerning repairs."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="button" value="Next"/></p> </div> <p>If the answer to question "C" is yes, clicking Next will walk you through creating an ILK service order for the field to investigate. Click Generate Service Order.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: <input type="text" value="AW HighBill Complaint Script latest"/> Lang.: <input type="text" value="en"/></p> <p>Objection: <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>There is indication of Service Line Leak. Lets Generate a service Order(LK type) to check for that possibility.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="button" value="Generate Service Order"/></p> </div> <p>If the answer to question "C" is no, clicking Next will continue with the investigation by asking consumption-related questions.</p>
10.	<p>The consumption questions help to provide an explanation for an increase in water usage. The questions on this screen should be asked if the bill in question included service periods associated with warmer times of year. If the customer is calling about a bill that occurred during winter months, choose "No" for each question to move to the next part of the Script.</p> <p>Tip: Keep in mind the weather in California is consistent enough that irrigation is commonly used year-round, and pools may be kept open for use.</p>

Step	Description
	<p>Select an answer for each question and click Process Consumption Answers. Review the Talking Points with the customer and click Next.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Details</p> <p>Launch: <input type="text" value="AW HighBill Complaint Script latest"/> Lang.: <input type="text" value="en"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> <p>Objection: <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>LEAK ANALYSIS</p> <p>Let's go over some questions that may help determine a reason for the higher than expected water use.</p> <p>D. Do you have irrigation? FOR CSR: : Consider the time of year before asking this question. California is the only area where irrigation is used year round. For other states, if high bill period was after September and before May, skip this question.</p> <p><input type="text" value="Please choose Option"/></p> <p>E. Do you have a pool and have you recently filled or topped off your pool? (For warmer climates or warmer weather months May-September)</p> <p><input type="text" value="Please choose an option"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="Process Consumption Answers"/></p> <p>Error: Please answer all consumption questions</p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Response For "D" : No NA</p> <p>Response For "E" : No NA</p> </div> <p>If the customer's answers to the Script questions don't provide a reason for the increase in usage, a reminder appears to direct the customer to use the leak detection information available on American Water's internet site at www.amwater.com. The customer will select their State, hover over "Water Information", and select "Detecting Leaks". Availability of this information must be discussed with the customer prior to creating the ILK service order. If the customer agrees to perform a check for possible leaks, there is <u>no need</u> to create the ILK service order.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>Response For "D" : No NA</p> <p>Response For "E" : No NA</p> <p style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">"Although your responses don't lead to an indication of a leak, please take time to review our website for instructions on how to identify leaks in your home. You may find helpful information to use when investigating your water use is higher than expected."</p> <p>Is customer satisfied with response?</p> <p><input type="button" value="Yes"/> <input type="button" value="No"/></p> </div>

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Step	Description
11.	<p>The Additional Occupants screen is used to determine if the increased consumption was due to any guests in the home during the billing period in question. There are open fields to type in the number guests, and for how many days they were in the home. Any additional water used is estimated based on 100 gallons per person per day.</p> <p>The “Difference in Gallons” indicates the total difference in usage from previous bill to this bill. In the screen shot below, the difference in usage between the last two bills was 39,100 gallons. The customer’s extra guests during that time accounted for only 7,500 gallons of that usage.</p> <p>While the customer’s guests did contribute to the higher usage, there is a possibility that there is a different reason for the increase in consumption.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>ADDITIONAL OCCUPANTS</p> <p>Lastly did you have extra people in the home during the dates covered by the bill?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>How many guests: <input type="text" value="5"/></p> <p>How long did they stay? (in Days): <input type="text" value="15"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="Process Consumption Answers"/></p> <p>Additional water user based on number of occupants and days: 7,500 gallons Difference in Gallons from prior bill to questionable bill: 39,100 gallons</p> <p>TALKING POINTS:</p> </div>
12.	<p>The Wrap Up Screen is the last step in the Script. If the customer is satisfied with the evaluation, clicking Yes will end the Script. If the customer is not satisfied, click No and create an ILK service order.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>WRAP UP</p> <p>Service Order completed within last 30 days? No</p> <p>TALKING POINT if no investigative service order has been completed in the last 30 days: "Since I am unable to provide a satisfactory response to the probable cause for your higher than expected bill, we will schedule a visit from a field service representative to check your property as to why you may be experiencing higher than expected water use."</p> <p><input type="button" value="Create ILK Service Order"/></p> </div>

How a Leak May Impact a Customer's Bill

Below is a guide to help explain how a leak could impact a customer's usage and water bill. When explaining to customer's the size of the leak, please refer to the Household Object Comparison to help them understand the impact of a small leak.

Length Of Leak	Size of Leak / Gallons Lost			
	1/16"	1/8"	3/16"	1/4"
1 Day	823 Gallons	3,290 Gallons	7,400 Gallons	13,127 Gallons
7 Days	5,763 Gallons	23,030 Gallons	51,800 Gallons	91,887 Gallons
14 Days	11,527 Gallons	46,060 Gallons	103,600 Gallons	183,773 Gallons
30 Days	24,700 Gallons	98,700 Gallons	222,000 Gallons	393,800 Gallons
60 Days	49,400 Gallons	197,400 Gallons	444,000 Gallons	787,600 Gallons
90 Days	74,100 Gallons	291,100 Gallons	666,000 Gallons	1,181,400 Gallons
Household Object Comparison	Safety Pin	Push Pin	Pencil Lead	Pencil Eraser
				

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If no cause for the high bill is found through the investigation and probing:

Advise the customer an ILK service order will be created for investigation. If the meter is located inside the customer's home, a reading should be obtained from the customer. Confirm with the customer that safe access to the meter is available. If the reading falls in line with prior reads, there is no reason to create a service order. Additionally, if the next read date is within 7 days, there is no reason to create a service order, as a new read will be obtained. The questionable bill will be corrected if an error is found as a result of the new meter reading.

An ILK service order is only created AFTER all other avenues have been exhausted.

Scheduling a service order should **never** be the first course of action for a high bill.

- Additionally, there are some areas where AW will go in the home to check for leaks (check IDA). If an in-home inspection is offered or the meter is inside, the customer must be home to allow the FSR access.
 - Once an ILK service order is issued, the *SO-Inspect for Leak Service Order* BPEM case is system generated and is routed to the Account Resolution Team (ART). ART is responsible for follow up on all ILK service orders.
1. Place two 30 day locks on the account once the ILK service order has been created for high bill investigation. **Process:** Dunning **Lock Reason:** Billing Inquiry/Dispute and **Process:** Calculate Interest **Lock Reason:** Late Payment Charge Lock
 2. If the customer calls back and disputes the read and letter, do not update the original BPEM that was automatically generated with the ILK. Create a new BPEM CS – Account Resolution Team Follow-up and explain the customer's concerns.

NOTE: Billing disputes may result in a complaint to the **Public Utility Commission (PUC)**, the organization that governs public utilities in each state. Please ensure that you have thoroughly investigated the customer's account. All information regarding the call should be documented completely in the Interaction Record on the account.

It is important that you do not direct customers to contact their PUC. Only if the customer makes a request to contact their PUC should you assist in providing PUC contact information.

Account Resolution Team Investigation

The Account Resolution Team (ART) is in the Billing Department. Their responsibilities include the following:

- ILK service order follow up
- Process Meter Test scheduling and test results
- Work CS-Account Resolution Team BPEMs

Once an ILK service order is completed, the BPEM *SO-Inspect for Leak Service Order* is generated and is routed to ART. After the ILK service order is completed, ART will continue to investigate the account. When ART contacts the customer as a result of a high bill inquiry, ART will ask many of the following questions:

Have you filled or topped off a swimming pool? (when applicable)	What is your irrigation timer set on? (when applicable)	Do you have a water softening system?
How many commodes do you have? Have you ever had to jiggle the handle?	Have you recently repaired any leaks? If so, what is the date of those repairs?	If you are able to access your meter at this time, can you tell me if the leak indicator (triangle on the meter) is moving?
Have you done any recent landscaping?	Have you washed vehicles lately?	Have you performed any power washing recently?

In addition, ART will provide the customers with information and steps for the do it yourself dye test.

1. Advise the customer to obtain food coloring or Kool-Aid for this test.
2. Ask the customer to flush the commode (toilet).
3. Add the food coloring or Kool-Aid to the back of the tank.
4. Allow the customer about 15 minutes to see if the food coloring enters the bowl from the back of the tank.
5. Then flush the commode (toilet).

By flushing the commode prior to adding the food coloring allows the customer to see if the flapper is being secured in position. (If the flapper is already secured in position from the previous jiggling of the handle, the customer will not see the food coloring in the bowl).

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Meter Test

Meter test service orders are ONLY issued by ART. When you receive a customer inquiry about having their meter tested, be sure to provide some education about their meter. Once a meter is removed and replaced with a new meter, the new meter often registers more accurately meaning the removed meter may not have registered full usage as the result of corrosion within the gears.

The image below provides you with a glimpse of buildup that occurs over time. This buildup prevents all the water from flowing through the lines which results in consumption that is not measured. Once a new meter is installed there is no corrosion and therefore all the water flowing through the lines is measured.

From the date the customer requests the meter test, it could take up to 60 days for the meter to be pulled and an additional 30 days from the day it is pulled to get the test results.

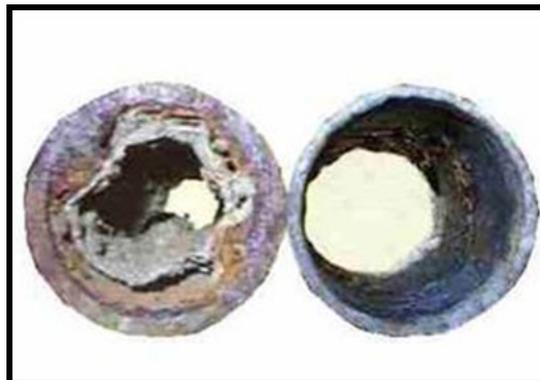
There will be occasions when the ART team will be unsuccessful at contacting the customer to issue an order. If that occurs, ART will leave a note in a BPEM Case explaining to the CSR to issue a CMT service order if the customer contacts the call center.

Note: CMT orders are undated so it is VERY important to obtain a call back phone number so the local office can coordinate with the customer to complete the order. Check IDA for meter test requirements and information.

If a customer requests to have their meter tested, please note the following:

- Check **Account Overview > Technical Data Environment or Premise Overview > Devices** for the meter install date. If the meter is brand new and it has recently been installed, a test is not necessary. All new meters are tested before they are installed at a customer's property.
- If cause for the high bill cannot be determined, verify an **ILK** service order has already been performed at the premise, **probing questions** have been asked, review the **Service Order List** for existing service orders, and verify leak detection information was offered.
- Create a **CS – AW Meter Testing Request BPEM Case**.
- The ART team will contact the customer to discuss the account and if needed will schedule a Meter Test service order to resolve the issue.

Remember, the CMT service order is the **last** resort issued by the ART team and **should not** be offered.



AMERICAN WATER

It's a lot more than just a drop in the bucket
Imagine a hole the size of the period in this sentence. It may not seem like much, but in your water system, it can waste more than 4,000 gallons a month—enough for a shower every day.

Fix-a-Leak Legend:

- DIY Do-it-Yourself
- Call a Professional Call a Professional

Toilets
If your toilet is continually draining and refilling, the plunger ball or flapper valve probably needs replacing. If the water flow doesn't shut off after flushing, you may have to adjust or replace the float ball.

Sinks
When a faucet keeps dripping even when you tightly close it, the problem is most likely a worn or improperly fitted washer. Washerless faucets may need to be rebuilt or replaced.

Refrigerators
If the ice-making unit isn't working properly, you'll notice excessive ice accumulation in the freezer and small puddles under the refrigerator.

Dishwashers
Water on the floor around the unit? Probably a leak.

Hot water tanks
Water dripping down the side of the tank and accumulating on the floor below is often a sign that the pressure valve release isn't working properly.

Washing machines
Water on the floor around the machine could indicate a leak.

Outside faucets
If faucets around your house haven't been drained or shut properly frigid winter temperatures cause freeze-ups. Check for leaks when the weather warms up.

Outside service line
If you notice a soft, wet spot on your lawn or hear water running outside the house, the service line to your house may be leaking. To be sure, give us a call.

Sprinkler systems
Look for soft spots on your lawn. This can be an indication of a leak flowing into the ground.

EPA

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How are leak adjustments calculated?

There are two methods a customer may receive a leak adjustment: (1) percentage of the excess usage or (2) discounted rate.

Generally, if a leak adjustment is issued it is based on historical account usage information. If historical account usage information is not available, a per-day average is calculated to determine how much the customer typically uses. Once it is determined how much the customer uses on an average basis, the customer is given a percentage of the excess usage off of the highest usage billing period when the leak occurred.

Remember, an outlet coupling leak is the only leak adjustment the customer can receive a credit for 100% of the excess usage.

With the exception of outlet coupling leaks, the adjustment amount, as well as how many leak adjustments are allowed is dependent upon state specific guidelines.

II. Auto Pay (EFT)

If a customer calls with a high bill concern and they have Auto Pay, or **EFT** (Electronic Funds Transfer), the customer has the **option** of deactivating their Auto Pay. Be sure to inform the customer the total amount of their bill will continue to be withdrawn from their account even though they have an active dispute with us. If the customer would like Auto Pay suspended until the dispute is resolved, it should be deactivated.

Once the dispute has been resolved, the Auto Pay will need to be reactivated at the customer's request.

If a customer is changing checking or savings account information, the customer can go on **My H2Online** to make changes to their banking information **OR** a CSR can make changes to checking account information over the phone.

Determining if a customer has Auto Pay

Click **Payments** fly out and **Bank Details** to view customer's EFT information.

The column header **Assignments to Contract Account** is the indication an account is currently on Auto Pay. Clicking on the link under **Assignments to Contract Account** will display the Auto Pay information.

You can also verify if an account is on Auto Pay by accessing the Account Balance menu and clicking directly on the customer's Contract Account number. Look for 'Auto Pay' in the **Payments Via** section.

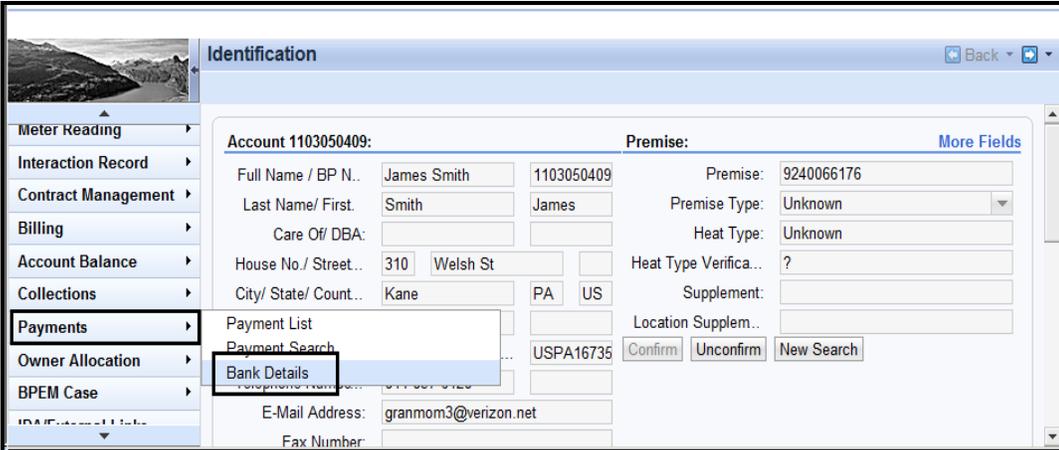
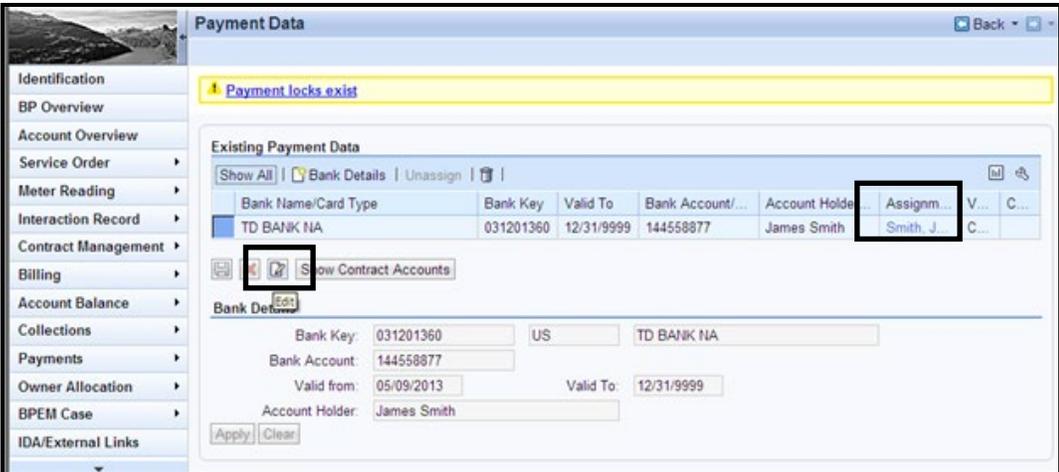
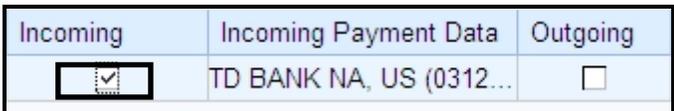
If a customer is currently on Auto Pay and requests the Auto Pay to be transferred to another contract account, advise the customer that since it is a different contract account number, you will be happy to set it up for them on the new account.

If a customer requests a Move Out and the account on Auto Pay final bills, the Auto Pay will appear Unassigned. In the event a customer moves out and receives a final bill, and subsequently moves back into the same premise, same contract account number (i.e seasonal accounts, snow birds), the Auto Pay information is still on file. Confirm with the customer if they wish to be on Auto Pay and if the same banking information applies. If the customer does in fact want Auto Pay to pull on the new contact account, make sure it is still assigned.

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Deactivating Auto Pay

To deactivate Auto Pay on a customer's account, complete the following steps:

Step	Description
1.	<p>Select the Bank Details fly out from the Payments menu item.</p> 
2.	<p>Click the customer's name and then click the Edit button.</p> 
3.	<p>Uncheck the Incoming box.</p> 

Step	Description												
4.	<p>Click Save.</p> <p>Note: No assignment will display under the Assignment column</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Existing Payment Data</p> <p>Show All  Bank Details Unassign  </p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Bank Name/Card Type</th> <th>Bank Key</th> <th>Valid To</th> <th>Bank Account/...</th> <th>Account Holder...</th> <th>Assignm...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>TD BANK NA</td> <td>031201360</td> <td>12/31/9999</td> <td>144558877</td> <td>James Smith</td> <td>No assign...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>   Show Contract Accounts</p> </div>	Bank Name/Card Type	Bank Key	Valid To	Bank Account/...	Account Holder...	Assignm...	TD BANK NA	031201360	12/31/9999	144558877	James Smith	No assign...
Bank Name/Card Type	Bank Key	Valid To	Bank Account/...	Account Holder...	Assignm...								
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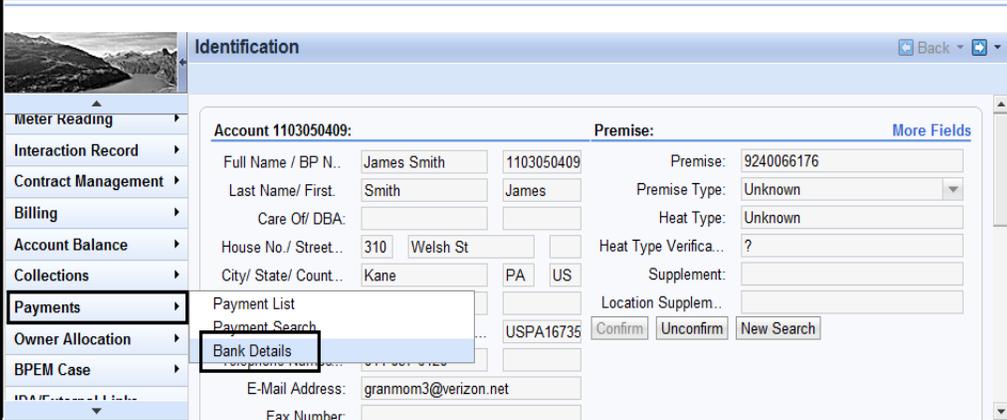
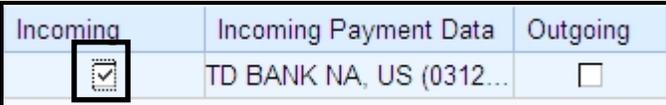
Auto Pay can take up to two days to deactivate. Once the customer's high bill concern is resolved, the customer must call in to reactivate their Auto Pay. Advise the customer that if there is any unpaid balance on the account, that the Auto Pay once activated, will pull that total balance from their account.

It could take up to 72 hours Monday through Friday for the Auto Pay to take effect once activated. If the customer's current bill has a due date that is within the next 3 days, that bill may not be drafted. **Inform the customer that they should keep an eye on their account to see if it drafts and if not, manually pay that bill amount.**

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Reactivating Auto Pay

To reactivate Auto Pay on a customer's account, complete the following steps:

Step	Description
1.	<p>Select the Bank Details flyout from the Payments menu item.</p> 
2.	<p>Click the No Assignment hyperlink and click the Edit button.</p> 
3.	<p>Click the Incoming checkbox.</p> 
4.	<p>Click Save on the next two screens that appear.</p> 

It could take up to 72 hours Monday through Friday for the Auto Pay to take effect once activated. If the customer's current bill has a due date that is within the next 3 days, that bill may not be drafted. **Inform the customer that they should keep an eye on their account to see if it drafts and if not, manually pay that bill amount.**

Summary

In this unit you learned how to handle high bill concerns. Key points from this unit include the following:

- High bill concerns are often a result of a perceived discrepancy in the current amount of the customer's bill.
- The first step in handling a high bill concern is to investigate the customer's account.
- When investigating a customer's account review Billing > Billing View, Account Balance > Account History, and Account Overview > SO by premise.
- If a reason for the high bill can't be found on the customer's account, begin asking probing questions to see if you can determine a cause.
- Probing questions typically revolve around two areas: usage and leaks.
- It is imperative to help the customer understand the impact of a leak on their bill.
- The action that you take depends on the results of your investigation and probing and may result in: setting up a payment arrangement, submission of documentation for a possible adjustment, or scheduling a service order.
- A high bill may be sent if the bill does not meet the parameters set up in the system to flag the account as a hard/terminal exception.
- If a customer is disputing a bill and that customer is set up on Auto Pay, you must offer to deactivate the Auto Pay.
- If a customer disputes a bill even after you have attempted to resolve the issue, a BPEM Case should be created for further review.

FAQ, Hints, and Tips

Below are some frequently asked questions, hints, and tips to help you handle high bill concerns.

- Be sure to investigate the customer's account thoroughly. Oftentimes, the high bill may be the result of a prior balance or an estimated read, which can be identified relatively quickly.
- Investigate the customer's usage history to determine if there is a trend in the usage from last year's billing period to this year's billing period.
- Use the Water Usage Facts located on IDA to help educate the customer on the amount of water used by common household appliances.

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High Bill Calls Study Guide

Terms

Please define each of the following terms.

No.	Definition
1.	High Bill Complaint Script
2.	PUC
3.	Hidden Leak

Exploring the Objectives

Please expand on the following topics.

No.	Description
1.	What effects do internal plumbing leaks have on a customer's bill? What should you do if a customer tells you they have an internal plumbing leak?
2.	If the high bill is found to be legitimate, what alternatives can we offer to the customer?
3.	When do you send a service order to re-read a meter?
4.	Explain how leak adjustments are generally calculated.
5.	What should be offered to the customer if he/she has a high bill and is set up on Auto Pay?