



Your municipal service questions answered

1 Question: When I bought my property I only used it for residential purposes. Now I want to run a business from there. What should I do?

Answer: You must apply for a change of zoning. Call the Rates & Taxes Department on 407 6111. Once the rezoning has taken place your property will be revalued. This process takes a few months. In the interim, you will stop paying the residential tariff on your property and immediately start paying the business tariff. If there is a change in this tariff once your revalued figures are available, the difference will be calculated and your account will reflect a credit or debit.

If you rezone from business use to residential use: As the property will be used for residential purposes, you are eligible for the residential rebate for assessment rates. For the rebate to apply, you must apply to the Council. Until the rebate is approved, the amount you pay in your assessment rates will be the same.

2 Question: What happens if I dispute my clearance figures?

Answer: If you have issues with the clearance figures supplied on your account, you must log a query with Joburg Connect on 375 5555 to resolve the problem. The Clearance Certificate department will review the figures. The reviewed figures will be available within 5 working days and the Clearance Certificate department will re-issue the statement with the details of how the figures were generated by the system. Only when all the queries on the account are resolved can transferring attorneys apply for a Clearance Certificate.

3 Question: What happens to an account when the account holder dies?

Answer: The account must be settled in full and then closed. A letter must be sent to our Legal department informing them that the account holder is deceased. The letter should have the deceased's full name and surname, or a copy of the deceased's Death Certificate, together with a letter from the Master of the Supreme Court, the municipal account number, and your certificate of appointment as executor, and the process with our Credit Control Legal department will begin upon receipt of the letter. The completed documents can be hand delivered to Thuso House, 61 Stiemens Street, Braamfontein, any municipal People's Center, or faxed to 358 3267.

4 Question: How do I apply for a debit order?

Answer: Debit orders are one of the easiest and safest ways to ensure that your account is paid in full and on time every month. Application forms can be faxed, emailed or posted to you. You can also download a copy from the City's website at www.joburg.org.za, or go to one of the nearest People's Centres.

To cancel your debit order you must write a cancellation letter. This letter must contain:

- 1) your municipal account number
- 2) the date you want the debit order (ACB) facility to be cancelled
- 3) your full bank account details (i.e. bank name, bank account number and bank branch code)
- 4) and your signature

You can send this letter:

- 1) Via fax, to the fax number 358 3044 or 358 3843
- 2) Via scan and email to cashcollections@joburg.org.za
- 3) By hand to your nearest municipality People's Centre

5 Question: Where do I find my electricity meter?

Answer: Your power meter will normally be located on the wall close to your front boundary line, set in a meter box. Meter location details are also available from City Power. If you are unsure please call Joburg Connect on 375 5555.

6 Question: I have just bought a property. Do I have to have my own water account with Johannesburg Water, or can I inherit the previous owner's account?

Answer: Each customer within Johannesburg should have his or her own water and electricity account. A person cannot inherit an existing water and electricity account from a previous owner or tenant of a property. REMEMBER: If you continue to make payments into someone else's account that you have inherited, that money will accrue to them, not to you, as the account is not in your name.

NEWS 2 USE

Meter Readers

City Power has four contractors reading the domestic meters throughout the City. Each company has its own distinctive uniform and each reader must wear the uniform and carry a company or City Power ID card.

If you are unsure about your meter reader, always ask to see his or her City Power identity card. We appreciate the security concerns customers may have about allowing strangers onto their property and that is why we ensure that our contractors are clearly identifiable.

You are required to ensure that our meter readers have access to your property. If they can't read your meter then you could end up having interim readings on your statements.

You may also read your own meter and submit the readings by phone to Joburg Connect on 375 5555 or by email to joburgconnect@joburg.org.za

Want to know when your next meter reading is due? Call your meter reading contractor:

Rubby.tad
Tel: 494-2917

Rubby.tad covers some of the southern and western areas

Global Metering Services
Tel: 435-0780

Global Metering covers some of the southern and western areas

African Meter Reading Company PTY
Tel: 885-3198

African Meter Reading covers some of the north and eastern suburbs

Micro Mega
Tel: 827- 3455

Micro Mega covers some of the north and eastern suburbs

Absa's new Speed Banking makes paying your account even easier

The City's banker Absa has introduced Speed Banking for municipal account holders to make payments even more convenient than before.

Speed Banking is simply a deposit slip that is already loaded into Absa's IT system, ensuring that no human error can occur when putting in the City's bank account number on a deposit form. This had previously been a problem for the City, with many customers not seeing their deposits credited to their accounts timeously due to the fact that incorrect account details were put onto deposit slips.

Now, in just minutes, customers can pay their municipal account by cash, cheque, transfer or pinpad transfer using Speed Banking. (This does not apply to mixed deposits). You must simply present a copy of your municipal statement to any Absa teller and request to make a payment against the account. The teller will do the rest.

You will be provided with a computer print out which you will be required to sign and retain as proof of payment.

You may also make payments at any EasyPay outlet, at any municipal revenue office, at any SA Post Office and on any major bank internet site, ATM machine or at any teller.

Applying for an Outstanding Refund

If you have an outstanding refund older than three months you can log a request for payment through any People's Centre, the Customer Service Centre at Thuso House, 61 Jorissen Str, Braamfontein, any paypoint, the website at www.joburg.org.za or by calling Joburg Connect at 375 5555.

The process of payment for outstanding refunds may take longer than current refunds, particularly those prior to 1999, when our IT system was updated. In addition, further delays may be caused by the need to confirm if the water and power meter readings dates are correct, and to confirm proof of payment, either by original receipt or by contacting your bank for a copy of the appropriate bank statement.

Joburg Connect is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year contact centre that logs customer enquiries regarding all services offered by the City of Johannesburg, as well as account or billing queries. Call them on 375 5555 or email them at joburgconnect@joburg.org.za

Joburg

CITY BUZZ

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG
ACCOUNTS & SERVICES INFO

November/December 2006

In this issue

Landlords and tenants
Reathusa ends 31st December
Remember to pay your account



Contact us

• **Fault reporting, accounts queries and general enquiries:**

Joburg Connect (011) 375 5555

• **Read your own meter and phone the reading through to:**

(011) 375-5555 or

email to

joburgconnect@joburg.org.za

• **Emergency Connect - for life-threatening emergencies:**

(011) 375 5911

• **Joburg Water – for account queries and to report water/sanitation/sewer service problems:**

(011) 375 5555

• **City Power - for account queries and to report electrical problems:**

(011) 375-5555

• **Fraud and Corruption Hotline:**

0800 002 587

• **Register to get your statement by email by logging onto the City's website:**

www.joburg.org.za

• **Fax proof of payment for reconnections to the Credit Control Department:**

(011) 358 3164

On the cover..

A collage from a series of custom-designed murals that decorate the public spaces of our offices at Thuso House, 61 Jorissen Str (cnr Simmonds Str), Braamfontein.



Don't Miss Your Last Chance to go 50/50!

Reathusa Municipal Account Scheme Ends 31st December

The Reathusa Municipal Account Scheme aims to assist customers who earn R6500 a month or less and are the breadwinners (main income earners) to rehabilitate their municipal accounts and create a culture of payment. To date over 1600 applications have been confirmed. The Scheme will end on the 31st December and no further applications will be considered.

If you meet the terms of the Scheme you can receive assistance in concluding a formal repayment arrangement for half your debt, while keeping your current account up to date. If you stick to this for a period agreed to and pay your arrears, you will then have the remaining half of your debt written off.

Don't miss out on vital help – register today!

To register, visit any municipal office and bring along the following documentation:

- Valid green SA identity book
- Valid, recent pay slip for you and your spouse
- Recent copy of your bank statement
- Recent copy of your municipal account

You will also be required to apply for pre-paid water (from Joburg Water) and electricity (from City Power) meters within 12 months of your application being approved.



Customers Can Appeal Outcome Of Billing Queries

The City's Revenue & Customer Relations Management Department – which is responsible for sorting out customer queries – often finds itself in conflict with its customers when they cannot agree on the outcome of an investigation into an account query.

It could be because either we have made a mistake or you may not agree with our findings into your account query. In circumstances like these, you have the right to dispute the outcome of the findings of an account query by appealing in writing directly to the City Manager.

The letters must be addressed to **The City Manager, City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, PO Box 1049, Johannesburg, 2000**. You must ensure that you clearly mark the envelope with the words **"APEAL AGAINST FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATION INTO A CUSTOMER QUERY."**

The appeal process is a legally constituted process and so we want to ensure that no correspondence in this regard is accidentally misplaced or misdirected. Letters can also be hand delivered to **The Office of the City Manager, 2nd Floor Council Chamber Wing, Metro Centre, 159 Loveday Street, Braamfontein, 2001**.

The Appeal Process is as follows:

- The letter of dispute is received by the Office of the City Manager and forwarded to the Revenue & Customer Relations Management Department.
- The disputed query is then reinvestigated and a comprehensive report prepared for the Office of the City Manager. The report will include:
 - The input document (detailing the initial investigation Pega ticket);
 - The original letter sent to the Office of the City Manager;
 - All support documents related to the query;
 - Recommendation on resolution by the Revenue & Customer Relations Management Department.

The City Manager receives the input document together with the Revenue recommendation and makes a decision. The customer will then be informed of the City Manager's decision in writing. The City Manager's decision is final and binding.

The entire process must be completed within 14 days of receipt of the letter in the City Manager's office.



Landlords remain responsible for tenants' accounts

Many property owners are surprised when, in trying to sell their property, they find they have arrears - incurred by tenants - that they have to pay. Property owners who have tenants are reminded that ultimately property owners remain responsible for payment in full of municipal accounts for water, sanitation, power, waste collection and rates.

This does not mean that tenants who have accounts for municipal services in their name shouldn't pay. Tenants who have signed a contract with the City for municipal services remain liable, even if they leave the property, and the City vigorously pursues such outstanding debt in civil court.

The law stipulates that two years of outstanding accounts must be paid at the time of the sale of a property. We actively seek to recover any money due that is older than two years from property owners.

Property owners may request the restriction or termination of a municipal service if they see their tenant has fallen into arrears with their municipal account and is making no effort to either make arrangements to pay it off or is simply not paying for the services used. In these situations, a property owner may request the restriction or termination of the service by faxing a signed written request (with full details of the account to be restricted or terminated) to 358 3164.

Tenants may not open accounts without the permission of the property owner. Tenants who wish to open accounts must:

- Get the property owner (or his or her legal proxy) to co-sign the account application form;
- Provide a certified copy of the property owner's (or his or her legal proxy) ID with the account application;
- Provide a certified copy of the lease agreement and indicate the starting date of occupation.

To open an account tenants are required to produce:

- A valid ID book for yourself and (if applicable) a valid ID book or certified copy of ID book for your spouse
- Spouse's details, spouse's employer's details; spouses banking details (where applicable)
- Your next of kin's details
- Your banking details

We would like to encourage property owners to request copies of tenants' accounts in order to monitor them. Copies of accounts can be obtained from the Revenue & Customer Relations Management Department's Customer Service Centre at Thuso House, 61 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, or any of the Regional Offices. **Don't get caught out – check your tenant's account today!**



Remember to pay your accounts before you go on holiday

Holidays are a great time to forget about daily stress – but please don't forget to pay your municipal accounts before you go away! Unfortunately, many customers default on their payments over this time. Remember, even in December you must pay your account in full and on time.

How to pay:

I hate queues – how else can I pay?

Easy!

- With EasyPay facilitating a quick payment option at many shops that you visit on a regular basis, including Pick 'n Pay and Shoprite Checkers
- Debit orders • Direct deposits at major banks • ATMs • Internet and cell phone banking
- SA Post Office • Any Council pay-point



Help! I have a problem paying my account this month - what do I do?

Please come in and talk to our staff at any of the City's Regional Offices, or the Customer Service Centre at Thuso House, 61 Jorissen St, Braamfontein. We can help you make a financial arrangement that suits you and will give you piece of mind.

I didn't receive an account this month - must I still pay?

Absolutely! If you haven't received an account, either pay the same amount as the previous month or call Joburg Connect on **375 5555** to enquire as to how much you owe. You can also register to receive your accounts by email. All you need to do is to register on the City's website at www.joburg.org.za and your account will be emailed to you monthly.

Please note that Council paypoints will be closed on Saturday the 23rd and Saturday 30th of December.

Get unwarranted interest charges on your account reversed!

We have recently established an Interest Adjustment Committee to assist customers who feel that they have unwarranted interest charges on their accounts to have it reversed.

The Committee is mandated to consider writing off interest charges on customer accounts in certain circumstances, for example, when we have erroneously overcharged your account and you accrue interest against the overcharged amount.

However, interest write-offs can only be considered if:

- your account has been fully settled; or
- you have made arrangements to settle the account in full.

The Committee takes a maximum of one month to make its decision, and a report will be supplied to you. As each individual case is reviewed on its own merits, there is no guarantee that your request will be approved, and the decision of the Committee is final. **THERE CAN BE NO APPEAL AGAINST THE DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE.**

Applications to the Committee must:

- be made by the account holder of the property or their lawyers;
- include a copy of the applicant's account;
- be in writing on the prescribed form (available for download on www.joburg.org.za)

The applications must be **HAND DELIVERED** to:

Interest Adjustment Committee, CRM Strategy and Support Unit, Ground Floor Thuso House, 61 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, 2001

