

The Apartment Manager Handbook

Revised November 23, 2004



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Welcome!

Welcome to the Multi-Family Partnership Program!

This Apartment Manager Handbook covers many different topics to aide apartment communities and their residents. It was created in collaboration with the Austin Apartment Association so that newly hired apartment managers don't have to wait for a training session to start to familiarize themselves with the Multi-Family Partnership Program and with the Utility; they will have immediate access to tools that can assist them.

The Multi-Family Partnership Program, established for the purpose of providing continuous electric service to the apartment community, relies heavily on the "partnership" aspect of the relationship between Austin Energy and apartment managers to make this multi-faceted, high-volume process work.

This requires not only good communication between the participants, but also an ongoing education plan to keep apartment managers updated on the changing utility and municipal regulations, policies and processes. As Austin Energy takes advantage of available technologies to make program enhancements and improve service delivery, it becomes imperative for Austin Energy to provide more of this information to the apartment community. With these goals in mind, we hope that this Handbook provides you with information that will benefit both managers and their residents.

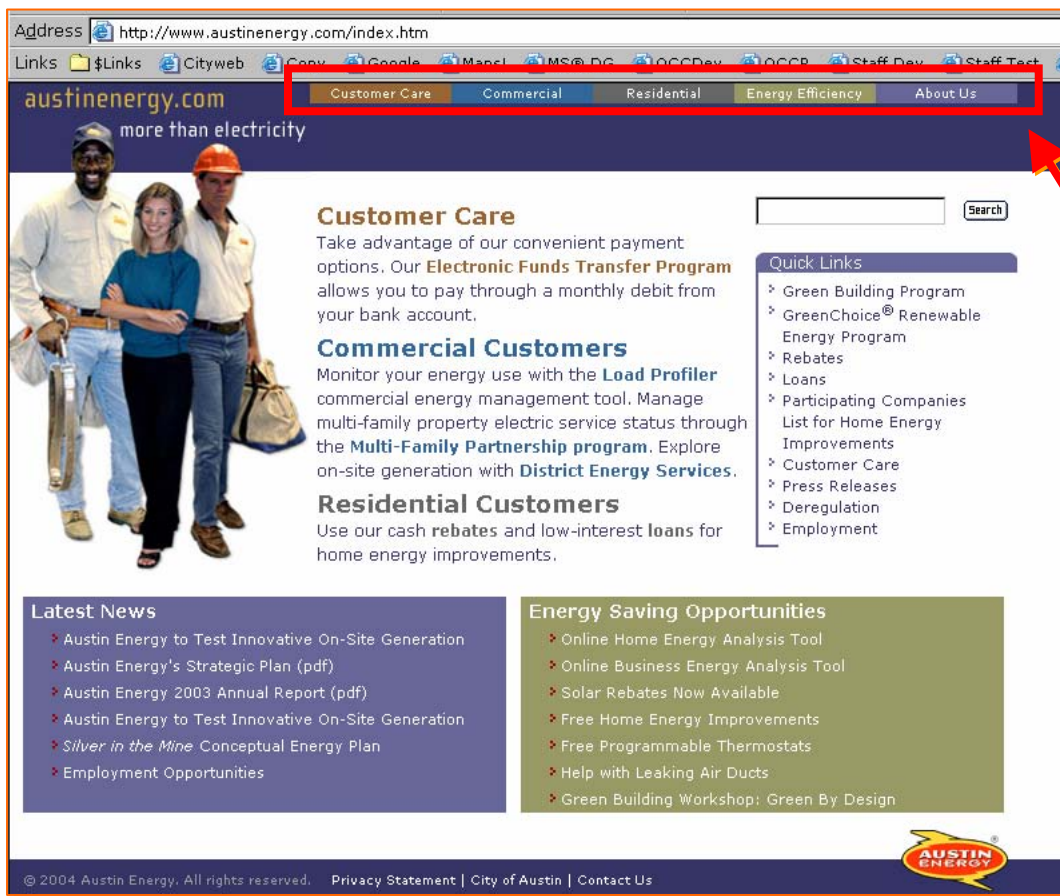
Thank you,

The Austin Energy Multi-Family Partnership Team

Note: *Please don't forget to look at the **Glossary** and the **Resident Reference** sections in the Appendices of this Handbook.*

The Austin Energy Website

At Austin Energy's website (www.AustinEnergy.com) you can find a variety of helpful information. Here is a brief tour of the extensive information that you can find on the AE site:



At the top of the Web Page there are five (5) main buttons with which you can navigate the AE Web Site:

***Customer Care,
Commercial,
Residential,
Energy Efficiency
and
About Us.***



Customer Care

The Customer Care section of the AE Web Page contains most of the main Residential and Commercial information. It is broken down into five main topics:



- 1.) Electric Service** – *The Electric Service Web Page contains information about and links to:*

The Austin Energy Service Area

Starting, Stopping, Transferring and Reconnecting Service: New to Austin Energy web services is the Online Customer Care website. On this website, customers can register for new utility services via the web. This service is new to Austin Energy and can be accessed at <https://www.coutilities.com>. In addition to finding a link to the Online Customer Care website, you can find information and identification required for service, a listing of some of the fees common to these service requests, and a list of convenient, common utility pay stations.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer Care/Electric Service/index.htm>

- 2.) Billing** – *The Billing Web Page contains information about and links to:*

The Utility Bill: Unlocking the mystery - Commercial and Residential fees (i.e. Customer, Energy and Fuel Charges), getting help with High Bills, and even learning how to read your meter.

Payment Options: Electronic Funds Transfer Program, utility bill payment assistance, and Drop Boxes.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer Care/Billing/index.htm>

- 3.) Contacting Customer Care** – *The Contacting Customer Care Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Contacting almost any group within Austin Energy: from the Billing department to the General Manager, to the AE Webmaster!

<http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Contact Us/index.cfm>

- 4.) **Other Services** – *The Other Services Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Austin Energy's Tree Trimming program: It's about safety and reliability!

Street Lighting: New Traffic Lights requests and the convenience of Nightwatchman.

Call Before You Dig Program: For your safety, please obey these State Laws.

http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer_Care/Other_Services/index.htm

- 5.) **Power Outages** – *The Power Outages Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Reporting Power Outages and Electrical Hazards: Numbers to call

The Electric Restoration Process

http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer_Care/Power_Outages/index.htm

Commercial

The **Commercial** section of the AE Web Page contains information about four main topics:



- 1.) **Multi-Family Partnership Program** – *Monitor electric service status in each unit of your multi-family property.*

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Commercial/Other_Services/Multi-Family Partnership Program/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Commercial/Other_Services/Multi-Family_Partnership_Program/index.htm)

- 2.) **Load Profiler** - *Monitor your business energy use with our online energy management tool.*

http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer_Care/Billing/index.htm

- 3.) **Commercial Energy Rebates** – *Information about energy efficiency rebates for large and small customers.*

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy Efficiency/Tools and Tips/Commercial/loadProfiler.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Tools%20and%20Tips/Commercial/loadProfiler.htm)

- 4.) **Green Building Program** - Design "green" and realize lower operating costs, increased employee productivity and higher indoor air quality.

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer Care/Power Outages/powerQuality.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer%20Care/Power%20Outages/powerQuality.htm)

Residential

The **Residential** section of the AE Web Page contains information about five topics:



- 1.) **Account Information** – Access your utility account online!

<http://www.coautilities.com>

- 2.) **Rebates and Low Interest Loans** - Use our rebates and low-interest loans to make home energy efficiency improvements. Bonus rebates up to \$400!

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy Efficiency/Programs/Rebates/Residential/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/Rebates/Residential/index.htm)

- 3.) **Payment Options** - Payment options to suit your busy lifestyle.

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer Care/Billing/Payment Options/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Customer%20Care/Billing/Payment%20Options/index.htm)

- 4.) **Get A Free Thermostat** - Free programmable thermostat program.

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy Efficiency/Programs/Power Partner/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/Power%20Partner/index.htm)

- 5.) **Online Energy Audit** - Tips for saving money and energy around the home.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Residential/index.htm>

Energy Efficiency

The **Energy Efficiency** section of the AE Web Page contains information about two topics:



- 1.) **Energy Efficiency** – *The Energy Efficiency Programs Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Energy Efficient Programs: Rebates, Loans, Free Home Energy Improvements, Free Thermostats, Duct Diagnostics and Sealing, Green Building and the Green Choice Program

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy Efficiency/Programs/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/index.htm)

- 2.) **Tools and Tips** – *The Energy Efficiency Tools and Tips Web Page contains information about and links to:*

A List of Tools and Tips: For both Residential and Commercial Customers! Energy efficiency Tips, Free Online Energy Audit, Green Building Workshops, Finding Green Companies and Apartment Complexes, How to Read Your Meter, Requesting a Green Choice / Energy Efficiency Speaker, and Places where you can find Energy Star Energy Efficient Appliances.

[http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy Efficiency/Tools and Tips/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Tools%20and%20Tips/index.htm)

About Us

The About Us section of the AE Web Page contains information relating to corporate and community initiatives of Austin Energy:



- 1.) **Company Profile** – *The Company Profile Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Electric Information: Grids, Power Plants, the Electric System, Field Service Systems, Permits and Codes.

Budget Information: Information about AE Annual Budget and deregulation.

Serving Our Community: Information about AE youth and community events.

[http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Company Profile/index.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/About%20Us/Company%20Profile/index.htm)

- 2.) **Job Openings** - *The Job Openings Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Jobs: Applications, Human Resources address, and fax.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Jobs/index.htm>

- 3.) **Austin Energy Newsroom** – *The AE Newsroom Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Newsroom: Media Requests, Interviews, Tours, Facts and Statistics, Background Information, AE Newsletter, AE Reports, and Press Releases.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Newsroom/index.htm>

- 4.) **Community Outreach** - *The Outreach Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Outreach: Safety, Speakers Bureau, Classroom Presentations, Educational Events, Facility Tours, and the National Night Out Program.

<http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Outreach/index.htm>

- 5.) **Contact Us** – *The Contact Us Web Page contains information about and links to:*

Everything! Alphabetical Index of contact information for everything from Marketing to the Employee Directory to Spanish Translations of AE materials!

<http://www.austinenergy.com/About Us/Contact Us/index.cfm>

Communicating with Austin Energy

The Austin apartment community and Austin Energy are dynamic and fast paced. The nature of both industries creates high volume interactions that present ongoing challenges. It is important that all avenues of communication are utilized to enhance understanding of our mutual business needs.

Here are some ways that the apartment community and Austin Energy can make the communication process a smoother one:

- Austin Energy has an e-mail address that is regularly monitored during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday). This address is multifamily.partnership@austinenergy.com. Turn around time for an e-mailed request is 24 hours. Many e-mailed and faxed notification reports sent to properties do not get to their destinations because of all of the changes in fax numbers and in e-mail addresses that occur at apartment complexes.

The Multi-Family Partnership Program e-mail address is a good way to:

- Submit service orders
 - Submit changes in apartment complex e-mail addresses, fax numbers, property ownership, or any other necessary information.
 - Ask questions
 - Submit comments and/or feedback about the program
- It is best for apartment properties to create a generic e-mail address (like manager@oaktree.com) so that changes in personnel will not create the need to update Austin Energy. This generic e-mail address will allow the current manager at the property to access e-mailed reports coming from Austin Energy.
 - Austin Energy also communicates with apartment complexes through the Austin Apartment Association newsletter, in which AE may include important and informative articles.
 - The Austin Energy website will include a **Bulletin Board with Program News** and other information and is always a good place to go for information.

Each Multi-Family Partnership Program apartment complex will also receive a copy of this Apartment Manager Handbook (while supplies last). An updated guide is available on our AustinEnergy.com website. Changes to information in the Handbook will also be posted both on the website and on the **Bulletin Board**, allowing managers to print any new information.

Apartment Move-In Process

Residents are responsible for initiating electric service. To do this, residents can call Austin Energy, access the City of Austin Online Customer Care Website (<http://www.coutilities.com>) or initiate services through the apartment community's website (if that option is available). If new residents fail to initiate electric service, the account remains in the apartment complex's name even as the resident continues to use service. In these cases, the apartment complex will be responsible for these services. There are several ways apartment managers and Austin Energy can work together to minimize and even prevent these issues:

- The manager can check for requested service requests using the **REQUESTED ACTIONS REPORT**. This information will be in the **WEB PORTAL** as well as on the e-mailed or faxed Notification Report the next business day.
- Have the resident call in for service at the time they sign their lease – Austin Energy can take orders two days, two weeks or two months in advance.
- Have the resident give the apartment manager their **account number** before issuing a key to the leased apartment.
- The manager can call Austin Energy and verify the **account number**.
- The manager can put a notice on the door of the apartment unit requesting that the resident has a specified period of time to initiate service, or their service will be disconnected.
- If utilities are in the apartment complex's name and the resident has already moved in, the manager can request that the resident call Austin Energy and change utility service into their name. The manager can give the resident 24 to 48 hours to initiate service. If they have not done so, the manager can request a service disconnection at the meter.
- If the manager sees a pending order for a service disconnect from a resident before the resident has given possession of the apartment back to the apartment manager, the manager can notify that resident to stop the service disconnect. If the resident does not reverse this order, the services are placed in the apartment complex's name, and then the manager can request a disconnection. If the resident moves or skips before the manager can notify the resident, the services should remain in the manager's name until the unit is leased. If the manager does not want services to remain in their name, they can request a disconnection; however this will result in a \$20 fee being applied to the account.

Mexican Government Consular I.D.

The Matricula Consular

The Matricula Consular is an official identification card issued by the Mexican Government through its Consular Offices. It is accepted as a valid I.D. in the United States.

Austin Energy accepts the Matricula Consular as a form of identification to open a utility account. To be accepted the Mexican Matricula Consular identification card must be issued after July of 2002 by the Mexican Consulate at 800 Brazos Street, Suite 330, in Austin, Texas. The phone number for the Consulate is 512-478-2866. **Austin Energy will only accept Matricula Consular I.D. cards from the Austin Mexican Consulate.**

To obtain a Matricula Consular, the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin requires the following:

- Presentation of an original birth certificate
- Presentation of another official Mexican I.D., preferably a voter registration card
- Proof of address
- Personal information
- Picture

Non-documented immigrants using a Matricula Consular must go to the Austin Energy walk-in service center at 2800 Webberville Road to open an Austin Energy utility account. Matricula Consular I.D. holders should also plan to pay a standard deposit in addition to the \$20 electric service connection fee. There is a minimum deposit of \$200 required on all accounts where the deposit applies. Austin Energy determines the deposit by calculating the monthly average for the previous 12 months at the property service address and multiplying that number by two – the deposit is the greater of this amount or \$200. Customers using an MC for identification will have to pay deposits in cash in advance. They are not eligible for deposit payment terms (breaking deposit payments over several bills.)

If the customer has a previous balance, it must be paid before service will be initiated.

Other entities that accept the Matricula Consular:

Wells Fargo Bank
U.S. Bank
Bank of America
Citibank

Union Bank of California
Bank and Trust
Washington Mutual

Payment Processing

Austin Energy's Remittance (Payment) Processing department is committed to processing your utility payment accurately and as timely as possible. The following guidelines will assist us with accomplishing this objective.

Payment Detail:

- *The complete payment should include a check with all the associated stubs, which reconcile to the check.*
 - If the stubs cannot be sent, an Excel spreadsheet detailing account numbers and amounts due can be substituted.
 - Please ensure that the spreadsheet totals reconcile to the check.
- *If you are paying an amount other than the specific amount due on the bill, be sure to write that amount on the stub or provide a ledger or spreadsheet with account number and amount paid. Then cross out the amount due on the stub.*
- *Include the paper / calculator tape detailing the total stubs reconciling to the check. We first look at the tape total to ensure it balances to the check.*
- *Ensure the check is included and properly made out to the City of Austin.*
- *Please do not send duplicate stubs for the same account, this may cause double posting; send only the stub for the currently due amount.*
- *Please send only the original stub; our payment processing equipment cannot read copies.*
- *Please do not write on the stub OCR line (located at the bottom of the stub). It is difficult for the stub to be read by the processing equipment when this occurs.*
- *Please do not use paperclips or staples.*
- *Always include a contact name and phone number in case of questions.*
- *Please use adequate postage; not doing so leads to delays in mail delivery.*

Mailing Information:

Post office box:

City of Austin
P. O. Box 2267
Austin, Texas 78783 – 2267

Physical Address:

Austin Energy
721 Barton Springs Road
Austin, Texas 78704 - 1194

Current Diversion / Meter Tampering

Electric meter tampering is not only illegal but also extremely dangerous. If the seal is broken, the meter is unprotected from being opened and a very dangerous situation exists where electrocution is possible. A broken seal would also allow someone to possibly alter the meter's functions to receive electricity without paying for it. Austin Energy is committed to preventing both situations from occurring and addressing these issues of security and tampering with electric meters at multi-family properties, as well as with other customers. A large part of the Partnership Program is focused on education and information exchange between Austin Energy and property managers / owners, first, in order to protect the safety of residents and apartment maintenance personnel, and secondly, to prevent meter tampering and vandalism.

City of Austin Rules and Regulations Code:

Article III Section 18-4-059 - PROHIBITIONS AGAINST UTILITY SERVICE DIVERSION, UNLAWFUL USE OF SERVICE, AND DAMAGE TO CITY EQUIPMENT.

- A. A person, including a city employee, is *prohibited from altering, benefiting from, or permitting the alteration of utility equipment, utility services, utility records, and utility billing, beyond authorization by policy or regulation.*
- B. The city assumes the responsibility of *investigating suspected utility tampering; correcting confirmed tampering to safe conditions; attempting collection of associated back billed utility costs, broken seal fees, and utility diversion charges; and seeking legal remedies where determined necessary.*
- C. Policies governing utility service diversion, unlawful use of service, and damage to city equipment as outlined in this chapter will in *no way restrict the city from exercising legal recourse in lieu of or in conjunction with these policies.*

Source: 1992 Code Section 18-4-059; Ord. 031204-14; Ord. 031211-11.

Article VII Section 18-4-182 - UTILITY SERVICE DIVERSION, UNLAWFUL USE OF SERVICE, AND DAMAGE TO CITY EQUIPMENT.

- A. In any case of utility service diversion, unlawful use of service, and/or damage to city equipment, a customer who could reasonably be expected to benefit from such action is subject to immediate termination of service as provided in Article XIII of this chapter and prosecution under applicable laws.
- B. In any case of utility service diversion, unlawful use of service, and/or damage to city equipment, *the city shall be entitled to collect from the customer payment of:*
- i. The *un-billed utility costs* for all power, energy and water not recorded on the meter, the amount of which may be estimated by the city from the best available data, and billed at the proper rate schedule and
 - ii. The *Broken Seal Fee* and/or utility diversion charges as defined in Article I of this chapter.

Source: 1992 Code Section 18-4-182; Ord. 031204-14; Ord. 031211-11.

Current Diversion Definition and Statistics:

Current Diversion is unauthorized use of energy through meter tampering, by-pass, self-connection or other means.

- International Utilities Revenue Protection Association says that in 1998, between 0.5% and 3.5% of annual gross revenues in the US were lost to theft, equating to \$1 – 10 billion as compared to:
 - \$28 million from bank robberies
 - \$109 million from shoplifting
 - \$845 million from theft of jewelry or precious metals

Why We Are Concerned With Current Diversion:

- The diversion of current is dangerous, with the potential for fatal injury.
 - 1% (one-tenth of a milliamp) of what comes out of your wall outlet can kill you. A typical house meter has 240 volts of electricity running through it.
- Diverting current increases rates.

Austin Energy's Current Diversion Investigation Process:

1. **Finding and Identifying Current Diversion** - Austin Energy receives leads about possible Current Diversion from:
 - *Austin Energy Field Personnel*
 - *Meter Readers*
 - *The Austin Energy Call Center*
 - *The Austin Police Department*
 - *Concerned Citizens*
 - *Apartment Managers*
 - *Automated Meter Reading flags and indicators*

2. **Current Diversion Research** (Phase I) – All reported incidents of Current Diversion are investigated. A Phase I investigation includes:
 - *Consumption / Usage History*
 - *Billing History*
 - *History of Service Requests on the Account*
 - *History of Customer Contacts*

3. **Current Diversion Research** (Phase II) – If the Field Inspection shows that there has been Diversion on a meter, a Phase II investigation begins. A Phase II investigation includes:
 - *A Review of Customer Contacts*
 - *A Review and Verification of Billing Information*
 - *A Determination of the Dollar Amount of the Stolen Utility Service*
 - *A Determination of the Beneficiary of the Stolen Utility Service*

4. **Current Diversion Research** (Phase III) – After the Phase II investigation, the Case Assessment Prosecution Team decides if the Current Diversion investigation will be taken to prosecution. In Phase III the following is researched and reviewed:
 - *All File Contents*
 - *All Evidence*
 - *A Review Summary is Prepared*
 - *A Peer Review Presentation is Prepared*

5. **Informal (Case by Case) Review Panel** – As a last step, before the case is sent to the County Attorney, a Peer Review is completed. In the Peer Review, all of the above research is reviewed and discussed by the following panel:
 - *Vice President, Customer Care*
 - *AE Legal Staff*
 - *Representative from Customer Account Service Team*
 - *Representative from Customer Contact Team*
 - *Revenue Measurement Staff*
 - *Austin Police Department*

Broken Seal Assessment

1. There will be **NO BROKEN SEAL FEE IF ALL** of the following criteria are met:
 - There has been **NO tampering or unauthorized use** of the electric meter.
 - The broken seal was gray and the account was active.
 - There have been **NO prior broken seals** associated with this account or customer.

2. If TAMPERING IS FOUND ON Multi Family Units:

- Charges will be applied to the tenant if the tenant is shown to be the beneficiary of the diversion.
- Austin Energy may provide a new heavier gauge seal if the seal is broken. These seals should be available by the end of this year.
- After the second seal is broken, Austin Energy will place a lock on the meter and bill applicable charges to the owner or determined beneficiary's expense.

Notification and Education

- **Information Exchange**: Austin Energy is currently developing a process to begin proactively working with apartment managers to complete a walk-through of their complex in order to identify and replace broken seals. These "sweeps" will begin in areas of greatest risk. ***Until then, when apartment managers find broken seals, they should report this to Austin Energy at 972-RISK. In these situations, we will waive any fees assessed to the property manager or tenant provided that the NO BROKEN SEAL FEE conditions (page 26) are met. In situations where true tampering has occurred, no fees will be waived.***
- **First Warning**: A notification that a broken seal has been found will be sent to the owner/account holder. A fee will not be charged at this time.
- **Second Warning**: If it does not compromise an ongoing investigation, a notification will be sent indicating a broken seal fee has been assessed.

Resolution Process

- Austin Energy will conduct any Current Diversion investigation as laid out in this manual. Throughout this investigation Austin Energy's Current Diversion team will determine the appropriate actions. If the findings warrant a reversal of charges, that process will begin with Austin Energy's Customer Care Management.

- If reasonable doubts remain as to the identity of the responsible party Austin Energy will continue to diligently work with all parties and continue to investigate, survey and interview all parties to resolve the issue.

Tips to Avoid Fees

- Observe seals
- Ensure the tenant's name is on the utility account
- Report violations
- Look for foreign objects, upside down meters, and meter cases with no protective cover
- Look for stolen meters that don't fit

How you can help

- Notify Austin Energy if you suspect that someone is stealing service.
- Report any suspicious activity on poles, transformers or meters.

*For more information or to report suspicious activity, call **972-RISK**.*

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

Questions and Answers for the Multi-family Partnership Program

Q: How is the new program different from the old Read and Change program?

A: With the Multi-Family Partnership Program, residents will contact Austin Energy directly to turn on or turn off utility services. Apartment managers can view these service requests on a secured web page for that property. When a resident moves out, their utility service is automatically placed into the apartment complex's name, ensuring uninterrupted utility services. Austin Energy will also be responsible for all meter reads, including initial and final reads.

Q: What fees are associated with the Multi-family Partnership Program?

A: When an owner/landlord joins MPP, a group initiation fee of \$20 per unit will be charged. A \$20 disconnect fee may also be charged to owner/landlord who requests that Austin Energy turn off services to a vacant unit.

Q: What kinds of resources will Austin Energy provide to apartment managers to help manage this program?

A: Austin Energy not only provides knowledgeable and experienced personnel dedicated to the Multi-Family Partnership Program to take your calls and respond to your needs, but also:

- *A secured Web site of your apartment community) / **Web Portal:*** which allows you to check via the internet to ensure that a new resident has placed a turn-on order for utility services or that a departing resident has requested that services be turned off.
- ***Property Status Report:*** a summary report which shows each apartment address, each apartment meter, current occupancy status of each apartment unit, master meters and common meters (such as those for offices, swimming pools or housekeeping functions). This report can be faxed or e-mailed upon request or at regularly scheduled intervals of your choosing.
- ***Completed Action Report:*** indicates any completed resident request for turn-on or turn-off of electric service or whether services have been turned off for non-payment. This report is available by fax or e-mail.

- **Requested Action Report:** notifies you of any service requested by a resident but not yet completed. This allows you to anticipate your resident's move. This report is available by fax or e-mail.

Q: If our complex is on the MPP, what are the resident responsibilities?

A: Residents are responsible for contacting Austin Energy directly to request connection or disconnection of utility services. When a resident is initiating new services, there will be a \$20 service initiation fee. Residents are also responsible for any delinquent amounts owed on their accounts.

Q. What are Austin Energy's responsibilities in the program?

A: It is Austin Energy's (AE) responsibility to transfer the utility bill into the owner/landlord's name when a resident requests a service disconnection. AE is also responsible for all meter reads, as well as the consistent updating of the MPP Web Portal. The Web Portal will be updated when a resident requests a connection or disconnection service order. E-mailed or faxed status notifications can be sent to the owner/landlord upon request.

Q. What are the owner/landlord responsibilities?

A: You play a very important role in the Multi-Family Program!

- The account must be transferred into the owner's name **within 3 business** days if a resident vacates the unit without advising the owner/landlord. This will prevent service interruption even if the resident has a delinquent payment history.
- The owner/landlord is responsible for ensuring that the resident connects service the first day of the lease. The owner/landlord will be responsible for payment until the change has been made. We recommend asking the tenant to provide proof of utility service prior to releasing apartment key.
- The owner/landlord is responsible for regularly reviewing the web portal to ensure services are billed to the appropriate party. Any disputes regarding bill responsibility are between the owner and the resident.
- If a resident calls to disconnect services and the resident or roommate(s) continue(s) to reside at the premises, the owner can request that services be disconnected without a fee assessment.
- The owner/landlord is responsible for keeping a valid and generic e-mail address on file with Austin Energy at all times.

Q: How does the apartment manager assure past due services remain in the proper name when a resident “skips” or a roommate is still occupying the premises/apartment?

A: If a resident vacates property without notification to the apartment manager, the manager should notify Austin Energy within three (3) business days of discovery and request that the account be transferred into the apartment complex's name to insure uninterrupted power. Please do not wait until the services are cut for non-payment. Any delinquent amount owed will be maintained in the name of the former resident. If a resident requests services to be removed from his/her name and the resident or roommate(s) continue(s) to reside at the premises, the apartment manager can request that services be disconnected. The apartment manager would be notified of the customer request to turn off service through the **Requested** or **Completed Actions Reports** or from access to the **Web Portal**.

Q: What is the procedure for reconnecting services at a unit that was disconnected for non-payment?

A: The owner/landlord should call the Customer Contact Center at **512-494-9400** and request the account be transferred into the property's name. Any delinquent amount owed will be maintained in the name of the former resident. Services will be reconnected within one business day if services have been interrupted for non-payment. There is no fee for this service.

Q: How can the owner/landlord verify the status of a new resident?

A: The apartment manager can verify that a new resident has transferred service to his/her name through the MPP **Web Portal** or through the **Requested** or **Completed Actions Reports**. The apartment manager may also ask the resident for their account number, which is given to each new customer as confirmation, and verify this number by calling 512-494-9400 once an account is set up in his/her name.

Q: How can I enroll or cancel participation in the Multi-Family Partnership Program?

A: Simply check “enroll” or “cancel” at the top of an **Enrollment / Change** form and e-mail (multifamily@austinenergy.com) or fax (512-479-8417) us the form. Enrollment/Change forms are available on our Web Site: <http://www.austinenergy.com>.

Change of Ownership/Mgmt. Form

Please use this form when there has been a change in ownership and / or in Management Company. To ensure that Austin Energy provides you with efficient and accurate invoices please complete the information on this form completely. Please be aware that when we place the services into your company's name you will be assigned a new account number.

The following is the required information that the Multi-Family Group would need to ensure that the ALL accounts have been transferred into the new company's name.

1. Name of Company and/or Apartment Complex taking over:

2. Tax identification number: _____

3. Mailing Address: _____

4. Service Address of property: _____

5. Effective Date: _____

Please list how many buildings on your property? (Example: Bldgs 1,2,3,...10 or if you have any buildings labeled as Laundry, Pool etc)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Will you be participating in the Multi-Family Partnership Program? Yes No

If you would like more information about the MP Program, please visit our website at www.austinenergy.com. For more information, contact us at 512-494-9400 or at multifamily.partnership@Austinenergy.com.

Please list **ALL** unit numbers that are currently in prior company/owner's name that will need to be changed over into new company/owner's name:

Appendix C: Glossary

Billing / Payment Definitions

Here are some of the terms commonly used in our industry.

- **Account status (Active / Inactive)** – Refers to whether an account is “Active” or “Inactive”. With an “Active” account, the billing system continues to generate a bill every month. With an inactive account, the billing system has stopped generating a bill.
- **Bill detail** – The details of the customer’s bill that includes a breakdown of their energy and water consumption, related costs, and fees. This detailed information is outlined on the back of a customer’s bill.
- **BillMatrix** – BillMatrix is a payment system that allows customers to pay their utility bill over the telephone using their checking account or their Visa, MasterCard or American Express card. There is currently a fee (\$5.95) to use BillMatrix. *For more information about BillMatrix see the Resident Reference section of this Handbook (Appendix C).*
- **CNP** – Cut non-pay, refers to cutting off services to a customer because they have not paid their bill.
- **Contact Type** – The different types of reasons that a customer will call us (e.g. to get new service, to disconnect service, to transfer service, etc.). These reasons are noted in the CIS system so that we can keep track of why customers are calling.
- **Credit** – An amount of money that is credited to the customer’s account balance, thus reducing the amount of money that the customer owes. Can pertain to payments made on the account, as well as corrections made when we over-bill the customer’s account.
- **Credit History** – Information that tracks the customer’s payments on their account, and whether or not they made payments on time (on or before their bill due date).
- **Debit** – An amount of money that is debited (added) to a customer’s account balance, thus increasing the amount of money that the customer owes. Can pertain to a correction on additional consumption, a returned check, etc.

- **Deposit** – An amount of money that a customer pays to the Utility to cover the possibility that the customer might close their account and leave an unpaid balance. This money is “held” by the Utility for a specific length of time, and might be returned to the customer under certain circumstances. Deposits are usually requested of new customers and those with poor payment histories.

- **Disconnect/Disconnection** – The action of turning off electricity to a meter.

- **DPA (Payment Terms)** – Customers who are unable to pay off their balances in full can make partial payments in addition to their monthly charges until the balance is completely paid off. The agreement for these payment terms is sometimes called a “deferred payment agreement” or DPA.

- **Fixed charge** – Any fee or recurring charge that is billed every month.

- **Generate Service Order** – When a service order is entered into the CIS system and it creates a service action.

- **Green Choice** – Customers who choose to help Austin Energy purchase clean renewable energy sources such as wind power, methane gas recovered from landfills, and solar energy can pay a small premium (amounting to about 12 cents/day) to do so. This premium is included as a fee on their monthly bill.

- **Miscellaneous Charge** – A non-recurring charge (e.g., the \$20 initiation fee is a one-time miscellaneous charge).

- **Payment Terms** – A contract that allows a customer to pay off a past due balance with small monthly payments.

- **Plus+1** – The program that solicits customer donations and uses the money to help needy individuals pay their utility bills.

- **Premises** – A physical location to which the Utility provides services.

- **Rel Agency (Released to Agency)** – (*For Apartment Residents*) denotes inactive accounts with outstanding balances that have been sent to a collection agency. These balances must be paid in full prior to initiating electric service at a new location.

- **Write off** – Old outstanding account balances not held by a collection agency and not actively pursued by the Austin Energy collections department. These debts can still be collected if the customer contacts Austin Energy to try and initiate electric service at a new location.

Electric Utility / Mechanical Definitions

- **Demand Meter** – A high consumption type meter that recorder the customers peak load (a Commercial Meter).
- **Jumpers** – A conductive device used to bypass the meter consumption. AKA Tampering.
- **Kilowatt Hour** (kwh) – A measurement of electric usage equivalent to the use of 1,000 watts for 1 hour. (A 100 watt light bulb x 10 hours = 1 kwh.)
- **Latch** – The part of the meter can where the seal is attached.
- **Lid** – The cover on a meter can that secures the meter.
- **Lock (LK)** – A device used to keep service off after the meter and/or meter can has been tampered with.
- **Lockring (LKRNG)** – A round ring that is used as a locking device on ring type meter cans that have been tampered with.
- **Main Breakers** – The switch (es) in the metal box located next to the meter that allows the power to be turned on and off.
- **Meter Can (Base)** – The metal square can that the meter is placed in.
- **Meter Dial** – These dials are located on the front of the meter and designate how many kilowatt-hours have passed through the meter.
- **Seal** – The plastic or metal tag/clip that is the City's identification on a meter can that secures the meter. It is unlawful to break or tamper with this seal without authorization from the utility. The color of the seal indications the status of the service. **RED** = Service is Off at customer request; **SILVER/GRAY** = Service is On; **YELLOW** = Service has been Cut for Non Pay.

Appendix D: Current Diversion Fee List

Definition of Charges

- **Addition Labor Fee - \$35/hr:** assessed when additional field personnel are needed.
- **Administrative Fee - \$100:** applies to tampering cases with multiple offences that result in significant safety hazards.
- **AMR Meter Replaced - \$75:** assessed in instances where an AMR meter has been stolen, removed, or damaged beyond repair.
- **Broken Glass - \$4:** assessed when the glass enclosing the meter is damaged.
- **Broken/Missing Meter Seal - \$25:** assessed when the hanging tag seal on the meter lid is broken or missing.
- **Broken Test Seal - \$20:** applied when the seal installed after meter accuracy testing is broken.
- **Labor and Equipment - \$50.60:** reimbursement for Austin Energy field expenses to investigate tampering.
- **Damaged A-Base Adaptor - \$17.50:** not applicable (older style meter can).
- **Damaged Lid - \$4.12:** assessed when the lid cannot be safely used without repair.
- **Damaged Lock - \$9.98:** assessed when a lock is damaged and unusable.
- **Damaged Lockring - \$5.70:** assessed when the lock ring that encloses the sealing ring to deter tampering is damaged.
- **Damaged Meter Base - \$34:** assessed when the internal base of the meter itself is damaged.
- **Damaged Sealing Ring - \$2.40:** assessed when the seal that holds the glass to the meter base is damaged.
- **Latch Kit - \$4.24:** assessed when the latch on the meter lid is damaged.
- **Lock Charge - \$23.53:** fee assessed when it is necessary to place a lock on the meter due to tampering.
- **Meter Replaced - \$34:** assessed in instances where the meter has been stolen, removed, or damaged beyond repair.
- **Meter Tampering Fee - \$100:** applies when theft or unauthorized use of service is determined; more than a broken seal.
- **Missing Blank Off - \$1.50:** assessed when the plastic covering installed when the meter itself is missing or removed is damaged.

Appendix E: Resident Reference

Residential Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What kind of identification does Austin Energy accept/require to set up utility services?

A: If a customer has a Social Security Number and/or a valid Driver's License, they can call Austin Energy at (512) 494-9400 to set up their utility services. If the customer has only a Passport, Military or Student ID, Green (alien) Card, or Matricula Consular, they will be required to come in person to set up utility services. To set up services in person, customers should be directed to the City of Austin East Branch Office, also known as the Rosewood Zaragosa Neighborhood Center, which is located at 2800 Webberville Road, Austin TX, 78702. The office hours at this facility are 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Q: What forms of credit verification will Austin Energy accept in lieu of a cash deposit?

A: Austin Energy will accept either of the following:

- A good payment history on a City of Austin utility account with at least 12 previous consecutive billing cycles, **OR**
- A letter of reference from another Electric, Water or Gas Utility.

Q: Why will Austin Energy not accept letters of credit from non-utility creditors like cell phone providers, cable companies or insurance providers?

A: In an effort to reduce outstanding debt owed to Austin Energy, it has become necessary to reconsider our letter of reference policy. Letters of reference from non-metered utility providers are different because the service delivery and collection capabilities are not similar to those of metered services.

Q: What is the customer charge?

A: Residential customers pay a monthly \$6.00 service charge. This is intended to cover the cost of meter reading and billing. A small number of customers are exempt from this fee because they qualify for a Low Income Discount, as a part of our Customer Assistance Program.

Q: What is the Fuel Charge? What is the Energy Charge?

A: The *Fuel Charge* is a per Kilowatt Hour fuel charge which covers the cost of fuel burned to generate electricity. This charge may vary depending on what is burned: nuclear fuel is the cheapest, followed by coal, then natural gas. The *Energy Charge* covers the expenses of everything else associated with running an electric utility. This rate increases when the customer uses over 500 KWH and is referred to as an **inverted** rate. It is called inverted because the more energy a customer uses, the higher the cost per KWH.

Q: What are these fees on my bill used for?

A: The **Drainage** fee goes to fund the on-going maintenance and repair of the City's drainage infrastructure, such as the cleaning of creeks, water quality ponds, and storm sewer drainage systems. The **Transportation User Fee** goes to pay for the maintenance and repair of the City's street system such as pothole repair, street resurfacing, and street reconstruction.

Q: How can the customer access the COA Payment System (Bill Matrix) to pay their utility bill through over the telephone?

A: The customer can access Bill Matrix two ways:

1. Call the City of Austin Utility Customer Care Center at **(512) 494-9400**. Select **option three (3)** for Residential Services; then select **option four (4)** to make a payment by Credit Card through Bill Matrix.
2. Call the City of Austin Utilities' Direct Payment Line at **1-800-959-7063**.

Q: What information does a customer need to have to make payments when calling in to the COA Payment System (Bill Matrix)?

A: When calling Bill Matrix, the **customer** must have:

1. Their City of Austin Utilities account number ***including the check digit*** (the single digit following the dash).
2. Their credit, ATM/Debit card number found on the front of the card.
3. The month/year of the expiration date (in the case of a credit card).
4. The zip code where the credit/debit card statement is mailed to the customer for payment.
5. Their routing number and checking account number (in the case of a check).
6. The amount the customer wishes to pay.
7. A pen and paper to write down the authorization code

Note: *If the customer has been or is in jeopardy of losing service, the customer must call the City of Austin Utilities Customer Care Center immediately after making the payment so that a Customer Care Representative can verify the payment and take the appropriate actions on the account to stop the disconnect.*

Q: Is there a charge to use BillMatrix?

A: BillMatrix charges a convenience fee of **\$5.95 per** single authorized payment to the City of Austin Utilities. The maximum amount allowed for a single transaction is \$600.00. There is no minimum. Customers are not charged a convenience fee when their utility payment transaction is declined.

Q: What is Green Choice?

A: It's an option to purchase electricity that is generated from the wind, landfill methane gas, and the sun. GreenChoice is a clean, non-polluting source of power. By joining GreenChoice, you can make a simple and inexpensive contribution to help preserve and enhance Austin's quality of life while securing a hedge against fossil fuel costs. As more Austinites choose green power for their electric use, Austin Energy will continue to contract for cleaner, renewable energy for our community.

Q: Will I have electricity when the wind is not blowing?

A: Yes! You will always have electricity regardless if the wind is blowing or not. The electricity from the wind turbines and landfill methane facilities is mixed in with electricity from other power plants, and all electricity is delivered throughout the same power lines resulting in no reduction in reliability.

Q: What is EFT?

A: The Electronic Funds Transfer Program (EFT) allows the City of Austin to, with your authorization, automatically debit money from your checking or savings account to pay for your monthly utility charges. With EFT, your bill will never be late again!

Q: Can I view my bills online?

A: Yes. The new City of Austin Online Customer Care Web Site allows customers to view their bills, payments, and utility usage information from the Internet! Encourage residents to check it out at <http://www.coutilities.com>.

Residential Customer Care Contact Numbers

USE	AGENCY	PHONE NUMBER
AE Contact Number	Austin Energy / City of Austin Utility Customer Care Center	512-494-9400
AE Contact Number	To Report A Power Outage	512-322-9100
AE Contact Number	Multi-Family Partnership Program – Direct line to Melody Dawson	512-505-3691
AE Contact Number	Multi-Family Partnership Program Fax	512-479-8417
AE Contact Number	Green Choice Renewable Energy Program	512-322-6144
Other Utilities / Services	Texas Gas Service	800-700-2443
Other Utilities / Services	Grande Communications	512-220-4600
Other Utilities / Services	Time Warner Cable	512-485-5555
Other Utilities / Services	SBC Communications	800-464-7928
Payment Assistance	AIDS Services of Austin	512-458-2437
Payment Assistance	Any Baby Can	512-454-3743
Payment Assistance	Capital IDEA	512-457-8610
Payment Assistance	Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church	512-469-9020
Payment Assistance	Sacred Heart Catholic Church	512-926-1171
Payment Assistance	St. Mary's Cathedral	512-476-3750
Payment Assistance	Services to the Elderly	512-477-3796
Payment Assistance	Travis County Family Support Services-Central	512-854-4120
Payment Assistance	Travis County Family Support Services-Oak Hill	512-892-0226
Payment Assistance	Travis County Family Support Services-South	512-854-9130

Residential Electronic Payment Option

The Electronic Funds Transfer Program (EFT) allows the City of Austin to, with the customer's authorization, automatically debit money from their checking or savings account to pay their total monthly utility charges on or within two business days of the bill's due date. The EFT Program saves time and money! There is no more writing checks, mailing payments or waiting in lines at pay stations; and there are no more late fees because bills are always paid on time. Best of all, it's absolutely free! And you save money on stamps and BillMatrix payment fees!

If the customer is interested in the **Electronic Funds Transfer Payment Program**, they can call the Austin Energy Contact Center at **512-494-9400** to enroll or, can research this information on the Austin Energy website.

Go to www.austinenenergy.com.

- Select the brown "**Customer Care**" block at the top left corner of the home page
- Select "**Billing**" from the menu on the right side of the page.
- Select "**Automatic Bank Draft (EFT)**" from the Payment Options menu mid-way down the page



The screenshot shows the Austin Energy website home page. The address bar displays "http://www.austinenenergy.com/index.htm". The navigation menu includes "Customer Care", "Commercial", "Residential", "Energy Efficiency", and "About Us". The main content area features a "Customer Care" section with a photo of three people and text describing the Electronic Funds Transfer Program. Below this are sections for "Commercial Customers" and "Residential Customers". A "Quick Links" sidebar on the right lists various services like the Green Building Program and Rebates. At the bottom, there are "Latest News" and "Energy Saving Opportunities" sections, along with a footer containing copyright information and contact links.

Residential High Bill Energy Saving Tips

Here are some simple tips for reducing energy costs.

Air Conditioner

- Set your air conditioner thermostat at 78 degrees or higher. For each degree you raise your temperature setting, you decrease your air conditioner energy usage by 5 to 8%.
- Check the accuracy of your thermostat with a second thermometer.
- Clean or change the air conditioning filter once a month. Dirty filters make the system work harder and run longer.
- For maximum energy savings, turn your air conditioner off when leaving your home for four hours or more.
- Monitor usage with frequent readings of your electric meter.
- Keep the return air vent clear of furniture or other obstructions.
- Make sure the blower fan and air conditioner are cycling on and off. If you have central air conditioning, do not close vents in unused rooms. This can increase pressure and create leaks in your ducts.

Fans/Lights

- Use fans to increase comfort. Fans blowing directly on you can make temperatures feel 4 degrees cooler.
- Turn fans off when you are not in the room.
- Turn lights off when possible. Standard bulbs give off 90% heat and just 10% light.
- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs that use 70% less electricity and last 10 times longer.

Windows/Doors

- Caulk around windows and plumbing and weather strip around doors to prevent cool air from your air conditioner escaping from your home.
- Keep blinds and drapes closed to keep your house cooler.
- Solar screens block out 70% of the heat entering your home through windows.

Shading

- Shade west and south windows in the summer to reduce heat entering your home.
- Solar screens or awnings work best because they stop the sun's heat before it hits the window.
- Shade trees positioned in the west and south sides of homes can reduce indoor home temperatures by up to 20 degrees and summer cooling costs by up to 40%. Tree shaded neighborhoods stay 3 to 6 degrees cooler than treeless neighborhoods.

For more information about Austin Energy's energy-efficiency programs, visit www.austinenergy.com or call 974-7827.