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**ORIGINAL**

Decision No. \_\_\_\_\_

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

JANE R. PILCHER,

Complainant,

vs.

HILLSIDE WATER COMPANY, a corpo-  
ration,

Defendant.

Case No. 7605  
Filed April 26, 1963Jane R. Pilcher, complainant.  
John DeSantiago, for defendant.O P I N I O N

Jane R. Pilcher, a customer of defendant, complains that bills for water service between October 18, 1962 and February 18, 1963, rendered to her by defendant, were excessive because they were based on erroneous amounts of water usage.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Warner on July 10, 1963, in Los Angeles.

Complainant is a chemical physicist, a schoolteacher, and a graduate student. She lives at 1239 Fernwood Pacific Drive, Topanga, California, with her two children in a two-bedroom, one one-bath residence. She does not possess a washing machine; her children are absent from the premises during the day as is she; she possesses a 135-cubic foot (1,000 gallons) water tank on her property which she fills periodically.

From June 1962 through the middle of August 1962, complainant was on a trip, and although she asked that her water service be

disconnected, defendant noticed some registering on the meter and did not disconnect the service but rendered a \$3 per month minimum bill for the period June 20, 1962 through July 20, 1962, and from July 20, 1962 through August 18, 1962. Complainant's mid-September bill was \$5.99 for 698 cubic feet of usage, and her mid-October bill was \$7.21 for 861 cubic feet of usage. During the latter two periods she had been clearing brush around her house and had done some planting and watering.

The following is a tabulation of complainant's bills subsequent to mid-October 1962:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Billed Amount</u>	<u>Billed Usage</u>
10/18/62 - 11/18/62	\$13.88	1731 cu.ft.
11/18/62 - 12/18/62	13.51	1701 cu.ft.
12/18/62 - 1/18/63	13.82	1743 cu.ft.
1/18/63 - 2/22/63	7.51	901 cu.ft.
2/22/63 - 3/21/63	6.82	809 cu.ft.
3/21/63 - 4/21/63	3.00 (Minimum)	271 cu.ft.
4/21/63 - 5/23/63	4.73	531 cu.ft.
5/23/63 - 6/21/63	4.67	523 cu.ft.

Complainant takes no issue with the billing as such, but alleges that the operation of the meter was faulty. She did no special entertaining during the latter part of 1962 and the early part of 1963, and knew of no reason why the meter should have registered consumptions in excess of 1700 cubic feet for three months and 900 cubic feet for the period mid-January 1963 to mid-February 1963.

Defendant could offer no explanation for the unusually large meter registrations in question.

When complainant received her October 1962 bill of \$7.21, she took steps to conserve water, and when she received her November 1962 bill of \$13.88, she contacted defendant who checked her premises for leaks and found only that a valve on the tank was faulty. Leakage through such valve was minimal. After repeated complaints had been made, defendant replaced complainant's meter in late February 1963, and the old meter was checked and found with full flow to be 100 percent accurate; with medium flow of 15 gallons per minute to be 103 percent accurate, and with low flow of one-quarter gallon per minute to be 85 percent accurate.

Defendant's rates for water service are \$3 per meter per month for water usage of 300 cubic feet or less, and \$0.75 per 100 cubic feet for all over 300 cubic feet of water usage.

#### Findings

Upon consideration of the evidence we find that:

1. Complainant is a regular domestic water customer of defendant.
2. Complainant's average water requirement reasonably is estimated at approximately 600 cubic feet per month between October 18, 1962 and February 22, 1963.
3. Defendant did not give a satisfactory explanation for meter registrations of more than 1,200 cubic feet per month from mid-October 1962 through mid-January 1963, and of more than 900 cubic feet between mid-January and mid-February 1963.
4. Defendant should have checked complainant's water meter for accuracy upon the first complaint in November 1962.
5. Complainant's average water usage was 600 cubic feet per month.

Conclusion

We conclude that defendant should adjust complainant's water bills for the period October 18, 1962 through February 22, 1963 on the basis of an average water usage of 600 cubic feet.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that Hillside Water Company adjust the bills rendered to complainant covering the period October 18, 1962 through February 22, 1963, to reflect an average monthly water usage of 600 cubic feet, and shall notify the Commission in writing within ten days after the effective date hereof of its compliance herewith.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of SEPTEMBER, 1963.

*Helen M. Brund*  
President

*[Signature]*

*[Signature]*

*George H. Grover*

*Fredrick B. Holcroft*  
Commissioners