

## Connection Telecom Billing Disputes Handling Procedure

Purpose of this Procedure.....	1
Definitions.....	1
General.....	1
Customer’s obligations to first use this Procedure.....	1
Time period within which Billing Disputes can be initiated.....	1
Circumstances under which payment of a Disputed Amount may be withheld.....	2
Billing Dispute Notice.....	2
Response to Billing Dispute Notice.....	2
Resolution, Agreement or Determination.....	2
Effect of this Procedure on continued service provision.....	3
Confidentiality.....	3
Referral of Billing Disputes to ICASA.....	3

### Purpose of this Procedure

1. This Procedure sets out the obligations of Connection Telecom and the Customer in resolving a Billing Dispute, including the manner in which Billing Disputes should be lodged and how they will be handled thereafter.
2. Connection Telecom’s Billing Dispute Handling Procedure is intended to service the interests of both the Customer and Connection Telecom, by setting out clear rules and procedures to be used where Billing Disputes may occur.

### Definitions

**“Billing Dispute”** means an instance where a Customer states in good faith that their bill contains incorrect charges, payments or adjustments.

**“Billing Dispute Notice”** means a notice submitted by the Customer in terms of this Procedure.

**“Billing Disputes Handling Procedure”** and **“this Procedure”** mean this Billing Disputes Handling Procedure for the initiation and resolution of Billing Disputes.

**“Billing Enquiry”** means the situation where the Customer seeks information or clarification relating to an invoice including without limitation seeking clarification of charges or sources of usage. For the avoidance of doubt, this is not a Billing Dispute.

**“Business Day”** means any day other than a Saturday or Sunday or a public holiday observed as such in the Republic of South Africa;

**“Complaint”** means an expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made by a Customer, but does not include a request for information. A Complaint is not a Billing Dispute.

## **General**

3. Any charge recorded on an invoice (the subject of a Billing Dispute) which is not submitted in accordance with this Procedure is payable in full to Connection Telecom by the due date of the invoice.
4. For the avoidance of doubt, the parties expressly acknowledge and agree that:
  - 4.1. An amount that is not in dispute ("Undisputed Amount") cannot be withheld for any reason (including without limitation when that amount is on an invoice together with an amount that is in dispute ("Disputed Amount")).
  - 4.2. Only Billing Disputes can trigger the Billing Disputes Handling Procedure (and the potential right to withhold payment of Disputed Amounts from Connection Telecom as set out below).
  - 4.3. Billing Enquiries and Complaints are not Billing Disputes and do not trigger the Billing Disputes Handling Procedure. Billing Enquiries should be directed to [accounts@connection-telecom.com](mailto:accounts@connection-telecom.com), and Complaints are dealt with under the Connection Telecom Complaints Handling Procedure.
5. Please note that Connection Telecom will not entertain any Billing Dispute based on unauthorised use of the services or on unauthorised use of the services by a third party, it being the Customer's responsibility to safeguard access to the services which they receive and to use them in the manner set out in the terms and conditions applicable thereto.

## **Customer's obligations to first use this Procedure**

6. As a current or prior subscriber of Connection Telecom, the Customer agrees to allow Connection Telecom to attempt settlement of any Billing Dispute for fourteen (14) Business Days before raising a dispute with any third party, credit card company or bank. Connection Telecom requires and Customer agrees that Connection Telecom be the first option in Billing Disputes. Should Connection Telecom receive a chargeback or other reversed charge from a third party, credit card company or bank on behalf of the Customer before Connection Telecom has been given a chance to resolve the Billing Dispute, Connection Telecom has the right to collect on the rendered services and any fees associated with those disputes.
7. Not all Billing Disputes may be settled to the Customer's satisfaction. Once this Procedure has been exhausted, a Customer may use any third party, credit card company or bank in an attempt to settle the dispute. However, Connection Telecom still retains the right to collect on any rendered services or fees that are due. Should Connection Telecom be unable to reverse any disputed amounts with a third party, credit card company or bank, Connection Telecom will submit the full delinquent amount for collection.

## **Time period within which Billing Disputes can be initiated**

8. A Billing Dispute Notice may be lodged in the required manner until the passing of thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the relevant invoice.

## **Circumstances under which payment of a Disputed Amount may be withheld**

9. The Customer may only withhold payment of a Disputed Amount where Connection Telecom receives a valid Billing Dispute Notice relating to such Disputed Amount at least five (5) Business Days prior to the due date recorded on the relevant invoice.

## **Billing Dispute Notice**

10. A Billing Dispute can only be validly initiated through the submission of a valid Billing Dispute Notice by sending an email to [accounts@connection-telecom.com](mailto:accounts@connection-telecom.com).
11. The Billing Dispute Notice should clearly set out:
  - 11.1. Invoice number and date;
  - 11.2. The amount in dispute (“the Disputed Amount”);
  - 11.3. The amount not in dispute (“the Undisputed Amount”);
  - 11.4. The full details of the dispute; and
  - 11.5. Any relevant evidence or documentation the Customer wishes to submit in support of the Complaint.

## **Response to Billing Dispute Notice**

12. In terms of the ICASA Code of Conduct Regulations, Connection Telecom will acknowledge receipt of the Complaint within three (3) Business Days.
13. Connection Telecom shall provide a response to the Billing Dispute Notice within fourteen (14) Business Days, which response shall take one of the following forms:
  - 13.1. A rejection of the Billing Dispute Notice on the basis that:
    - 13.1.1. The Billing Dispute Notice was not received by Connection Telecom within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the relevant invoice;
    - 13.1.2. The Billing Dispute Notice does not contain all of the information set out in clause 11 of this Billing Dispute Procedure or was not submitted in accordance with clause 10;
    - 13.1.3. The Customer has not made payment in accordance with (and does not have a right to withhold payment) in terms of clauses 3, 4.1 and 9 of this Procedure;
    - 13.1.4. Connection Telecom has confirmation from the Customer that the dispute which is the subject of the Billing Dispute Notice has been resolved;
    - 13.1.5. The Customer is disputing the charges on the basis that the Customer did not authorise the particular use of the services by another person; or
    - 13.1.6. Connection Telecom reasonably believes that the Customer does not have a *bona fide* dispute in relation to the charges.
  - 13.2. A request for information or documentation from the Customer lodging the Billing Dispute Notice, which information or documentation is reasonably

required to assist Connection Telecom in making a determination in the matter – the Customer shall provide such information or documentation as soon as possible, and the running of the fourteen (14) Business Day period will be suspended until such time as it has been received by Connection Telecom.

13.3.A determination of the Billing Dispute and the reasons for such determination.

### **Resolution, Agreement or Determination**

14. If stipulated under Connection Telecom's response under clause 13 that the Customer must make payment of a Disputed Amount, the Customer must pay the Disputed Amount within five (5) Business Days of the date of the determination.
15. If stipulated under Connection Telecom's response under clause 13 that Connection Telecom must withdraw the disputed charge or refund a disputed charge previously paid, Connection Telecom must as soon as practicable:
  - 15.1. Provide the Customer with an adjustment to their account reflecting the decision above. It is intended that this adjustment will appear on the next invoice issued to the Customer (which the Customer must pay in accordance with the agreement for services that it has with Connection Telecom), but the parties acknowledge that this may be delayed due to timing issues with the decision and Connection Telecom's standard billing terms; and
  - 15.2. Credit any Disputed Amount already paid by the Customer.
16. Where a resolution or determination is made in accordance with clauses 15.1 or 15.2 then, subject to either party meeting the payment obligations specified in such resolution or determination, the Billing Dispute will be deemed to be resolved and Connection Telecom will have no further obligations in relation to the Billing Dispute.

### **Effect of this Procedure on continued service provision**

17. Connection Telecom will not disconnect a service provided to the Customer which is the subject of a Billing Dispute or take adverse collection procedures or impose late payment penalties or charges while attempting to resolve a Billing Dispute lodged in terms of this Procedure and until such time as Connection Telecom has reached a determination and communicated this to the Customer provided that amounts not disputed are paid as contracted for.
18. Connection Telecom reserves the right, however, to take such measures immediately:
  - 18.1. Where a determination of the Billing Dispute has been made and communicated to the Customer; or
  - 18.2. Where the Customer has indicated that they are unable to pay the invoice or bill, or have filed or are the subject of any application to court for sequestration or liquidation, or otherwise seek to reach a formal arrangement with their creditors.

19. Subject only to the above, the rights and obligations of each party under the Billing Dispute Procedure continue pending resolution of a Billing Dispute invoked under this Billing Dispute Procedure. For the avoidance of doubt this includes that Connection Telecom shall continue to have the right to terminate or suspend the service in accordance with Connection Telecom's rights under the agreement that the Customer has with Connection Telecom.

### **Confidentiality**

20. Neither party shall use any information obtained from the other party during the course of any process invoked under this Procedure for any purpose other than the resolution of the particular Billing Dispute.

### **Referral of Billing Disputes to ICASA**

21. If the Customer is not happy about the outcome of the Complaint, the Customer has the right to escalate it to ICASA. If ICASA cannot resolve the matter it may be referred to the ICASA Complaints and Compliance Committee for adjudication.

22. ICASA can be contacted in the following ways:

22.1. Telephone: 011 566 3000;

22.2. Fax: 011 444 1919; and/or

22.3. email: [consumer@icasa.org.za](mailto:consumer@icasa.org.za).

Last updated: February 2013

---