

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of)	DOCKET UW-081417
)	
DEER MEADOWS WATER)	ORDER 01
COMPANY, INCORPORATED,)	
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	
Seeking Exemption from the)	
Provisions of WAC 480-110-375(3))	
Relating to REQUEST FOR)	
EXCEPTION TO RULE FOR)	
WINTER METER READING AND)	ORDER GRANTING
BILL ESTIMATION)	EXEMPTION FROM RULE
.....)	
.)	

BACKGROUND

- 1 On July 25, 2008, Deer Meadows Water Company, Incorporated, (Deer Meadows or Company), filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a petition requesting an exemption from WAC 480-110-375(3).

- 2 WAC 480-110-375(3) requires water companies to estimate water bills over no more than two consecutive billing cycles.

- 3 Deer Meadows stated that during some severe winters, snow cover lasts more than two billing cycles. The Company requests an exemption to allow it to estimate consumption charges during the winter months should reading the meters not be feasible due to snow covering for an extended period.

- 4 Customers commented that the company did not need the exemption to allow the company not to read meters during winter weather. In its memo, Staff summarized the comments that were received for this filing and responded to the comments. Staff has also explained to customers that the company filed its request for exemption at Staff's request because this is an emerging issue for companies operating in Eastern Washington.

- 5 Commission Staff reviewed the request and recommended granting Deer Meadows' request for exemption, subject to the following condition(s):

- 6 The company may defer reading meters for a third consecutive month, but only if severe weather prevents the company from reading the meters. The company will bill customers only the base charge each month that the company does not read the meters. Usage charges will be trued-up after the next meter reading and billed to customers in monthly installments that do not exceed the monthly base charge.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7 1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the State of Washington vested by statute with the authority to regulate the rates, rules, regulations, practices, accounts, securities, transfers of property, and affiliated interests of public service companies, including water companies. *RCW 80.01.040, RCW 80.04, RCW 80.08, RCW 80.12, RCW 80.16 and RCW 80.28.*
- 8 (2) Deer Meadows is engaged in the business of providing water services within the state of Washington and is a public service company subject to Commission jurisdiction.
- 9 (3) Deer Meadows is subject to WAC 480-110-375(3), which requires water companies to use estimated water use amounts for no more than two consecutive billing cycles.
- 10 (4) Under WAC 480-110-215, the Commission may grant an exemption from the provisions of any rule in WAC 480-110, if consistent with the public interest, the purposes underlying regulation and applicable statutes. *See also WAC 480-07-110.*
- 11 (5) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on August 28, 2008.
- 12 (6) After reviewing Deer Meadows' petition filed in Docket UW-081417 on July 25, 2008, and giving due consideration, the Commission finds that the exemption is reasonable and should be granted.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 13 (1) After the effective date of this Order, Deer Meadows Water Company, Incorporated, is granted an exemption from WAC 480-110-375(3), allowing the company to defer reading meters for no more than three consecutive billing cycles using estimated bills during severe winter weather events only.
- 14 (2) This exemption is subject to the following conditions:
- The company may defer reading meters for a third consecutive month, but only if severe weather prevents the company from reading the meters.
 - The company will bill customers only the base charge each month that the company does not read the meters.
 - Usage charges will be trued-up after the next meter reading and billed to customers in monthly installments that do not exceed the monthly base charge.
- 15 (3) The Commission retains jurisdiction over the subject matter and Deer Meadows Water Company, Incorporated, to effectuate the provisions of this Order.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective August 28, 2008.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MARK H. SIDRAN, Chairman

PATRICK J. OSHIE, Commissioner

PHILIP B. JONES, Commissioner