

WAC 480-90-023 Definitions.

"Account and usage information" means customer information contained in the records a utility keeps for each customer to provide and bill for utility service including, but not limited to, the customer's name, account number, address where service is provided, customer contact information, services the utility is providing or has provided to the customer, energy usage, customer financial information, bills the utility has issued, payment history, and medical or low-income status.

"Affiliated interest" means a person or corporation as defined in RCW [80.16.010](#).

"Aggregate data" means any collection of customer data by a utility from which identifiable customer information has been removed or modified so that the information cannot be attributed to any individual customer.

"Applicant" means any person, corporation, partnership, government agency, or other entity that applies, or is named in an application as a person having joint responsibility, for service with a gas utility or who reapplies for service at a new or existing location after service has been disconnected if the utility requires the person to reapply for service.

"British thermal unit" (Btu) means the quantity of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of water at 60° Fahrenheit and standard pressure, one degree Fahrenheit.

"Business day" means Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., except for official state holidays.

"Commission" means the Washington utilities and transportation commission.

"Control" means the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a company, whether through the ownership of voting shares, by contract, or otherwise.

"Cubic foot of gas" means a volumetric unit of measure used in sales and testing.

"Customer" means any person, corporation, partnership, government agency, or other entity that applied, or is named as a person having joint responsibility, for service and that has been accepted for, and is currently receiving or is entitled to receive such service. "Customer" for purposes of this chapter may also include a person or other entity whose service has been involuntarily disconnected and that person or entity then seeks to have the utility reconnect service.

"Customer information" means private customer information and proprietary customer information as defined in RCW [19.29A.010](#) and personal information as defined in chapter [19.255](#) RCW.

"Gas" means any fuel or process gas, whether liquid petroleum gas, manufactured gas, natural gas, or any mixture of these.

"Gas utility (utility)" means any business entity (e.g., corporation, company, association, joint stock association, or partnership) or person, including a lessee, trustee, or court appointed receiver, that is subject to the commission's jurisdiction and that owns, controls, operates, or manages any gas plant in Washington and manufactures, transmits, distributes, sells, or furnishes gas to the public for compensation.

"Liquefied petroleum gas" means a gas consisting of vapors of one or more of the paraffin hydrocarbons, or a combination of one or more of these vapors with air.

"Manufactured gas" means any gas produced artificially by any process.

"Natural gas" means a mixture of gaseous hydrocarbons (chiefly methane) and nonhydrocarbons that occur naturally in the earth.

"Primary purpose" means a business need to provide regulated utility services as required by state or federal law, or as specifically authorized in the utility's effective tariff or by the commission.

"Prior Obligation" is the dollar amount, excluding deposit amounts owed, the utility has billed to the customer and for which the utility has not received payment at the time the service has been

disconnected for nonpayment. A prior obligation does not need to be paid prior to reconnection and is are-not related to fraud or damage charges and fees.

"Qualified medical professional" means a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant authorized to diagnose and treat the medical condition without supervision of a physician.

"Sales volume" means a cubic foot of gas for billing purposes is the amount of gas that occupies a volume of one cubic foot under the temperature and pressure conditions existing in the customer's meter. Temperature and/or pressure recording or compensating devices may be used to reflect temperature or pressure base conditions for computing the volume sold. Temperature and/or pressure compensation factors may be used to compute the volume of gas sold as provided in the utility's tariff.

"Subsidiary" means any company in which the gas utility owns directly or indirectly five percent or more of the voting securities, unless the utility demonstrates it does not have control.

"Testing volume" means a cubic foot of gas for testing purposes is the amount that occupies a volume of one cubic foot at a temperature of 60° Fahrenheit and pressure of 14.73 pounds per square inch absolute.

"Therm" means a unit of heat equal to 100,000 Btus.

"Written consent" means permission or authorization in writing, whether electronic or paper.

Other terms. Terms used in this chapter and defined in the public service laws of Washington state (i.e., principally Title [80](#) RCW) have the same meaning here as in the statutes. Terms not defined in these rules or the applicable statutes have the meaning generally accepted in the gas industry, or their ordinary meaning if there is no meaning generally accepted in the gas industry.

WAC 480-90-103 Information to consumers.

(1) Each gas utility must make available at each of its listed business offices information regarding rates, rules, and regulations needed for its customers and applicants to obtain adequate and efficient service.

(2) The utility must maintain a toll-free telephone number available for its applicants and customers during business hours to receive information relating to services and rates, to accept and process orders for service, to explain charges on customer bills, to adjust charges made in error, to respond to customer inquiries and complaints, and to generally act as representatives of the utility.

(3) The utility must provide to each applicant relevant rate information and a brochure that explains the rights and responsibilities of a utility customer. The brochure must include, at a minimum, information about the utility's regular business hours, the utility's mailing address, the utility's toll-free number, the twenty-four hour emergency number(s), and an explanation of the utility's processes to establish credit, deposits, billing, delinquent accounts, disconnection of service initiated by the utility, cancellation of service by the customer, the dispute resolution process, and the commission's informal complaint procedures to be followed if the customer remains dissatisfied with the utility's dispute process. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.

(4) To the extent practicable, information sent to customers must be provided in the customer's preferred language.

~~(4)~~ At least once each year, the utility must directly advise each of its customers how to obtain:

- (a) A copy of the consumer brochure described in subsection (3) of this section;
- (b) A copy of the customer's applicable rate information;
- (c) A copy of the gas rules, chapter 480-90 WAC; and
- (d) A copy of the utility's current rates and regulations.

~~(5)~~ The utility must provide an applicant, upon request, the high and low bills for the requested service premises during the prior calendar year, if such data is available.

(67) The utility must provide a customer, upon request, a detailed account of the customer's actual natural gas usage at the service premises for the previous twelve-month period, if such data is available.

(78) The utility must provide customers information comparing energy usage for the current month and the same billing month of the previous year, if available, either on the customers' bills or upon request as follows:

- (a) Number of days in billing period;
- (b) Therms used; and
- (c) Average therms used per day.

(89) The utility must provide the commission with electronic or paper copies of all pamphlets, brochures, and bill inserts of regulated service information at the same time the utility delivers such material to its customers.

WAC 480-90-113 – Residential services deposit prepayment and fee requirements.

(1) ~~Residential customer~~ ~~Deposit~~ ~~criteria for residential customers.~~ ~~A gas~~ ~~The~~ utility may not collect a deposit from a ~~its own customers for residential service only if:~~ customer.

~~(a) At any time during the prior twelve months, the utility has sent the customer three or more delinquency notices;~~

~~(b) The utility has disconnected the customer's residential service for nonpayment; or~~

~~(c) There is a prior customer living at the residence who owes a past due bill to the utility for service at that address.~~

~~(2) Deposit criteria for residential applicants. A utility may collect a deposit from an applicant for residential service only if:~~

~~(a) The applicant has met any of the conditions described in subsection (1) of this section as a prior customer of the utility or as a customer of another natural gas utility;~~

~~(b) The applicant is not able to demonstrate continuous employment during the prior twelve consecutive months and neither is currently employed nor has a regular source of income;~~

~~(c) The applicant does not own or is not purchasing the premises to be served;~~

~~(d) There is a prior customer living at the residence who owes a past due bill to the utility at that address; or~~

~~(e) The applicant has an unpaid, overdue balance owing to any electric or gas utility for residential service.~~

~~(3) Deposit amount. Deposits required for a customer or location must not exceed:~~

~~(a) Two twelfths of the estimated annual billings for utilities billing monthly; or~~

~~(b) Three twelfths of estimated annual billings for utilities billing bimonthly.~~

~~(4) Deposit payment arrangements. The utility must allow an applicant or customer the option of paying fifty percent of the deposit prior to service, and paying the remaining balance in equal amounts over the next two months, on the dates mutually agreed upon between the applicant or customer and the utility. The utility and applicant or customer may make other mutually acceptable deposit payment arrangements.~~

~~(5) **Alternative to deposit.** The utility must allow any applicant or customer who indicates an inability to pay a deposit:~~

~~(a) To prepay any service initiation fees and reasonably estimated regular service charges or budget billings at periods corresponding to the utility's regular billing periods. for the length of time during which a deposit would ordinarily be required. The utility must then bill the applicant or customer in a normal fashion; or~~

(b) To furnish a satisfactory guarantor. A guarantor must be considered satisfactory if the guarantor has at least established credit with the utility as outlined in this section. A utility may, at its discretion, accept a guarantor that does not meet the requirements of this section. If the customer has been disconnected, the guarantor is responsible for the amount stated on the disconnection notice, not to exceed the amount of the deposit as defined in subsection (3) of this section unless the guarantor has agreed to guarantee an additional amount as specified in subsection (7) of this section; or

(c) To notify the utility of the inability to pay a deposit as provided in WAC 480-90-143, Winter low-income payment program; or

(d) The opportunity to provide a reference from a similar utility that can quickly and easily be checked if the conditions in subsection (1) of this section cannot be met.

(6) Transfer of deposit. When a customer moves to a new address within the utility's service territory, the deposit plus accrued interest, less any outstanding balance owing from the old address, must be transferred to the new address or refunded.

(7) Additional deposit. If a deposit or additional deposit amount is required after the service is established, the reasons must be specified to the customer in writing. Any request for a deposit or additional deposit amount must comply with the standards outlined in subsection (1) of this section. If the original deposit was secured by a guarantor and the guarantor does not agree to be responsible for the additional deposit amount, the customer will be held responsible for paying the additional deposit.

(8) Deposit payment date. Any deposit or additional deposit amount required after service is established is due and payable not earlier than 5:00 p.m. of the sixth business day after notice if the deposit requirement notice is mailed from within the states of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, or the ninth business day if mailed from outside the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. If the utility delivers the notice to the customer in person, the deposit or additional deposit amount is due and payable not earlier than 5:00 p.m. of the sixth business day from the date of delivery.

(9) Interest on deposits. Utilities that collect customer deposits must pay interest on those deposits calculated:

(a) For each calendar year, at the rate for the one-year Treasury Constant Maturity calculated by the U.S. Treasury, as published in the Federal Reserve's Statistical Release H.15 on January 15 of that year. If January 15 falls on a nonbusiness day, the utility will use the rate posted on the next following business day; and

(b) From the date of deposit to the date of refund or when applied directly to the customer's account.

(10) When refund of deposits is required. A utility must apply deposits plus accrued interest to the customer's account, or refund deposits plus accrued interest when there has been satisfactory payment, as defined in (a) of this subsection, or when service is terminated.

(a) "Satisfactory payment" means a customer has paid for service for twelve consecutive months in a prompt and satisfactory manner as evidenced by the following:

(i) The utility has not started a disconnection process against the customer; and

(ii) The utility has sent no more than two delinquency notices to the customer.

(b) Termination of service. When service is terminated, the utility must return to the customer the deposit amount plus accrued interest, less any amounts due the utility by the customer.

(2) Fees. The utility may not charge a residential customer any of the following fees:

(a) late payment fees;

(b) reconnection fees for customers who were disconnected for nonpayment;

(c) disconnection visit fees for visits related to or resulting from collection activities or service disconnections for nonpayment;

(d) returned check fees.

~~(11) How deposits are refunded. A utility must refund any deposit plus accrued interest as indicated by the customer at the time of deposit, or as modified by the customer on a later date, using one of the following methods:~~

~~(a) A check issued and mailed to the customer no later than fifteen days following completion of twelve months of satisfactory payment, as described above; or~~

~~(b) A credit applied to the customer's account for service beginning in the thirteenth month.~~

WAC 480-90-123 Refusal of service.

(1) A gas utility may refuse to provide new or additional service if:

(a) Providing service does not comply with government regulations or accepted natural gas industry standards;

(b) In the utility's ~~reasonable~~ reasonably informed judgment, the applicant's or customer's installation of piping or gas burning equipment is considered hazardous or of such a nature that safe and satisfactory service cannot be provided;

(c) The applicant or customer does not comply with the utility's request that the applicant or customer provide and install protective devices, when the utility, in its ~~reasonable~~ reasonably informed judgment deems such protective devices are necessary to protect the utility's or other customers' properties from theft or damage;

(d) After reasonable efforts by the responsible party, all necessary rights of way, easements, approvals, and permits have not been secured; or

(e) The utility determines that the customer ~~is known by the utility to have~~ has tampered with or stolen the utility's property, used service through an illegal connection, or fraudulently obtained service and the utility has complied with WAC 480-90-128(2), disconnection of service. In any challenge to that determination, the utility has the burden of proof.

(2) The utility must provide service to residential customers. ~~A gas~~ The utility may not refuse to provide new or additional service to a residential applicant or residential customer who has a prior obligation. ~~A prior obligation is the dollar amount, excluding deposit amounts owed, the utility has billed to the customer and for which the utility has not received payment at the time the service has been disconnected for nonpayment. The utility must provide service once the customer or applicant has paid all appropriate deposit and reconnection fees. This subsection does not apply to customers that have been disconnected for failure to honor the terms of a winter low income payment program.~~

(3) The utility may not refuse to provide service to an applicant or customer because there are outstanding amounts due from a prior customer at the same premises, ~~unless the utility can determine, based on objective evidence, that a fraudulent act is being committed, such that the applicant or customer is acting in cooperation with the prior customer with the intent to avoid payment.~~

(4) The utility may refuse to provide new or additional service, except as provided in subsection (2) for reasons not expressed in subsection (1) of this section, upon prior approval of the commission. The commission may grant the request upon determining that the utility has no obligation to provide the requested service under RCW 80.28.110. Prior to seeking commission approval, the utility must work with the applicant or customer requesting service to seek resolution of the issues involved.

(5) Any applicant or customer who has been refused new or additional service may file with the commission an informal complaint under WAC 480-07-910, Informal complaints; or a formal complaint under WAC 480-07-370, Pleadings—General.

WAC 480-90-128 Disconnection of service.

(1) **Customer-directed.** The utility may require customers to give at least three days' advance notice of customer-directed disconnection prior to the date the utility must disconnect service. The customer is not responsible for usage after the requested date for disconnection of service, provided the customer gave the utility the notice required in this rule and the utility's tariff. If the customer moves from the service address and fails to request that service be disconnected, the customer will be responsible for paying for service taken at that service address until the utility can confirm the date that the customer vacated the premises and the utility can access the meter, if necessary, or that a new responsible party is taking service at that address.

(2) **Utility-directed with notice.** After notifying the customer as required in subsection (4) of this section, the utility may disconnect service for any one of the following conditions:

(a) The customer has delinquent charges associated with regulated gas service, including any required deposit; however, the utility may not disconnect service when the customer has met the requirements of subsection (8) of this section for medical conditions or emergencies or has agreed to and maintains agreed-upon payment arrangements with the utility, as described in WAC 480-90-143 Winter low-income payment program;

(b) ~~Gas-Utility~~ service the utility provides is being used for purposes or properties other than those specified in the customer's service application;

(c) Flat-rate service for nonmetered load has increased natural gas use without the utility's approval;

(d) The customer refuses to allow, or utility representatives are otherwise unable to obtain, access to the customer's premises as required in WAC 480-90-168, Access to premises; identification;

(e) ~~Violation~~ Proof of violation of utility rules, service agreements, or filed tariff(s); or

(f) Equipment is being used that detrimentally affects the utility's service to its other customers or may result in detrimental impacts to the safety of those customers or other persons, customers' equipment or property, or utility service.

(3) A utility may not disconnect gas service for amounts the customer may owe the utility for nonregulated services.;

(4) **Disconnection notification requirements.** The utility must notify a customer as provided in this subsection before disconnecting the customer's service, except as described in subsection (7) of this section.

(a) The utility must provide at least two separate disconnection notices to the customer.

(i) The utility must provide the first disconnection notice in writing by delivery of a paper copy to the service premises. The utility must either mail a ~~hard~~-paper copy of the notice or deliver the notice to the service premises by attaching the notice to the customer's primary door. The notice must be mailed or delivered to the premises at least eight business days before the disconnection date. If the notice is mailed from outside the states of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, the utility must mail the notice eleven days before the disconnection date. In addition, the utility must provide an electronic copy of the notice, if the utility has such contact information for the customer and the customer has consented to electronic delivery of notices from the utility, at the time the utility mails or delivers the paper copy of the notice.

(ii) The utility must provide the second disconnection notice electronically (if the utility has such contact information and customer consent to electronic delivery of notices) at least two business days before the disconnection date and by one of the three options listed below:

(A) Delivered notice. The utility must deliver a paper copy of the second notice to the service premises and attach it to the customer's primary door at least two business days before the disconnection date.

(B) Mailed notice. The utility must mail a paper copy of the second notice at least three business days before the disconnection date unless mailed outside of the states of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, in which case the utility must mail the notice no less than six business days before the disconnection date.

(C) Telephone notice. The utility must attempt at least two times to contact the customer by telephone during regular business hours at least three business days before the disconnection date to enable sufficient time to send a timely written notice if the utility is unable to speak with the customer by telephone. The utility must keep a log or record of the calls for a minimum of ninety calendar days showing the telephone number called, the time of the call, and details of the results of each attempted call. If the utility is unable to speak with the customer by telephone, the utility must deliver or mail a paper copy of the second notice as provided in (a)(ii)(A) or (B) of this subsection.

(b) Each disconnection notice must include all relevant information about the disconnection action including:

(i) The cause for disconnection, the amount owed for regulated gas service, and how to avoid disconnection including, but not limited to, the availability of, and how to apply for, energy assistance, low-income assistance, exemptions for low-income assistance and medical conditions or emergencies, and a payment plan as required under WAC 480-90-138 Payment arrangements;

(ii) All relevant information about any charges that the utility is assessing or that it may assess;

(iii) The utility's name, address, and toll-free telephone number by which a customer may contact the utility to discuss the pending disconnection of service; and

(iv) If the notices are for nonpayment and the utility is scheduling disconnection during the late fall and winter between November 15th and March 15th, the utility must advise the customer of the payment plan options in WAC 480-90-143 Winter low-income payment program.

(c) If the utility discovers that an issued notice does not contain the information required ~~in~~ under (a) of this subsection, or if the information in the notice is inaccurate, the utility must issue another notice to the customer as described in (a)(i) or (ii) of this subsection, as applicable, and must recalculate the scheduled disconnection date to the extent necessary to ensure that the utility complies with the minimum prior notice requirements.

(d) If the utility does not disconnect service within ten business days ~~of~~ from the disconnection date stated in a disconnection notice under (a)(i) or (ii) of this subsection, the utility must restart the disconnection notice process required in (a) of this subsection unless the customer and the utility have agreed to a payment arrangement.

(e) A utility with combined accounts for both gas and electric service may disconnect the gas service in compliance with these rules if the reason for the disconnection applies or is attributable to that service. The utility may disconnect the electric service in compliance with chapter 480-100 WAC if the reason for the disconnection applies or is attributable to that service. The utility must state which service it intends to disconnect and any measures the customer needs to undertake to retain the other service. If the utility seeks to disconnect both services, the utility must distinctly identify both services it intends to disconnect.

(f) When the service address is different from the billing address, the utility must determine if the customer of record and the service user are the same party. If they are not the same party, the utility must provide notice to the service user as described in (a) of this subsection prior to disconnecting service.

(g) Except in case of danger to life or property, the utility may not disconnect service on Saturdays, Sundays, legal holidays, or on any other day on which the utility cannot reestablish service on the same or following day.

(h) Any representative the utility dispatches in connection with ~~service disconnection~~ a delinquent account must accept payment ~~of a delinquent account~~ at the service address, but will not be required to give change for cash paid in excess of the amount due and owing. The utility must credit any overpayment to the customer's account. ~~The utility may charge a fee for the disconnection visit to the service address if provided for in the utility's tariff.~~

(i) When the utility provides service through a ~~master~~-primary meter, or when the utility has ~~reasonable grounds~~evidence to believe that it is providing service to a person other than the customer of record, the utility must undertake reasonable efforts to inform the occupants of the service address of the impending disconnection. Upon request of one or more service users, where service is to a person other than the customer of record, the utility must allow at least five days past the original disconnection date to permit the service users to arrange for continued service.

(j) Medical facilities. The utility must take the following additional steps when the utility is aware that it is providing service to specified types of medical facilities.

(i) If the utility is providing service to a hospital, medical clinic, ambulatory surgery center, renal dialysis facility, chemical dependency residential treatment facility, or other medical care facility licensed or certified by the department of health (DOH), the utility must provide a notice of pending disconnection to the DOH secretary and to the customer. Upon request of the DOH secretary or designee, the utility must delay the disconnection for at least five business days past the original disconnection date to allow DOH to take the necessary steps to protect the interests of the patients residing at the facility.

(ii) If the utility is providing service to a nursing home, boarding home, adult family home, group care facility, intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities, intensive tenant support residential property, crisis residential center for children, or residential care facility licensed or certified by the department of social and health services (DSHS), the utility must provide a notice of pending disconnection to the DSHS secretary and to the customer. Upon request of the DSHS secretary or designee, the utility must delay the disconnection for at least five business days past the original disconnection date to allow DSHS to take the necessary steps to protect the interests of the patients residing at the facility.

(k) Any customer may designate a third party to receive a disconnection notice or notice of other matters affecting the customer's service. The utility must offer all customers the opportunity to make such a designation. If the utility has reasonable grounds to believe that a customer is not able to understand the effect of the disconnection, the utility must take reasonable steps to ascertain whether a third party, such as DSHS or other social services agency, is responsible for the customer's affairs. In either circumstance, the utility must delay service disconnection for at least five business days past the original disconnection date after issuing a disconnection notice to the third party. The utility must determine which social services agencies are appropriate and willing to receive the disconnection notice and the name and/or title of the person able to deal with the disconnection, and the utility must provide that information to the customer.

(5) For purposes of this section, the date of mailing a notice will not be considered the first day of the notice period.

(6) **Remote disconnection.** A utility may not disconnect gas services remotely unless the commission authorizes utilities to remotely disconnect gas services.

(7) **Utility-directed disconnection without prior notice.**

(a) A utility may disconnect service without prior notice or without further prior notice under any of the following circumstances:

(i) After conducting a thorough investigation the utility determines that the customer has tampered with or stolen the utility's property, has used service through an illegal connection, or has fraudulently obtained service. In any challenge to that determination, the utility has the burden of proving that fraud occurred. For the purpose of this section, a nonsufficient funds check or dishonored electronic payment alone will not be considered fraud.

(A) **First offense.** The utility may disconnect service without prior notice when it discovers theft, tampering, or fraud, unless the customer immediately pays all of the following:

(I) The tariffed rate for service that the utility ~~estimates~~determines was used as a result of the theft, tampering, or fraud;

(II) All utility costs resulting from such theft, tampering, or fraud; and

(III) Any required deposit.

(B) **Second offense.** The utility may disconnect service without prior notice when it discovers further theft, tampering, or fraud. The utility may refuse to reconnect service to a customer with commission approval and who has been twice disconnected for theft, tampering, or fraud ~~unless the commission determines otherwise.~~

(ii) After conducting a thorough investigation, the utility determines that the customer has vacated the premises;

(iii) The utility identifies a hazardous condition in the customer's facilities or in the utility's facilities serving the customer;

(iv) A customer pays a delinquent account with a check or electronic payment the bank or other financial institution has dishonored after the utility has issued notice as required in subsection (4) of this section;

(v) The customer has not kept any agreed-upon payment arrangement for payment of a delinquent balance after the utility has issued notice as required in subsection (4) of this section; or

(vi) The utility has determined a person has used service prior to applying for service. The utility must charge the ~~customer~~ person for service used in accordance with the utility's filed tariff. If the utility has reasonably sufficient grounds to conclude that the unauthorized usage is in good faith, the utility should notify the person and provide an opportunity to apply for service prior to disconnection.

(b) If the utility disconnects service without prior notice as authorized in this subsection, the utility must subsequently make a reasonable effort to notify the customer or affected person of the reason for the disconnection within five business days. Such notice must also describe the means by which the customer or person may dispute the utility's actions including, but not limited to, contacting the commission.

(c) This section should not be interpreted as relieving the customer or other person of civil or criminal responsibility.

(8) **Medical conditions or emergencies.** When the utility has cause to disconnect or has disconnected a residential service, it must postpone disconnection of service or must reinstate service for a grace period of five business days after receiving either verbal or written notification of the existence of a medical condition or emergency that requires gas to continue to be provided. The utility must reinstate service during the same business day if the customer contacts the utility prior to the close of the business day and requests a same-day reconnection. Otherwise, the utility must restore service by 12:00 p.m. the next business day. When service is reinstated the utility will not require payment of a reconnection charge and/or deposit prior to reinstating service, ~~but must bill all such charges on the customer's next regular bill or on a separate invoice.~~

(a) The utility may require that the customer, within five business days, submit written electronic or paper certification from a qualified medical professional stating that the disconnection of gas service would aggravate an existing medical condition of an occupant of the household. ~~"Qualified medical professional" means a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant authorized to diagnose and treat the medical condition without supervision of a physician.~~ Nothing in this section precludes a utility from accepting other forms of certification, but the maximum the utility can require is written electronic or paper certification. If the utility requires such written certification, it may not require more than the following information:

(i) Residence location;

(ii) An explanation of how the current medical condition will be aggravated by disconnection of service;

~~(iii) A statement of how long the condition is expected to last;~~ and

~~(iii)~~ (iv) The title, signature, and telephone number of the person certifying the condition.

(b) The medical certification is valid only for the length of time the health endangerment is certified to exist ~~but no longer than sixty days, unless renewed.~~

(c) A medical emergency does not excuse a customer from having to pay delinquent and ongoing charges. The utility may require the customer to do the following within a five-business-day grace period:

(i) Pay a minimum of ten percent of the delinquent balance;

(ii) Enter into an agreement to pay the remaining delinquent balance within one hundred twenty days; and

(iii) Agree to pay subsequent bills when due.

Nothing in this section precludes the utility from agreeing to an alternate payment plan, but the utility must not require the customer to pay more than this subsection prescribes. The utility must send a notice to the customer confirming the payment arrangements within two business days of having reached the agreement. The utility must provide information on energy assistance including but not limited to bill discount programs, grant programs, and arrearage management programs, if available. If the customer is approved for an arrearage management program the utility must recalculate the payment arrangement required by this section.

(d) If the customer fails to provide a medical certificate in accordance with (a) of this subsection or ten percent of the delinquent balance within the ~~five-ten~~ business days grace period, or if the customer fails to abide by the terms of the payment agreement, the utility may disconnect service after complying with the notice requirements in subsection (4)(a)(ii) of this section. If the utility previously provided a second disconnection notice to the customer, the utility must provide an additional second disconnection notice in compliance with the notice requirements in subsection (4)(a)(ii) of this section.

(9) **Payments at a payment agency.** Payment of any past-due amounts to a designated payment agency of the utility constitutes payment when the customer informs the utility of the payment and the utility has verified the payment. The utility must promptly verify the payment upon notification from the customer.

(10) **Remedy and appeals.** A utility may not disconnect service while the customer is pursuing any remedy or appeal provided by these rules or while engaged in discussions with the utility's representatives or with the commission. Any amounts not in dispute must be paid when due and any conditions posing a danger to health, safety, or property must be corrected. The utility ~~will~~must inform the customer of these provisions when referring the customer to a utility supervisor or to the commission.

(11) **Disconnecting service during inclement weather.** A utility must establish conditions in its tariff(s) under which the utility will cease nonvoluntary service disconnections during inclement weather events.

(12) Collections. Prior to sending any overdue balance to collections the utility must:

(a) provide at least two separate notices informing the customer past due amounts will be sent to collections. To the extent practicable, the notices must be provided, in the customer's preferred language;

(i) The utility must provide the first notice in writing by delivery of a paper copy to the service premises. The utility must either mail a paper copy of the notice or deliver the notice to the service premises by attaching the notice to the customer's primary door. The notice must be mailed or delivered to the premises at least eight business days before the balance is sent to collections. If the notice is mailed from outside the states of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, the utility must mail the notice eleven business days before the balance is sent to collections. In addition, the utility must provide an electronic copy of the notice, if the utility has such contact information for the customer and the customer has consented to electronic delivery of notices from the utility, at the time the utility mails or delivers the paper copy of the notice;

(ii) The utility must provide the second collection notice electronically (if the utility has such contact information and customer consent to electronic delivery of notices) at least two business days before the balance is sent to collections and by one of the three options listed below:

(A) Delivered notice. The utility must deliver a paper copy of the second notice to the service premises and attach it to the customer's primary door at least two business days before sending past due balances to collections.

(B) Mailed notice. The utility must mail a paper copy of the second notice at least three business days before the sending past due balances to collections unless mailed outside of the states of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, in which case the utility must mail the notice no less than six business days before the sending past due balances to collections.

(C) Telephone notice. The utility must attempt at least two times to contact the customer by telephone during regular business hours at least three business days before sending past due amounts to collections to enable sufficient time to send a timely written notice if the utility is unable to speak with the customer by telephone. The utility must keep a log or record of the calls for a minimum of ninety calendar days showing the telephone number called, the time of the call, and details of the results of each attempted call. If the utility is unable to speak with the customer by telephone, the utility must deliver or mail a paper copy of the second notice as provided in (a)(ii)(A) or (B) of this subsection.

(b) Each notice must include all relevant information about the collection action including:

(i) The cause for collection activity, the amount owed for regulated electric service, and how to avoid the amount being sent to collections including, but not limited to, the availability of, and how to apply for, energy assistance, low-income assistance, exemptions for low-income assistance and medical conditions or emergencies, and a payment plan as required under WAC 480-100-138 Payment arrangements;

(ii) All relevant information about any charges that the utility is assessing or that it may assess;

(iii) The utility's name, address, and toll-free telephone number by which a customer may contact the utility to discuss the pending collections actions;

(iv) Name, phone number, mailing address, and email address for the customer's local community action agency;

(c) If the utility discovers that an issued notice does not contain the information required under (b) of this subsection, or if the information in the notice is inaccurate, the utility must issue another notice to the customer as described in (a)(i) or (ii) of this subsection, as applicable, and must adjust the collection activity to the extent necessary to ensure that the utility complies with the minimum prior notice requirements.

WAC 480-90-133 Reconnecting service after disconnection.

(1) A utility must make every reasonable effort to restore a disconnected service within twenty-four hours, or other time mutually agreeable between the customer and the utility, after the customer has paid, or at the time the utility has agreed to bill, any applicable reconnection charge, and:

(a) The causes for disconnection not related to ~~a delinquent account~~ nonpayment are removed and the customer pays any delinquent tariffed charges, ~~plus any required deposit~~; or

(b) The customer has entered into an agreed-upon payment arrangement for a delinquent account, and pays any required deposit as defined in ~~WAC 480-90-113, Residential service deposit requirement, or~~ WAC 480-90-118, Nonresidential service deposit requirements; or

(c) The customer has paid all tariffed amounts due on the account that is not a prior obligation and the customer has paid any required deposit as defined in ~~WAC 480-90-113, Residential service deposit requirements, or~~ WAC 480-90-118, Nonresidential service deposit requirements.

(2) A utility may not reconnect gas service remotely unless the commission authorizes utilities to remotely reconnect gas services.

(3) The commission may require reconnection pending resolution of a dispute between the utility and the customer over the propriety of disconnection.

WAC 480-90-138 Payment arrangements.

~~(21) The utility must offer an all residential customers the option of an equal-payments plan to residential customers that distributes the costs of a customer's annual energy usage over equal monthly payments.~~

~~(a) The utility must provide the customer with the calculation used to determine the customer's equal payments plan.~~

~~(b) In the event the utility recalculates or trues up a customer's equal payments plan, and the recalculated or trued up amount results in customer payments increasing 3 percent or more, the utility must notify the customer using the customer's preferred method of communication and offer payment arrangements at least 30 days before the change becomes effective.~~

~~(c) An equal-payments plan allows the customer to pay the same amount each month based on historical usage. If historical information is not available, the utility must base the amount on projected usage.~~

~~(d) The utility may refuse to offer an equal-payments plan to customers who have been removed from the equal-payments plan for nonpayment within the past six months or have more than a two-month past-due balance on their current account. However, the utility may offer an equal-payments plan to any customer when the utility believes this would be in the best interest of all parties concerned.~~

~~(2) In situations where residential customers have incurred arrearages due to non-payment, a utility must offer a payment plan pursuant to this section. In addition, the utility must provide energy assistance information including but not limited to bill discount programs, grant programs, and arrearage management programs, if available. The utility at minimum must provide customers with the ability to enroll in payment arrangement plans on the utility's website, mobile application, or by contacting the utility customer service telephone number or email address.~~

~~(a) The utility must offer a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 24 months for a payment arrangement plan. The payment arrangement plan may be extended upon the request of the customer at any time to ensure the customer can manage the repayment of arrearages, as well as paying their current utility bills.~~

~~(i) The payment arrangement may discontinue if the customer defaults on payment more than twice during a consecutive 12-month period.~~

~~(ii) The utility must notify the customer within 5 business days of the remaining balance owed if the arrangement defaults.~~

~~(b) At the time of the customer's request, the company must divide the customer's arrearage balance by the desired number of months as specified in section (2)(a) of this rule to calculate the monthly payment arrangement amount.~~

~~(c) The utility and customer may make other mutually acceptable payment arrangements.~~

~~(d) In the event a customer wishes to re-negotiate or extend the payment arrangement plan, the utility must integrate any current billing and arrearage amounts into the payment arrangement plan.~~

~~(e) The utility must provide the following information to customers negotiating a payment arrangement plan:~~

~~(i) Contact information for the customer's local community action agency including website address, telephone number, email address, and any other contact information needed to apply for assistance with the agency.~~

(ii) Contact information for the utility's conservation program that provides customers with information about rebate programs, energy assessments, and energy saving information.

(3) The utility must provide a confirmation statement to the customer detailing the payment arrangement plan negotiated using the customer's preferred method of communication.

~~(14) If a gas~~the utility is delayed in billing a residential customer, the utility must offer payment a payment arrangements plan that are equal to the length of time in duration to the bill ~~was delayed~~, unless the utility determines that the customer used service prior to applying for service as outlined in WAC 480-90-128 ~~(27)(f)~~, Disconnection of service. If the customer reasonably expresses difficulty with the payment arrangement the utility must offer a payment arrangement two times the duration of the delayed billing.

(a) If the utility plans to issue a delayed billing statement and a customer has an equal payments plan the utility must work with the customer to determine if the customer wants to integrate the delayed billing amount into the equal payments plan or wishes to have separate payment arrangement plan up to two times the duration of the delayed billing. If the delayed billing is incorporated into the equal payments plan the utility must re-calculate the amounts to be paid in the equal payments plan or payment arrangement plan.

(b)) If the utility plans to issue a delayed billing statement and a customer has a payment arrangement plan the utility must work with the customer to determine if the customer wants to integrate the delayed billing into their payment arrangement into their existing arrangement or wishes to have separate payment arrangement plan up to two times the duration of the delayed billing.

~~(2) The utility must offer all residential customers the option of an equal payments plan.~~

~~(a) An equal payments plan allows the customer to pay the same amount each month based on historical usage. If historical information is not available, the utility must base the amount on projected usage;~~

~~(b) The utility may refuse to offer an equal payments plan to customers who have been removed from the equal payments plan for nonpayment within the past six months or have more than a two month past due balance on their current account. However, the utility may offer an equal payments plan to any customer when the utility believes this would be in the best interest of all parties concerned.~~

(3) The utility must accept payments made in cash. The utility must provide a receipt to customers for all payments made in cash.

WAC 480-90-179 Electronic Information

With the prior consent (as defined in subsection ~~(23)~~ of this section) of the customer or applicant, a utility may provide the following by electronic means, instead of in paper copy sent to the customer's mailing address:

- Bills;
- Notices of tariff revisions; ~~and~~
- Bill inserts containing information required to be provided to customers or applicants by statute, rule, or commission order;
- Confirmation of mutually agreed upon payment arrangements or equal payments plan;
- Denial of an equal payments plan or payment arrangement request; and
- Request for additional information from the customer to process an application or request.

The provision of this electronic information to a customer will be considered compliant with any statute, rule, commission order, or tariff provision that refers to the mailing of bills, notices of tariff revisions or bill inserts when a customer has consented to receive the information in electronic form as agreed to by the customer. The electronic form must provide a link to the electronic information, or otherwise advise

the customer of the electronic location of such information. To the extent practicable, all electronic information must be provided in the customer's preferred language.

(1) Text Alerts. Customers need to have the ability to opt-in to receiving text alerts for account actions including but not limited to:

- Late payments;
- Disconnection alerts; and
- Notice of rate increases or restrictions in access to service.

~~(1.2)~~ **Format of electronic communications.** All information provided in electronic form must meet the requirements for format, due dates, calculation of due dates, minimum time frames, and any other requirements specified in this chapter. Electronic information will be treated the same as documents that are mailed from a location within the state of Washington for the purposes of calculating due dates and minimum time frames.

~~(2.3)~~ **Obtaining and documenting customer consent.** The utility must obtain prior written or electronic consent to provide bills, notices of tariff revisions and bill inserts in electronic form (customer consent). The customer consent must be obtained directly from the customer of record and comply with the following:

(a) The consent section on the document, screen, or web page may also offer the customer separate, individual opportunities to consent to:

(i) Paperless billing offered by the utility.

(ii) Automatic payment services offered by the utility, including one-time payment services or other automatic payment services.

(iii) Equal payment plan.

For electronic consent, the customer consent section must be prominent on the web page and clearly distinguishable from any other ~~consent~~ content on the screen or page. No information other than as provided in this section, may be combined in the same customer consent section except utility contact information. The consent section must not have consent boxes or spaces already filled in. The customer must personally check each box or space giving his or her consent to one or more services. Each service requires a separate, affirmative consent.

(b) The utility must retain a record of the customer's consent to receive electronic communications as a part of the customer's account records as evidence of the customer's consent to receive selected documents in electronic form, or to participate in paperless billing service.

(c) Documentation of the customer consent must be made available to the customer and to the commission at no charge, if requested.

(d) At a minimum, the customer consent must include the following:

(i) The name, service address, and account number that exactly matches the utility record for such account;

(ii) The customer's opt-in decision to receive electronic information;

(iii) Confirmation that the customer understands the utility will provide, upon request but subject to the limitations in this section, a paper copy of any document sent electronically at no additional charge and that the customer may opt out of receiving information electronically at any time and revert to paper format through the mail at no additional charge;

(iv) Confirmation that the customer understands it is their responsibility to notify the utility of any change to their email or other electronic address; and

(v) Confirmation that the customer understands that in addition to the paperless bills they may receive all notices regarding service, including notices of the utility's request to increase rates and changes in

service, in electronic form.

(34) Distribution of electronic notices.

(a) Electronic notices of proposed tariff changes, including increased rates or restriction of access to services, and public hearings will be marked prominently "IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING YOUR GAS SERVICE." (Note: For combined service customers the caption must read "ELECTRIC AND GAS SERVICES.")

(b) If the utility elects to send the notices of proposed tariff changes or public hearings separate from the bill, it will also include a copy of the electronic notice with the electronic bill as an attachment or link. The attachment or link will include the electronic address designated by the commission where customers may file public comment(s) regarding the proposed tariff changes or restriction of access to service.

(45) Documents requiring paper delivery. The following documents may not be provided solely by electronic means:

(a) Notices of disconnection; and

(b) [Notification of denial of payment arrangements or an equal payments plan](#)

[\(i\) If a customer is denied the ability to participate in payment arrangements or an equal payments plan, the denial notification must specify the reasons why the customer was denied, and how they can become eligible in the future;-](#)

[\(ii\) A denial letter must provide contact information for the customer's local community action agency;-](#)

[\(iii\) A denial letter must provide contact information for the Commission's Consumer Protection staff.](#)

(c) Information regarding the ~~winter~~ moratorium on [winter or summer](#) disconnection of low-income heating customers, including written copies, if any, of extended payment plans under the ~~winter~~ [company's](#) low-income payment program-

(56) Limit on changes to information format. A utility is not obligated to provide both paper documents and electronic information to a customer on a continuous basis. A utility may limit a customer who has consented to electronic delivery to three requests for paper documents in a twelve-month period. A utility may require that a customer who requests an electronic bill also receive all bill inserts electronically. If a customer is unable to properly receive, view or understand electronic information provided by the utility, the utility may refuse to provide that information in electronic form.

(67) Specialized electronic format. When a utility provides electronic billing information in a specialized format, such as, but not limited to, the electronic data interchange (EDI), where the utility incurs a cost that is offset by not sending statements using mail, the utility may offer customers the choice of the specialized format or paper bill. In the event of a disputed bill, the customer may request and the utility shall provide customers receiving bills in a specialized format with billing details understandable by a person who will be reviewing the bills.

(78) Undeliverable electronic information.

(a) If any electronic information allowed in this rule is returned to the utility as undeliverable or the utility is made aware by other means that such electronic information did not reach the customer, the utility must take the following steps to ascertain and correct the problem causing the return of the information as undeliverable. It must, within the time specified in (c) of this subsection, either resend the electronic information to the customer-provided electronic address or contact the customer by telephone.

(b) If the utility fails to correct the problem within the required time, it must send the customer the information by mail and return the customer to mail notification. It also must include in the mailed

information an explanation that the email address or other electronic address is not functioning and indicate that future information will be sent via mail until the customer provides to the utility a functioning email or other functioning electronic address.

(c) The utility must take the steps required in (a) and (b) of this subsection by either:

(i) The business day following receipt of the undeliverable message; or

(ii) If the utility extends the bill due date by five business days, within five business days.

WAC 480-90-193 Posting of tariffs for public inspection and review.

Each electric utility offering service under tariff must make available for public inspection and review all tariffs governing its provision of service, as required by RCW 80.28.050. To comply with this requirement, a utility must fulfill the provisions of either subsection (1) or (2) of this section.

(1) **Web, telephone, and mail access.** The utility must:

(a) Maintain a complete copy of its tariff or tariffs and [prominently post](#) all proposed tariff changes on an Internet website accessible to the public using generally available browser software;

(b) Provide a toll-free telephone number by which customers and applicants can obtain assistance during normal business hours from a company agent qualified to assist the customer in locating, interpreting, and applying tariff provisions;

(c) Upon written or oral request by any customer or applicant, deliver at no charge a copy of any current, proposed or most recently canceled tariff page that relates to the customer's or applicant's service; and

(d) Include on each customer bill and notice the address of the tariff website and the toll-free telephone number.

(2) **Physical access.** The utility must make available for public inspection and copying a complete copy of its tariff or tariffs, all most recently canceled tariff sheets, and all proposed tariff changes at one or more offices in each county where it offers service, except that: A single office may serve more than one county if the office is within twenty miles of all customers in the county where no tariff is posted. The utility must provide at each office either an agent qualified to assist the customer in locating, interpreting, and applying tariff provisions or access to such an agent by a toll-free telephone number.

WAC 480-90-194 Publication of proposed tariff changes to increase charges or restrict access to services.

Each gas utility offering service under tariff must publish or provide electronically all proposed changes to its tariff for at least thirty days, as required by RCW [80.28.060](#). For any proposed tariff change that would increase recurring charges, except purchased gas adjustment (PGA) filings as provided in subsection (5) of this section, or restrict access to services (e.g., discontinue a service, or limit access to service by imposing a new usage level on existing services), a utility must fulfill the requirements of subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section. For any other proposed tariffs, the utility must fulfill the requirements of WAC [480-90-195](#). [The utility will not be required to accomplish publication under this section if it has agreed to suspend its tariff filing and to provide notice as provided under WAC 480-90-197](#). The utility may provide [this](#) information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information. [Upon request, current notices, and subsequent notices must be translated and provided to the customer in the requested language.](#)

~~The utility will not be required to accomplish publication under this section if it has agreed to suspend its tariff filing and to provide notice as provided under WAC 480-90-197.~~

(1) **Thirty-day notice to individual customers.** To comply under this method, the utility must, at least thirty days before the stated effective date of the proposed change, mail or provide electronically the posting to each customer that would be affected by the proposed change. The posting must include the information listed in subsection (4) of this section. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.

(2) **Published notice.** To comply under this method, the utility must, at least thirty days before the stated effective date of the proposed change, publish notice of the proposed change within the geographical areas where it offers service. To meet minimum publication requirements, a utility must:

(a) Distribute copies of the published notice to [tribes](#), community agencies and organizations [that represent or work with highly impacted and vulnerable populations](#) in the geographic area where the utility offers service for posting and publication by the [tribe, agency, or organization](#). The utility must include in its distribution list any agency or organization that requests these notices. [In addition, the utility must distribute copies of the notice to its advisory groups;](#)

~~(b) Cause to be printed in large print, as a paid advertisement, a complete copy of the published notice in the daily newspaper of general circulation with the greatest number of subscribers in each geographic area or each of the areas affected by the proposed tariff;~~

[\(b\) Conduct a three-day paid advertising campaign on the social media platform or platforms with the most active users, targeting customers in the utility's service territory;](#)

[\(i\) The social media campaign must include a link to the complete notice posted to the utility website and the statement "learn how you can participate" by following a link to the complete copy of the notice hosted on the utility website;](#)

[\(ii\) The social media campaign must include the percent increase for the average residential customers;](#)

[\(iii\) The social media campaign must comply with WAC 480-90-198;](#)

[\(c\) Send an in-app notification to customers that includes a link to the complete notice;](#)

[\(i\) The in-app notification must include the statement "learn how you can participate" along with a link to the complete notice;](#)

~~(e) Provide to the news editor of every newspaper, television station, and radio station, in the geographic area within which it offers service a news release or public service announcement summarizing the published notice, [in the preferred language of that media outlet](#). The release or announcement must include a toll-free number that customers can use to obtain more information from the utility. ~~The commission will maintain a list of area newspapers, television, and radio stations and will provide it on request to any utility;~~ and~~

~~(e) Prominently p~~[Post a complete copy of the published notice, including translations, on the utilityan Internet website accessible to the public using generally available browser software.](#)

[\(f\) Post a statement on all of the utility's social media pages indicating the utility has requested to increase rates or restrict access in service and provide a link to the complete copy of the notice posted to the utility website and include the statement "learn how you can participate" with a link to the complete copy of the notice hosted on the utility website;](#)

[\(g\) Distribute via app notification and text message to each consenting customer a statement indicating the utility has requested to increase rates or restrict access in service and provide a link to the complete](#)

[copy of the notice posted to the utility website and include the statement “learn how you can participate” with a link to the complete copy of the notice hosted on the utility website.](#)

(3) **Reduced publication with shortened notice to individual customers.** To comply under this method, the utility must:

(a) Mail or ~~provide electronically~~ [email](#) the posting to each customer that would be affected by the proposed change at least fifteen days before the stated effective date of the proposed change. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information;

(b) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, distribute copies of the published notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(a) of this section;

(c) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, provide news media notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(~~d~~e) of this section; and

(d) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, [prominently](#) post a complete copy of the published notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(~~e~~d) of this section;

[\(e\) Post a statement to the Utility's social media pages indicating the utility has requested to increase rates or restrict access in service and provide a link to the complete copy of the notice posted to the utility website and include the statement “learn how you can participate” with a link to the complete copy of the notice hosted on the utility website;](#)

[\(f\) Distribute via app notification and text message to each consenting customer a statement indicating the utility has requested to increase rates or restrict access in service and provide a link to the complete copy of the notice posted to the utility website and include the statement “learn how you can participate” with a link to the complete copy of the notice hosted on the utility website.](#)

(4) **Content of postings.** The published notice required by this rule must include, when applicable:

(a) The date the notice is issued;

(b) The utility's name and address;

(c) A brief explanation of the reason(s) the utility has requested the rate change (e.g., increase in labor costs, recovery of new plant investment, and increased office expenses, such as postage and customer billing);

(d) A comparison of current and proposed rates by service;

(e) ~~An e~~ [Examples separately](#) showing the monthly increase of the average customer's [annual](#) bill based on the proposed rates (e.g., "based on the proposed rates, a typical gas customer using an average of eighty therms per month would see an average monthly increase of \$2.74.") [and the increase to the average customer's winter bill;](#)

(f) When the rates will be billed (i.e., monthly or bimonthly);

(g) The requested effective date and, if different, the implementation date;

(h) A statement that the commission has the authority to set final rates that may vary from the utility's request, which may be either higher or lower depending on the results of the investigation;

(i) A description of how customers may contact the utility if they have specific questions or need additional information about the proposal; and

(j) Public involvement language. A utility may choose from:

(i) Commission-suggested language that is available from the commission's designated ~~public affairs officer;~~ [Public Involvement staff member](#) or

(ii) Utility-developed language that must include the commission's mailing address, toll-free [Consumer](#)

[Protection](#) number, ~~and~~ docket number, if known, and a brief explanation of:

(A) How to participate in the commission's process by mail, ~~ing or faxing a letter submitting an, email, or submitting an~~ [commission webform](#); and

(B) How to contact the commission for process questions or to be notified of the scheduled open meeting at which the proposal will be considered by the commission.

(5) **Optional method of publication for purchase gas adjustment (PGA).** A utility that publishes notice of a PGA filing pursuant to this subsection is not required to publish notice of the filing pursuant to subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section, [so long as the proposed increased is less than three percent for each customer class](#).

(a) The utility must provide notice to affected customers before and after final commission disposition. Notice before commission disposition is to educate customers of a potential increase in natural gas prices. Notice after commission disposition is to inform customers of the new rates.

(b) Prior PGA notice. The notice must:

(i) Clearly define what a PGA is and explain how it works;

(ii) State whether the utility expects an increase or decrease in the upcoming filing; and

(iii) Include a utility contact phone number for additional information.

[\(iv\) Include a statement that the commission has the authority to set final rates that may vary from the utility's request, which may be higher or lower depending on the results of the analysis;](#)

[\(v\) Public involvement language as referenced in subsection \(4\)\(j\) of this section.](#)

(c) The utility must provide the notice to each affected customer by mail or by electronic means consistent with the provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information. The utility must also send the notice or a press release about the increase to every daily paper within its service territory.

(d) A newsletter, bill insert, bill message, or separate mailing to customers is permitted for prior notice.

(e) Customer notice after final commission disposition must be provided pursuant to WAC [480-90-195](#).

WAC 480-90-195 Notice of tariff changes other than increases in recurring charges and restrictions in access to services.

(1) This section applies to tariff changes ~~for~~ other than those that are subject to WAC [480-90-194](#). [Tariff changes reflecting an increase of three percent or more must be noticed in accordance with WAC 480-90-194.](#)

(2) A utility that files a tariff change to increase any charge that a customer may incur without being quoted a rate or price-(e.g., late payment fees, insufficient fund charges, or a one-time charge) [or to pass through local and state utility tax increase](#), must provide notice to each affected customer on or with the first bill after the change becomes effective.

(a) At a minimum, the notice must include the effective date, a clear description of changes to rates or services and a utility contact number where customers may seek additional information.

(b) Methods of notice permitted include a bill insert, bill message, printing on the billing envelope, a separate mailing to all affected customers or, if the utility has the capability and the customer has authorized, by email.

(3) A utility that files a tariff change that decreases rates, including promotions that temporarily waive recurring or nonrecurring charges, or that changes terms or conditions without restricting access to the service, must publish the change in the manner it posts tariffs under WAC [480-90-193](#).

WAC 480-90-197 Adjudicative Proceedings with a public comment hearing where public testimony will be taken.

(1) For adjudicated proceedings, when scheduling a hearing to take testimony from the public, the timing, location, and amount of notice to the public or to customers will be addressed in the prehearing conference order.

(2) The notice must include all information contained in WAC ~~480-90-194~~(4), except the public involvement information in WAC ~~480-90-194~~ (4)(j). A utility must include either of the following public involvement language:

(a) Commission-suggested language that is available from the commission's designated Public Involvement staff member~~public affairs officer~~; or

(b) Utility-developed language that must include the commission's mailing address, toll-free number, docket number, and a brief explanation:

(i) How to participate in the commission's process by mailing or faxing a letter, or submitting an email;

(ii) How to contact the commission for process questions; and

(iii) The date, time and location of the public hearing.

(3) The utility must conduct a three-day paid social media advertising campaign on the social media platform(s) with the most active users, targeting customers in the utility's service territory;

(a) Beginning at least 7 days prior the date of the public comment hearing;

(b) The paid social media campaign must include a link to the complete notice posted to the utility website and the statement "learn how you can participate" with a link to the complete notice posted to the utility website;

(c) The social media ads must include the percent increase for the average residential customer;

(d) The social media campaign must comply with WAC 480-90-198.

~~(4)~~ Methods of notice permitted include a bill insert, bill message, printing on the billing envelope, a separate mailing to all affected customers or, if the utility has the capability and the customer has authorized, by email.

~~(5)~~ In addition to each affected customer, a utility must notify at least one newspaper of general circulation, and at least one radio station and at least one television station in the area or each of the areas affected.

WAC 480-100-198 Notice verification and assistance.

(1) The utility must allow the commission's Consumer Protection Section at least five business days to review, and propose edits to, the notice prior to distribution.

~~(2)~~ Within ten days of making a filing requiring posting, publication, or customer notice under WAC ~~480-90-194~~, ~~480-90-195~~, or ~~480-90-197~~, but no sooner than when the tariff is filed with the commission, a utility must file a statement with the commission's records center that the required notice has been posted, published, and/or mailed. The declaration must include:

(a) The methods used to post, publish, and/or give notice to customers;

(b) When and how the notice was posted, published, and/or issued to customers;

(c) How many customers are affected, how many customers were sent notification and many customers opened electronic notices, and number of impressions from social media campaigns; ~~and~~

(d) The Community Action Agencies or advocacy groups that received the notice;

(e) A list of all languages in which the notice was distributed; and

(f) A copy of the notice.

(2) A utility may request assistance from the commission's ~~designated public affairs officer~~ Public Involvement staff with efforts to comply with WAC 480-90-193 through 480-90-197.