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July 14, 2010

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Dave Danner, Executive Director & Secretary Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 1300 S Evergreen Park Drive SW Post Office Box 47250 Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

Re: U-100523, Paperless Billing for Gas Customers NW Natural's Comments

Dear Mr. Danner:

Northwest Natural Gas Company, dba NW Natural ("NW Natural" or the "Company"), hereby submits the following comments to the Washington Transportation and Utility Commission's ("Commission") draft rules on paperless billing for gas utility customers, issued June 11, 2010.

NW Natural's revisions to the Commission's draft rules are attached. An explanation of the Company's suggested edits is provided separately.

NW Natural appreciates the Commission's consideration of the Company's comments. Please contact me at (503) 226-4211, extension 3590 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

NW NATURAL

/s/ Jennifer Gross

Jennifer Gross Rates & Regulatory Affairs

Docket U-100523 -- Gas Draft Rules

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-90-XXX Electronic information. A gas utility With the prior consent of the eustomer or applicant, a company may offer applicants or customers the option to receive required information specific to the customer's utility service through electronic means. The type of information that may be made available through electronic means includes, but is not necessarily limited to: application for service; bills, bills or notices about bills; bill inserts, including inserts containing information required to be provided to customers or applicants by statute, rule, or Commission order; disconnection notices; bill or deposit payment plan agreements; notices of rate changes, or provide bills, notices of tariff revisions; or bill inserts including inserts containing information required to be provided to customers or applicants by statute, rule, or commission order by electronic means. The utility may include or attach the information in an electronic communication, or may use electronic means to notice the customer that the information is available to be viewed on the utility's website. instead of the use of paper copies sent by U.S. Mail.

- (1) All-Format of electronic communications. Electronically available bills, notices, and other communications documents provided electronically must meet all applicable the requirements for format and, due dates, calculation of due dates, minimum timeframes, and any other requirements specified within WAC 480-90. Electronic Electronically delivered bills documents will be treated the same as documents that are bills mailed within the state of Washington for the purposes of calculating due dates and minimum timeframes.
- (2) Verification of Customer consent. The eompany-utility will not issue any bill or other notice that contains customer-specific account information by electronic means without the must obtain prior written-consent of the customer or applicant. or electronic consent to provide prescribed documents electronically (consent letter). If a utility offers the option to apply for service, or to receive electronic notices of bills and bill inserts, disconnection notices, or payment plan agreements through electronic means, the utility must provide a secure means for customers to request and to consent to the receipt of these documents, including but not limited to the use of a secure password of the customer's choosing. The utility must allow a customer to revert to paper service for the receipt of these documents at any time at no cost to the customer. The eonsent letter must not be combined on the same document or on the same screen or web page with any other information. The company must retain the consent letter as a permanent part of the customer's account records to serve as verification of the customer's authorization to receive selected documents electronically. The documentation of the consent must be made available to the customer and to the commission upon request at no charge. The consent letter must confirm the following information from the customer:
 - (a) The customer's name, telephone number, address, and e-mail address;
 - (b) The decision to change:
- (c) The customer understands that signing the consent letter allows the company to provide bills, notices of tariff revisions, or bill inserts including inserts containing information

required to be provided to customers or applicants by statute, rule, or commission order by electronic means instead of the use of paper copies sent by U.S. Mail;

- (a) The utility must retain a record of the customer's request and consent to receive electronic notices or documents for as long as the customer's account remains active, and thereafter as required by WAC 489-90-228.
- (d) The company will provide u(b) Any Customer that requests and consents to the receipt of electronic notices or documents will waive their rights to paper service of such documents except as required by section (4) of this rule. However, upon reasonable customer request, the utility will provide a paper copy of any document sent to such customer by electronic means electronically at no additional charge. The customer may also request to revert to paper delivery at no additional charge.
- (c) Nothing precludes the utility from using its website as a means for customers or the public to obtain electronic information for certain notices, documents or other communications that are not specific to an individual customer account or from referring customers to such electronic information, whether or not the customer has requested and consented to receive electronic notices or documents in the manner set forth in this rule.
- (3) Required Identifying Verbiage. Electronic notices of pending disconnection of service or other notices that have a direct impact on the customer's service status with the utility for proposed tariff changes of increased rates or restriction of access to services, and public hearings must will be clearly marked in the subject line of the electronic transmission and must be clearly identified as an URGENT NOTICE. Electronic notices about rate increases, public hearings, or any changes in the utility's services should be clearly identified and marked as IMPORTANT INFORMATION. in the subject line.
- (4) <u>Provision of Hardcopies.</u> The <u>utility must always issue a paper notice in addition to</u> an electronic notice of the following documents may not be provided solely by electronic means:
- (a) Notices of disconnection; and
- (b) Information regarding the winter low income payment program, including written copies of aAny extended payment plans under the winter low-income payment program.

AMEND

WAC 480-90-103 Information to consumers.

(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.

<u>AMEND</u>

WAC 480-90-178 Billing requirement and payment date.

(4) Electronically issued bills must meet all format and due date requirements specified in this rule, and must

With the consent of the customer, a company may provide regular billings in electronic form if the bill-meets all the requirements for the use of electronic information in this chapter. The company must maintain a permanent record of the customer's request, and the customer may change from electronic to printed billing upon request. The company must complete the change within two billing cycles of the request.

AMEND

WAC 480-90-194 Publication of proposed tariff changes to increase charges or restrict access to services. Each electric 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 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 a 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 it tariff filing and 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.

(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 notice the posting to each customer that would be affected by the proposed change. The posting must include information listed in subsection (4) of this section. The utility

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may provide this information in an eElectronic notices must be in a form format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.

- (3) Reduced publication with shortened notice to individual customers. To comply under this method, the utility must:
- (a) Mail <u>or provide electronically notice</u> 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; <u>The utility may provide this information in Electronic notice must be made an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.</u>

THIS RULE SECTION ALSO NEEDS TO CHANGE:

- _(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.
- (c) The utility must <u>provide mail</u> the notice to each affected customer <u>by U.S. 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.</u>

NW Natural's Edits to Proposed Rules in U 100523- Paperless Billing

Attached to this filing is NW Natural's redlined edits to the Commissions draft rules in Docket No. U -1000523. Generally, the Company's edits intend to make the rule more readable and more consistent with the verbiage in other sections of the Washington Administrative Code. The Company's edits also seek to provide the flexibility necessary for emerging or future technologies, such as texting and social media, and to clarify that these rules apply only to communications utilities are required to provide as part of providing a regulated utility service. Specific issues as they relate to each section are explained below.

WAC 480-90-XXX Electronic Information – This section is revised to provide a broad purpose statement. The reference to customer consent is removed as this requirement is addressed in section (2) of this draft rule.

WAC 480-90-XXX (1) Format of Electronic Communications – A title is added for consistency with the rest of this rule. Minor language revisions are made for readability and consistency.

WAC 480-90-XXX (2)(a) through (c) Customer Consent – The title of this section is revised from "Verification of Customer Consent" to "Customer Consent" which is more consistent with the requirements established in this section. The Company has also modified the requirement for the consent letter because a hardcopy or an electronic letter, as described, is inconsistent with current electronic methods for obtaining customer consent. The Company currently obtains the customer's consent using an electronic form that requires the customer's electronic signature. A record is retained of the date, the electronic signature and a confirmation number for the request. Attached for your review are screen prints of the Company's electronic consent form and the record retained of that consent. The rules are modified to allow the customer consent to be consistent with what is electronically possible to provide.

New language is added to Section (c) which specifies that the utility does not need customer consent to send customers complementary information using electronic communication channels.

WAC 480-90-XXX (3) Required Identifying Verbiage – A title is added for consistency with the rest of this rule. Also, the language is modified so that disconnection notices are marked "URGENT NOTICE," while other notices about changes to a customer's utility service are marked "IMPORTANT NOTICE." This is consistent with the Company's practices for mailed notices. NW Natural believes it is important to reserve the heading "URGENT NOTICE" for disconnection notices.

WAC 480-90-XXX (4) Provision of Hardcopies - A title is added for consistency with the rest of this rule. Minor language revisions are made for improved readability.

100523 – Paperless Billing Draft Rules NW Natural's Explanation of Edits July 14, 2010 – Page 2

WAC 480-90-103 Information to consumers – The Company has no edits or comments on this section as revised.

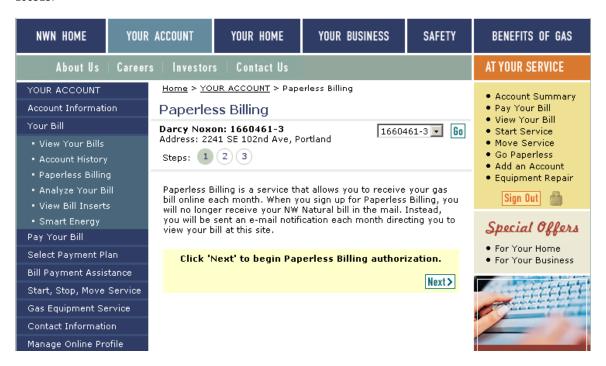
WAC 480-90-178 Billing Requirement and payment date – Requirements established in other sections under WAC 480-90 are removed as the repetition is unnecessary.

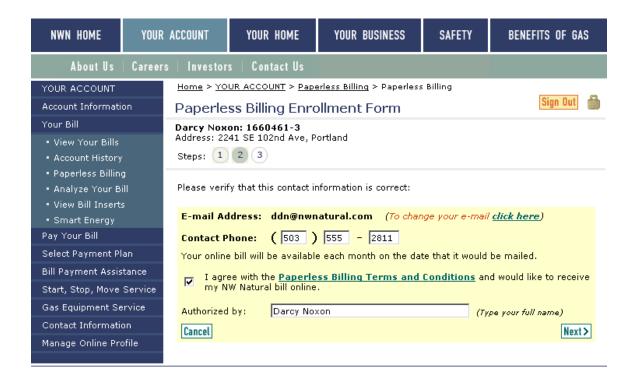
WAC 480-90-194 Publication of proposed tariff changes to increase charges or restrict access to services - The rule is restored to its current form. Also, the added reference to electronic communications is removed as the term 'publish' does not preclude electronic channels.

WAC 480-90-194(1) Thirty-day notice to individual customers - and
WAC 480-90-194 (3) Reduced publication with shortened notice to individual customers. Minor edits are made to these two sections to improve readability and consistency of wording.

WAC 480-90-194 (5) and (5)(c) Optional method of publication for purchase gas adjustment (PGA) – The Company proposed amending this rule also to allow utilities to use electronic communications.

Please note – the customer of record is an employee who has consented to the use of this data for this docket, U 100523.





Paperless Billing Terms and Conditions

Paperless Billing Terms & Conditions - Microsoft Internet Explorer



Paperless Billing Terms and Conditions:

By signing up for Paperless Billing you will no longer receive a paper bill from NW Natural. NW Natural will send you a monthly e-mail notification when your bill is ready to be viewed at nwnatural.com.

Please note: If your current bill was already printed, you may still receive it in the mail within the next few days. Your paperless bill notifications will begin with your next bill.

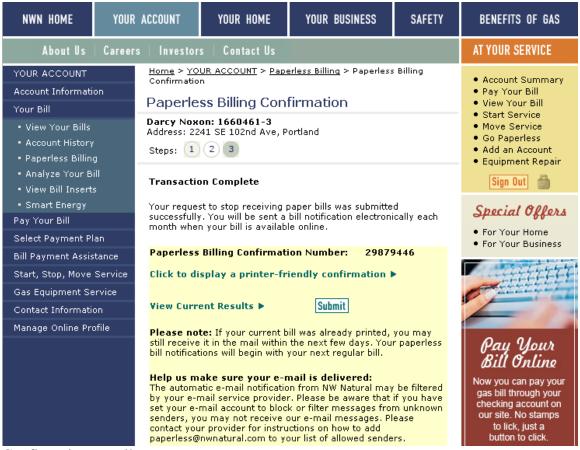
If your e-mail address changes, you will need to update it by logging on at nwnatural.com.

NW Natural will send your paperless bill notification to the e-mail that you have provided. NW Natural is not responsible for undelivered bill notifications. You will still be responsible for paying your NW Natural gas bill each month by the bill due date. Past due notices will continue to be sent by regular mail.

If NW Natural cannot successfully deliver the bill notification to your e-mail address, your paperless billing may be discontinued, and your gas bill will be mailed to you. If this occurs, NW Natural will send you a letter advising you of this change.

Please note: The automatic e-mail notification from NW Natural may be filtered by your e-mail service provider. Please be aware that if you have set your e-mail account to block or filter messages from unknown senders, you may not receive our bill notification. Please contact your provider for instructions on how to add paperless@nwnatural.com to your list of allowed senders.

You may cancel Paperless Billing at any time at nwnatural.com, or by calling Customer Service at 800-422-4012. If you cancel Paperless Billing, you will receive a paper bill on your next billing cycle.



Confirmation e-mail

Sent: Mon 7/12/2010 1:37 PM Cc: Subject: NW Natural - Paperless Billing Sign-up

Thank you for using NW Natural's online services

We received your request to enroll in the paperless option to receive your NW Natural bill online for account ***461-3.

You will no longer receive a paper copy of your bill in the mail. Instead, starting with your next regular bill, you will be sent an e-mail reminder eacl month when your bill is available online.

Help us make sure your e-mail is delivered:
The automatic e-mail notification from NW Natural may be filtered by your e-mail service provider. Please be aware that if you have set your e-mail account to block or filter messages from unknown senders, you may not receive our e-mail messages. Please contact your provider for instructions on how and paperless@nunatural.com to your list of allowed senders.

Please visit us at http://www.nwnatural.com

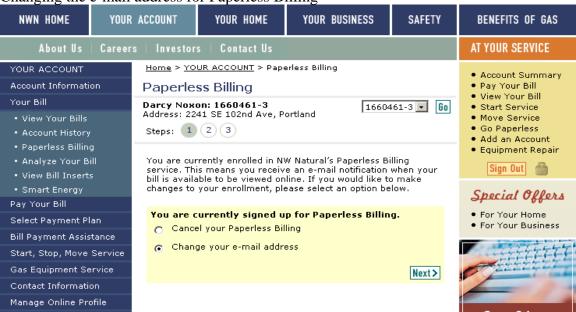
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Related Contacts in CIS (Contact Number matches the confirmation number in e-mail)

7/12/2010 WEBPB Customer Email Address: ddn@nwnatural.com WEB

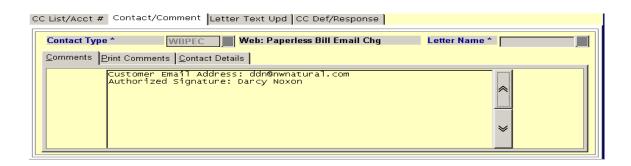
Authorized Signature: Darcy Noxon CC List/Acct # Contact/Comment | Letter Text Upd | CC Def/Response | Contact Type * WEBPB Web: Paperless Billing Signup Letter Name * Comments Print Comments Contact Details Customer Email Address: ddn@nwnatural.com Authorized Signature: Darcy Noxon CC List/Acct # Contact/Comment | Letter Text Upd | CC Def/Response | Contact Type * WEBPB Web: Paperless Billing Signup Letter Name * Comments Print Comments Contact Details **Contact Number** 29879446 **Contact Created** 7/12/2010 13:37:06 WEB **Contact Closed** Υ WEB Rep Name

Changing the e-mail address for Paperless Billing

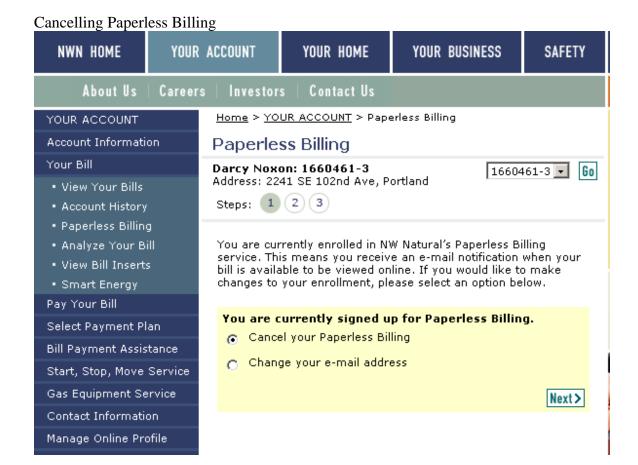


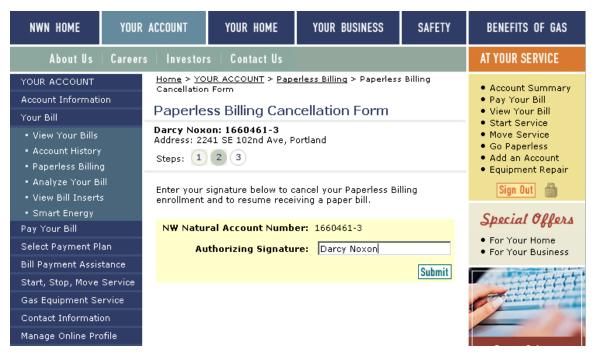
Confirmation e-mail

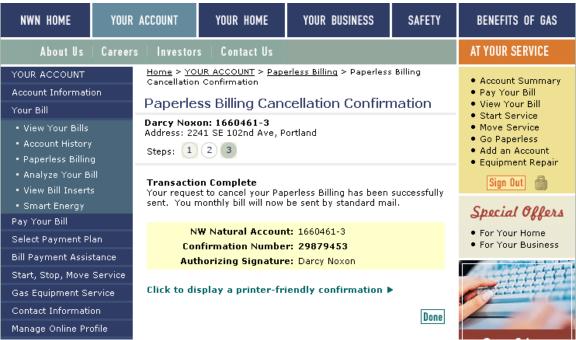




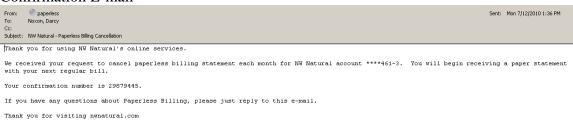
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Confirmation E-mail



Related Contacts in CIS (Contact Number matches the confirmation number in e-mail)

