

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,

Complainant,

v.

PUGET SOUND ENERGY

Respondent.

DOCKET NOS. UE-190529 and UG-190530 (*Consolidated*)

SUSAN M. BALDWIN ON BEHALF OF PUBLIC COUNSEL UNIT

EXHIBIT SMB-6

Puget Sound Energy Response to Public Counsel Data Request No. 113

November 22, 2019

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Dockets UE-190529 & UG-190530
Puget Sound Energy
2019 General Rate Case**

PUBLIC COUNSEL DATA REQUEST NO. 113:

Re: Get to Zero and Disconnections; Direct Testimony of Joshua J. Jacobs, Exh. JJJ-1T at 5:8-9.

Please reference Mr. Jacobs' testimony, stating in pertinent part: "and the implementation of remote disconnect and reconnect features in the future years of the initiative."

- a) In which year does PSE anticipate implementing the remote disconnect feature?
- b) Please describe the way in which PSE presently determines to disconnect a residential customer.
- c) Prior to disconnecting a residential customer for non-payment, does PSE offer a deferred payment arrangement? If so, please describe the way in which this discussion occurs and how it would occur when GTZ is fully-implemented.
- d) Prior to disconnecting a residential customer for non-payment, does PSE facilitate the customer's enrollment in a financial assistance program? If so, please describe the way in which this discussion occurs and how it would occur when GTZ is fully-implemented.
- e) Separately for each of the past five years, indicate the number of residential customers terminated for non-payment.
- f) Please describe in detail the impact of GTZ on disconnections, and include in the answer the average speed of the disconnections before GTZ deployment and the anticipated speed of disconnections after the GTZ deployment. Also, indicate the number of mistaken disconnections before GTZ deployment and the anticipated numbers of mistaken disconnections after the GTZ deployment.

Response:

- a) Puget Sound Energy ("PSE") anticipates implementing the customer initiated and unauthorized energy use remote disconnect feature in Q4 2019 for residential electric meters. PSE anticipates implementing non-payment disconnects in Q1 2020 for residential electric meters. There is an ongoing rulemaking on remote disconnection in Docket U-180525. When new rules are adopted, PSE will follow the rules adopted by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission in that docket.

- b) PSE disconnects a residential customer when a customer’s past due balance reaches a threshold. Before disconnection takes place, the customer is notified by an outbound call, an urgent mailed notice, and a final mailed notice. (See WAC 480-100-128(3), (6))
- c) PSE offers multiple channels for customers to make a payment prior to disconnection, including encouraging the customer to pay online, call PSE at 1-888-225-5773, or mail their payment. The website (www.pse.com), mobile app (MyPSE), interactive voice response, and customer service representatives, are all available for customers should they need access to making payment arrangements on their outstanding balance. After Get to Zero (“GTZ”) is fully implemented, customers will continue to receive the same notices regarding non-payment as they do today, which includes information on how to set up payment arrangements or seek assistance. (See WAC 480-100-128(6))
- d) Yes, PSE facilitates the customer’s enrollment in a financial program by providing a statement within the notices to the customer that states “Depending on income and household size, you may be eligible for payment assistance. Contact your local energy assistance agency at 1-866-223-5425.” After GTZ is fully implemented, customers will continue to receive the same notices regarding non-payment as they do today, which includes information on how to set up payment arrangements or seek assistance. In the future, customers will have more options available to them on www.pse.com to facilitate the payment assistance process as described in PSE’s Response to Public Counsel Data Request No. 115.
- e) The following table provides the number of residential customers disconnected for non-payment in the last five years:

Number of Customer Disconnections for Non-Payment						
Month / Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
January	2,543	1,932	4,177	2,989	3,977	2,447
February	1,756	2,782	5,220	2,576	2,787	1,389
March	2,951	3,472	3,758	3,746	3,493	3,315
April	3,586	4,839	4,516	3,769	3,696	3,480
May	3,000	3,942	1,350	4,258	3,881	3,337
June	3,968	4,463	3,743	4,414	3,221	4,172
July	3,337	2,942	2,861	3,005	1,963	3,966
August	2,953	2,811	3,000	3,511	2,586	3,507
September	2,963	3,608	2,842	2,772	2,563	
October	2,635	3,914	2,942	3,222	4,174	
November	1,041	1,050	4,662	2,807	3,116	
December	1,475	852	1,981	2,126	1,567	

Number of Customer Disconnections for Non-Payment						
Month / Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	32,208	36,607	41,052	39,195	37,024	25,613

- f) PSE anticipates that GTZ will have the biggest impact on disconnections through the remote disconnection process for electric residential meters, which it intends to fully enable by Q1 2020. See PSE's response to subpart a) above. Prior to GTZ, the average number of days to disconnect after a disconnection service notification had been issued was approximately 50 days. The remote disconnection process aims to minimize the number down to one day. The GTZ program is expected to not have an impact on the number of mistaken disconnections. Under the current process, dunning disconnect orders expire after ten business days if the work has not been completed and that will not change as a result of GTZ.