

**RULE 20  
CASCADE ARREARAGE RELIEF ENERGY SAVINGS (CARES) PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this rule is to define the parameters for applying an energy burden discount on a qualifying customer’s monthly gas bill and a one-time, up-front arrearage relief discount on a customer’s outstanding balance, if applicable.

**AVAILABILITY**

This rule applies to residential customers or household members of a dwelling served on Schedule 503, Residential Service Rate, who have declared that their household is low-income.

**LOW-INCOME DEFINITION**

A customer is considered low-income if their gross cumulative household income inclusive of deductions in alignment with the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), for a specific timeframe within the last twelve months, extrapolated for twelve months, does not exceed 80% of the county’s area median income (AMI) or 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a household with the same number of occupants.

**PROGRAM DELIVERY**

The program will be administered by the designated Agencies listed in the table below that already administer LIHEAP funds to Cascade’s customers and have executed agreements for program delivery with the Company.

<b>Agencies</b>	
Blue Mountain Action Council	Kitsap Community Resources
Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council	Lower Columbia Community Action Program
Coastal Community Action Council	Northwest Community Action Program
Community Action Connections	Opportunities Industrialization Center of WA
Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties	Opportunity Council
Community Action of Skagit County	Snohomish County Human Services Department

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**APPLICATION FOR CARES**

Customers or household members may apply for the program by calling an Agency, meeting with an Agency, or completing the online application found on [www.cngc.com](http://www.cngc.com), which can either be printed and mailed or submitted electronically. A customer may also ask the Company or an Agency to mail a hardcopy application to their residence. Applications submitted on the Company's website or received via mail will be provided to the Agencies for processing.

**DECLARED INCOME VERIFICATION PROCESS**

Customers may qualify for service under this rule by declaring that their household is low income. The Company may randomly select up to five percent (5%) of customers, who enrolled by declaring their low-income status, for post-enrollment verification of their declared income.

If a customer selected for income verification fails to provide timely documentation of income, they may be removed from the program but will not be required to reimburse the Company for any discounts received prior to removal.

If a customer who has been removed from CARES for failing to verify their household income provides the Agency documentation verifying income within 60 days after being removed from the program, the Company will reenroll the customer into CARES and will credit the customer's account for the discount the customer would have received had the customer not been removed from the program.

**TERM**

Qualifying customers are enrolled in CARES for twenty-four (24) months, after which time it is the customer's responsibility to reapply for continued service in this program by contacting an Agency or submitting a completed application form found on the Company's website. The twenty-four-month term restarts the full billing month after the complete expenditure of a newly applied federal or state credit (e.g., LIHEAP) on the customer's account or upon the application of a new Winter Help credit. The Company shall make sufficient effort to notify the customer prior to the end of their term of service in the CARES Program. Customers will be provided with a mailed notice 60 and 30 days prior to the end of the customer's CARES term of service. 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. Upon sending the second notice, the Company will also make at least two attempts to contact the customer by telephone.

**PROGRAM YEAR**

The program year is a 12-month period starting October 1 of each year.

**PROGRAM COSTS**

Program costs, including discounted amounts, outstanding arrearage relief amounts, program delivery, and marketing, will be tracked for collection through Schedule 592, CARES Cost Recovery.

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CNG/W23-06-02  
Issued August 1, 2023

Effective for Service on and after  
August 1, 2023

**Issued by CASCADE NATURAL GAS CORPORATION**

By:  Lori A. Blattner

Director, Regulatory Affairs

**RULE 20****CASCADE ARREARAGE RELIEF ENERGY SAVINGS (CARES) PROGRAM****ADVISORY GROUP**

An Advisory Group consisting of key stakeholders, including Public Counsel, Commission Staff, the Energy Project, NW Energy Coalition, Cascade, and representatives from each of the Agencies, will discuss and provide advice to the Company on program-related matters. This includes identifying and reviewing data necessary to design the program and meet the following goals: reduce customers' energy burden, keep customers connected to energy service, provide energy assistance to more customers than are currently served, collect data necessary to assess program effectiveness and inform ongoing policy discussions, and maximize the use of funding for energy assistance from government sources, e.g., LIHEAP. The advisory group will hold meetings at least twice a year via teleconference or in person. While the advisory group can offer guidance and suggestions, the Company is not bound to follow their recommendations when submitting proposals or tariff changes to the Commission.

**ENERGY DISCOUNT TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. The energy discount offered under CARES will not be prorated upon initiation of service but will begin at the start of the first full billing month after the customer has qualified for the program.
2. A customer receiving a bill discount may still be eligible to apply for other available financial assistance programs, such as LIHEAP and Winter Help. However, when state or federal financial assistance is applied (e.g., LIHEAP), the customer's enrollment in CARES will be paused. After state or federal assistance is applied, customer's enrollment in CARES will resume for a 24-month term. These provisions are not applicable to non-governmental, third-party payments such as those from friends, relatives, or churches.

**ARREARAGE RELIEF TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. The arrearage relief percentage is an upfront, irrevocable credit applied to the customer's bill within a few business days of qualifying for the program.
2. A customer who receives partial arrearage relief may be placed on a time payment arrangement (TPA) for up to 24 months to pay their remaining past due balance. The unpaid balance will be billed in equal amounts over the term of the TPA.
3. A customer may receive up to \$1,000 of arrearage relief once every twenty-four (24) months.
4. Payment credits or grants received, such as those from LIHEAP or Winter Help, will be applied to a full, non-discounted arrearage before any benefits from this program are applied.

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**SCHEDULE 302  
CASCADE ARREARAGE RELIEF ENERGY SAVINGS (CARES) DISCOUNT RATES**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this schedule is to define the discount assistance for customers who have qualified for low-income bill payment assistance and arrearage relief, if applicable, as established in Rule 20, Cascade Arrearage Relief Energy Savings (CARES) Program.

**APPLICABILITY**

This schedule is for residential customers served on Schedule 503 who have qualified for CARES Program service per the parameters established in Rule 20.

**BILL ASSISTANCE**

The following energy discount and arrearage relief discounts are available to Customers receiving service on the CARES Program. The discount tier for which a customer qualifies corresponds to the customer’s cumulative household income and the number of household occupants at the time the customer enrolled in the CARES Program.

Service on this schedule is available on and after October 1, 2023.

Tier	Income Tier Level		Energy Discount	Arrearage Relief (if applicable) *
	FPL	AMI		
1	0-20%	0-4%	90%	100%
2	21-50%	5-12%	71%	100%
3	51-100%	13-24%	40%	90%
4	101-150%	15-36%	15%	70%
5	151-200%	37-80%	8%	50%

\*Arrearage relief may be limited to \$1,000 per 24-month term of service in CARES.

The tiers are designed to reduce the customer’s gas energy burden to a target percentage of three percent (3%) to three and a half percent (3.5%) of their total income, which aligns with the required six percent (6%) total gas and electric burden established in the Clean Energy Transformation Act and codified in RCW 19.405.120.

**GENERAL TERMS**

Service under this adjustment schedule is governed by the terms and conditions outlined in this schedule, the Rules contained in this Tariff, any other applicable schedules, and all rules and regulations prescribed by regulatory authorities, subject to amendments from time to time.