

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Request of

NORTHWEST NATURAL
GAS COMPANY,

Petitioner,

For Less Than Statutory Notice in
Connection with Tariff Revision

DOCKET UG-200182

ORDER 01

GRANTING REQUEST FOR LESS
THAN STATUTORY NOTICE;
ALLOWING TARIFF REVISION TO
BECOME EFFECTIVE

BACKGROUND

- 1 On March 13, 2020, Northwest Natural Gas Company (NW Natural or Company) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a revision to its currently effective natural gas Tariff WN U-6, designated as Fourth Revision of Sheet No. C.2 Schedule C Miscellaneous Charges (continued). The purpose of the tariff revision is to suspend the application of NW Natural's Late Payment Charge in certain situations related to disconnection of natural gas service. Concurrent with the proposed revision, the Company also filed a request to allow the tariff revision to become effective with less than statutory notice as permitted by WAC 480-80-122.
- 2 On March 17, 2020, the NW Natural filed a revised request to allow the tariff revision to become effective with less than statutory notice, modifying its requested effective date from March 27, 2020, to March 18, 2020.
- 3 RCW 80.28.060 and WAC 480-80-121 require 30 days' notice to the Commission prior to the tariff's stated effective date. The tariff sheet bears an effective date of April 12, 2020, consistent with the required 30-day statutory notice. The Company, however, requests a March 18, 2020, effective date to allow NW Natural to immediately respond to the rapidly changing conditions customers are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4 Commission staff (Staff) reviewed the proposed tariff revision and agrees that it is appropriate in light of the emergent circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential adverse effects the virus may have on customers in NW Natural's service territory. In addition, NW Natural will post the proposed tariff changes, as required by law and the Commissions' rules and regulations and communicate it on its website, its main office, and by mail in accordance with WAC 480-90-193.

5 Staff believes the proposed tariff revision is reasonable and that less than statutory
notice is consistent with the public interest. Staff recommends that the Commission
grant NW Natural's request to allow the proposed tariff revision to go into effect with
less than statutory notice on March 18, 2020.

DISCUSSION

6 We agree with Staff that the proposed revision, which was filed in response to an
emergency situation that has the potential to place a portion of NW Natural's most
vulnerable customers at risk of disconnection, is decidedly in the public interest.

7 We also grant the Company's request for less than statutory notice. Pursuant to RCW
80.28.060 and WAC 480-80-122, the Commission may allow tariff changes, for good
cause shown, without requiring 30 days' notice by order specifying the changes to be
made and the time when the Order shall take effect. Here, we find that the COVID-19
pandemic and the associated issues that could result from disconnecting utility service
during a state of emergency unequivocally constitutes good cause to permit the tariff
revision to become effective on less than statutory notice.

8 Accordingly, we allow the tariff revision to become effective on less than statutory
notice.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington vested by statute with
the authority to regulate the rates, regulations, practices, accounts, securities,
transfers of property and affiliated interests of public service companies,
including natural gas companies.
- 10 (2) NW Natural is a natural gas company, and a public service company subject to
Commission jurisdiction.
- 11 (3) This matter came before the Commission at its special open meeting on March 26,
2020.
- 12 (4) Staff has reviewed NW Natural's request in Docket UG-200182 and recommends
the Commission approve the proposed tariff revision. Staff further recommends
that the Commission grant the Company's request to allow the revised tariff page

to become effective on less than statutory notice.

- 13 (5) NW Natural is subject to RCW 80.28.060 and WAC 480-80-121, which require natural gas companies to file changes in any rate, charge or service with 30 days' notice. For good cause shown, however, the Commission may allow changes without requiring 30 days' notice by order specifying the changes to be made and the time when the Order shall take effect.¹
- 14 (6) Based on the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting state of emergency, the Commission finds good cause to allow the tariff revision filed by NW Natural on March 13, 2020, as revised on March 17, 2020, to become effective with less than statutory notice on March 18, 2020.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 15 (1) Northwest Natural Gas Company's request for less than statutory notice is granted.
- 16 (2) The tariff revision filed by Northwest Natural Gas Company on March 13, 2020, as revised on March 17, 2020, shall become effective on less than statutory notice on March 18, 2020.
- 17 (3) The Commission retains jurisdiction over this matter for the purposes of effectuating this Order.

The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective March 17, 2020.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MARK L. JOHNSON
Executive Director and Secretary