

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending Docket No. U-991301, General Order No. R-481, filed 4/4/01, effective 5/5/01)

WAC 480-90-193 (~~Notice to the public of tariff changes.~~) Posting of tariffs for public inspection and review. (~~(1) Except as to variations between the prescribed maximum and minimum rates in banded tariffs previously authorized by the commission, every utility desiring to change, modify, cancel or annul any rate, must place on file the tariff containing such modification or change at its listed business offices in the territory affected thereby for a period of at least thirty days prior to the expiration of statutory notice in connection therewith. A notice, coincident with or immediately prior to the date of such filing, that such tariff is on file at said offices shall be posted at the cashier's windows or other places where the customers pay their bills at the aforesaid offices. Said posted notice shall give anyone viewing same a brief summary as to the content of the tariff; state that the tariff is being submitted to the Washington utilities and transportation commission at Olympia; indicate the inserted effective date thereof; and relate that a copy of the tariff is available for inspection.~~

~~(2) If there is no listed business office in the territory to be affected by a tariff proposal subject to this notification but there is a payment agency therein, posted notice with the same content and timing as set forth above shall be employed at each such agency which notice, in addition thereto, shall give the name, address and telephone number of the nearest listed business office responsible for that service area at which such tariff may be examined in person without assigning any reason therefor.~~

~~(3) In lieu of the above posted notice, insofar as payment agencies are concerned, the utility may stamp or print on each bill or envelope in which such bill is mailed, enclose therewith or separately mail, with the same content as set forth above with respect to the posted notice in payment agencies and at the earliest practicable date subsequent to filing, a notice to each subscriber to be affected by the tariff proposal. Commencing ninety days or earlier from July 31, 1959, the latter procedure must be followed in those instances where a utility does not have a listed business office or a payment agency in the service area where notice, as set forth above, could otherwise be employed in a service area subject to a tariff proposal falling within this notification procedure.~~

~~(4) Whenever the alternative provision is chosen or must be used, the utility shall use such other adequate and appropriate means of notification, on or by the filing date, that will reasonably insure notice to the public of tariff revisions proposed and the effect on the public in the service area or areas involved. Such other notification may include personal contacts, letters or mailing pieces, newspaper articles or advertisements and radio and television announcements.~~

~~(5) The commission may require such other notification to the public as may be necessary in any particular case of tariff filing: Provided, That where a tariff or a part of a tariff is filed involving no increase in charges to its patrons; where the users to be affected by a tariff change are so few in number the utility chooses to advise each by direct mail or contact; or where there is no one to be affected by the tariff proposal, the utility may forego posting of notice relative thereto and will not be required to have a copy of the proposed tariff available for inspection.~~

~~(6) The inserted effective date, unless otherwise directed, shall be a~~

~~date not less than thirty days after the date the commission receives the tariff. Also, if the commission permits the tariff to become effective without statutory notice, the period of notice to the public shall still be for at least thirty days after the date the commission receives the tariff.))~~
Each gas 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 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: 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.

NEW SECTION

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 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.

(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 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.

(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 community agencies and organizations in the geographic area where the utility offers service for posting and publication by the agency or organization. The utility must include in its distribution list any agency or organization that requests these notices;

(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;

(c) 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. 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

(d) Post a complete copy of the published notice on an Internet website accessible to the public using generally available browser software.

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

(a) Mail 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;

(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)(c) of this section; and

(d) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, post a complete copy of the published notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(d) of this section.

(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 example showing the monthly increase of the average customer's 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.");

(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; or

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

(A) How to participate in the commission's process by mailing or faxing a letter, or submitting an e-mail; 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.

(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.

(c) The utility must mail the notice to each affected customer. 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.

NEW SECTION

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.

(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) 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 e-mail.

(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.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-90-197 Adjudicative proceedings 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 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 e-mail;

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

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

(3) 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 e-mail.

(4) 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.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-90-198 Notice verification and assistance. (1) 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; and

(d) A copy of the notice.

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

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-90-199 Other customer notice. The commission may require notice to customers of tariff changes other than those described in these rules when the commission determines that additional customer education is needed.