

SCHEDULE 304
TEMPORARY COVID-19 RESIDENTIAL BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(N)

PURPOSE:

Implement a temporary residential bill assistance program (“Big HEART grant” or “program”) to help with financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as described in the “UTC Staff Proposed COVID-19 Response Term Sheet” in Docket U-200281. The Big HEART grant is intended to help alleviate bad debt accumulation on customer accounts.

AVAILABILITY:

Applies to any customer receiving natural gas service for domestic purposes under the Company’s Rate Schedule 503, general residential service, within the Company’s service territory, account carrying a past due balance, and who has a household income up to 200 percent (200%) of the Federal Poverty Level (“FPL”).

ENROLLMENT:

Eligible customers may receive a Big HEART grant by calling Cascade’s Customer Service at (888) 522-1130 during business hours (Monday – Friday, 7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.); or by reaching out to their local Community Action Agency (“CAA”).

BILL ASSISTANCE OPTIONS:

1. Automatic Hardship Grant

Customers with a documented history of low-income program eligibility in which the customer has received energy assistance within the previous 24 months based on the effective date of this schedule will automatically receive a one-time Big HEART grant equal to the amount of their outstanding past due balance, not to exceed \$2,500 and not to result in an account credit. The Company will start in chronological order from oldest to most recent balance.

2. Financial Hardship Grant

For customers who have not received energy assistance within the past 24 months but express financial hardship to Cascade, either verbally or in written form, may qualify for the Big HEART grant. Cascade will work with customers to determine which payments or arrangements can be made before a grant credit is provided for the remaining balance. Any payments made by the customer will be deducted from the customer’s account balance to be paid with a Big HEART grant.

For customers who apply for energy assistance with CAAs and have not received energy assistance within the previous 24 months, but verbally express financial hardship to CAA employees during the application process. CAAs will attempt to qualify the applicant for traditional bill pay assistance (LIHEAP, WEAFF and Winter Help) before utilizing the Big HEART grant.

Whether through Cascade or CAAs, monthly income would be provided verbally by the customer where documentation is not required and shall be the combined current income amounts of all adult household members. The grant will be equal to the amount of their outstanding past due balance, not to exceed \$2,500 and not to result in an account credit.

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FUNDING:

Funding to be distributed is one percent (1%) of the Company's Washington retail revenues, not to be increased without prior WUTC approval, based on the Company's Commission Basis Report in Docket UG-200393, which the amount is \$2,473,250.

EXPENDITURES:

Expenditures associated with the implementation and promotion of the Company's residential bill assistance program will be deferred and accounted for within the Company's COVID accounting deferral under Docket U-200281, Order 1. Outreach funds used to promote the availability of COVID financial assistance throughout the Company's service area may include, but not be limited to, emails, print, and digital advertisements.

The Company proposes to pay CAA's \$25 per qualifying household for a Big HEART grant request. This will be in addition to the current \$75 admin fee provided for each qualifying household under the WEAFF program. HEART grants and traditional WEAFF grants may be submitted at the same time. When submitted at the same time, Agencies will earn \$25 for the qualifying HEART grant and \$75 for the qualifying traditional WEAFF grant.

TERM:

The Big HEART program, as described above, will be in operation from April 2021 until the Company reaches its spending limit, or until the WUTC closes the program.

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Effective for Service on and after
April 1, 2021

Issued by **CASCADE NATURAL GAS CORPORATION**

By: 

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Director, Regulatory Affairs