

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: April 21, 2020**

REGULAR CONSENT EFFECTIVE DATE April 22, 2020

DATE: April 13, 2020

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Mitchell Moore

THROUGH: Bryan Conway, Michael Dougherty, John Crider, and Matt Muldoon **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: NORTHWEST NATURAL:
(Docket No. UM 1631)
Requests partial waiver of Rule relating to Emergency Medical
Certificates.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) approve Northwest Natural's (NW Natural or Company) partial waiver request of OAR 860-021-0410(4) for a period of 60 days, with an effective date of April 22, 2020.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve NW Natural's request for a partial waiver of OAR 860-021-0410(4), which concerns the duration of Emergency Certificates for residential customers of the utility.

Applicable Law

OAR 860-021-0410(4) addresses the duration of an Emergency Medical Certificate for residential customers. Subsection (4) of this rule states: "An emergency medical certificate shall be valid only for the length of time the health endangerment is certified to exist, but no longer than six months without renewal for certificates not specifying chronic illnesses and no longer than twelve months for certificates specifying illnesses identified as chronic by a "Qualified Medical Professional" as defined in this rule. At least 15 days before the certificate's expiration date, an energy utility will give the

customer written notice of the date the certificate expires unless it is renewed with the utility before that day arrives.”

OAR 860-021-0005 allows the Commission to grant waivers of Division 21 rules for good cause shown.

Analysis

Background

On April 7, 2020 NW Natural filed this application requesting a partial waiver to OAR 860-021-0410(4). The rule addresses the length of time that an Emergency Medical Certificate should remain in effect, and the length of time (15 days) required of the utility to give notice of expiration of the certificate. When a customer presents the Company with an Emergency Medical Certificate as described by the rule, the Company may not disconnect the customer’s utility service for non-payment.

The Company proposes to extend the 15-day renewal timeframe of the certificate to six months. NW Natural will provide the customer written notice that the medical certificate is expiring and provide a six-month period for the customer to provide a renewed medical certificate.

The Company seeks this flexibility in order to be responsive to the changing economic and social conditions facing customers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Company requests this waiver be in effect for an initial period of 60 days. The Company will monitor the situation and continually assess the need to seek any continuance of the waiver.

Conclusion

Staff reviewed the Company’s filing and finds there is good cause to support the request due to the uncertainties and flux with the public health situation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. NW Natural has concurrently filed a request in ADV 1107 to implement the rule waiver in its PUC Or. 25 tariff.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve NW Natural’s partial waiver request of OAR 860-021-0410(4) for a period of 60 days, with an effective date of April 22, 2020.