



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Public Utility Commission

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April 21, 2020



BY EMAIL

Northwest Natural Gas Company, dba NW Natural

Natasha Siores

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RE: Advice No. 20-04

At the public meeting on April 21, 2020, the Commission adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter docketed as ADV 1107. The Staff Report, a receipted copy of the sheets in your advice filing, and the signed LSN are attached.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nolan Moser".

Nolan Moser

Chief Administrative Law Judge

Public Utility Commission of Oregon

(503) 378-3098

**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. ADV 1107/Advice No. 20-4)
Requests update to PUC Or. 25 Rule 10 relating to Emergency Medical
Certificates for residential customers.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) approve Northwest Natural's (NW Natural, NWN, or Company) filing that updates tariff PUC Or. 25 Rule 10 relating to extension of renewal timeframes for Emergency Medical Certificates for residential customers.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve NW Natural's proposed revision to its Tariff P.U.C. Or. 25, on less than statutory notice, extending the renewal timeframe for Emergency Medical Certificates for residential customers, with an effective date of April 22, 2020.

Applicable Law

The Commission may approve tariff changes if they are deemed fair, just and reasonable. ORS 757.210. Tariff revisions may be made by filing revised sheets with the information required under the Commission's administrative rules, including OAR 860-022-0025. Filings that propose any change in rates, tolls, charges, rules, or

regulations must be filed with the Commission at least 30 days before the effective date of the change. See ORS 757.220; OAR 860-022-0020.

Analysis

Background

On April 7, 2020, NWN filed Advice No. 20-4, requesting an update to its P.U.C. Tariff Or. 25, Rule 10 – Emergency Medical Certificates. The purpose of the filing is to update the tariff sheet to allow the Company to extend the renewal notice timeframe that utilities must provide customers to renew their emergency medical certificates from 15 days to six months.

The Company made a concurrent filing in Docket No. UM 1631 requesting a partial waiver of the rule relating to renewal notice of the emergency medical certificates.

An Emergency Medical Certificate presented by a residential customer to a utility prevents the utility from disconnecting service for non-payment.

NW Natural proposes to make minor changes to Rule 10 to indicate the temporary suspension of the parameters for customers providing medical certificate renewals.

The Company proposes to extend the 15-day renewal timeframe of the certificate to six months. If approved, 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 filed the request to be approved with less than statutory notice as required by ORS 757.220. The Company claims “good cause” due to the request being in response to the declared COVID-19 emergency. Staff agrees with the Company’s rationale for good cause.

The Company states the proposed changes to Rule 10 are meant to be temporary, mirroring the expected short-term duration of the requested waiver of OAR 860-021-0410(4). Once the Commission-approved waiver expires, NW Natural will make a new tariff advice filing to remove the temporary changes proposed here.

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 the 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 is satisfied that the changes are appropriate and reasonable, and recommends the update to Tariff P.U.C. Or. 25, Rule 10 be approved.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve NW Natural's proposed revision to its Tariff P.U.C. Or. 25 Rule 10 on less than statutory notice, extending the renewal timeframe for Emergency Medical Certificates for residential customers, with an effective date of April 22, 2020.

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

(continued)

Rule 10. Emergency Medical Certificates – Residential Customers.

Customer must notify Company if a medical emergency exists. A medical emergency does not excuse a Customer from paying delinquent and ongoing charges.

The Company will not disconnect Residential Service for nonpayment if the Customer submits an emergency medical certificate from a qualified medical professional stating that disconnection would significantly endanger the physical health of the Customer or a member of the Customer's household.

A qualified medical professional is defined as a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or a physician's assistant authorized to diagnose and treat the medical condition described without direct supervision by a physician.

Customer shall enter into a Time Payment Agreement as described in **Rule 9** of this Tariff, or on such other terms as the Company deems reasonable, within twenty (20) days of filing the medical certificate with the Company. If the Customer fails to enter into a Time Payment Agreement, or if the Customer fails to abide by the terms of a Time Payment Agreement, service may be disconnected in accordance with **Rule 11**, following notice to the Commission's Consumer Services Section.

An emergency medical certificate will be valid only for the length of time the health endangerment is certified to exist, but no longer than six (6) months for non-chronic illnesses and no longer than twelve (12) months for chronic illnesses, without renewal.

A medical certification given to Company verbally must be confirmed in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days by the qualified medical professional prescribing medical care. **

(N)

The Company may verify the accuracy of any emergency medical certificate submitted under this Rule.

The Company will provide written notice to Customer of the upcoming expiration of a medical certificate at least fifteen (15) days prior to the expiration date, unless the medical certificate is renewed with the Company before that day arrives. **

(N)

**** Effective with the approval date indicated below, the asterisked terms in this Rule 10 are temporarily suspended in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.**

(N)

(N)

(continue to Sheet RR-11)

LESS THAN STATUTORY NOTICE APPLICATION

This document may be electronically filed by sending it as an attachment to an electronic mail message addressed to the Commission's Filing Center at puc.filingcenter@state.or.us.

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF)	UTILITY L.S.N. APPLICATION
<u>Northwest Natural Gas Company</u>)	NO. <u>2259</u>
(UTILITY COMPANY))	(LEAVE BLANK)
TO WAIVE STATUTORY NOTICE.)	

NOTE: ATTACH EXHIBIT IF SPACE IS INSUFFICIENT.

1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEDULE(S) ADDITION, DELETION, OR CHANGE. (SCHEDULE INCLUDES ALL RATES, TOLLS AND CHARGES FOR SERVICE AND ALL RULES AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE SAME)

First Revision of Sheet RR-10, General Rules and Regulations, Rule 10 Emergency Medical Certificates - Residential Customers. Changes reflect the proposed temporary suspension of rules relating to the timeframe in which customers may provide medical certificate renewal information.

2. APPLICANT DESIRES TO CHANGE THE SCHEDULE(S) NOW ON FILE KNOWN AND DESIGNATED AS: (INSERT SCHEDULE REFERENCE BY NUMBER, PAGE, AND ITEM)

Original Sheet RR-10

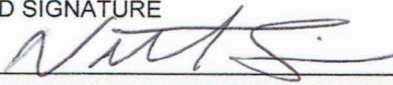
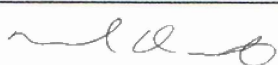
3. THE PROPOSED SCHEDULE(S) SHALL BE AS FOLLOWS: (INSERT SCHEDULE REFERENCE BY NUMBER, PAGE AND ITEM)

First Revision of Sheet RR-10

4. REASONS FOR REQUESTING A WAIVER OF STATUTORY NOTICE:

The Company seeks changes to reflect the temporary suspension of rules relating to the timeframe in which customers may provide medical certificate renewal information with less than statutory notice in order to be immediately responsive to the rapidly changing economic and social conditions facing customers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. NW Natural considers this tariff revision to be practical based on the changing economic and social conditions and to be in the best interest of its customers.

5. REQUESTED EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE NEW SCHEDULE(S) OR CHANGE(S): upon Commission approval

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE 	TITLE Manager, Regulatory Compliance	DATE April 7, 2020
PUC USE ONLY		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> DENIED	EFFECTIVE DATE OF APPROVED SCHEDULE(S) OR CHANGE <div style="text-align: right;">04/22/2020</div>	
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE 	DATE 04/21/2020	