

ITEM NO. RA3

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING DATE: March 20, 2020

REGULAR CONSENT EFFECTIVE DATE Upon Commission Approval

DATE: March 19, 2020

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: John Crider

THROUGH: Bryan Conway

SUBJECT: CASCADE NATURAL GAS:
(Docket No. ADV 1103)
Request a change to Sheet No. 5.8 and Sheet No. 200.1 to allow a temporary suspension of the Late Payment Charge.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Cascade Natural Gas's (Company) request for a modification to tariff Sheets No. 5.8 and Sheet 200.1 to allow for temporary suspension of late charges for unpaid accounts with less than statutory notice.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve the Company's request to modify its tariff sheets in order to allow discretion for temporary suspension of late charges for unpaid accounts.

Applicable Rule or Law

ORS 757.205, OAR 860-022-0025, and OAR 860-022-0030 establish rules for tariff changes and updates to rates. ORS 757.220 provides for less than 30 days' notice for a tariff change with good cause.

Analysis

The language in Sheet 5.8 states in part: “A Late-Payment Charge as established in Schedule 200 *will* be applied to overdue account balances, both residential and nonresidential, at the time of preparing the subsequent month's bill.” There is similar language in Schedule 200 asserting a late payment “*will*” be applied to unpaid accounts. The Company requests a language change to both tariffs, changing the word “*will*” to “*may*”, in order to provide discretion in applying the charge. This flexibility will allow the Company to temporarily waive late charges for unpaid accounts during the declared COVID-19 emergency.

In its petition, the Company states that it wishes to be immediately responsive to the rapidly changing economic conditions facing customers in the wake of the spreading COVID-19 virus, and that this tariff change will help them meet that goal.

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.

Conclusion

Staff concludes that the Company's tariff modification request is warranted, is in the best interest of customers, and should be granted with less than statutory notice.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Cascade Natural Gas’s request for a modification to tariff Sheet No. 5.8 and Sheet No. 200.1 to allow for temporary suspension of late charges for unpaid accounts with less than statutory notice.