

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
OF OREGON**

AR 505

In the Matter of the Adoption of a )  
Temporary Rule Regarding Reconnection ) ORDER  
of Gas Service. )

**DISPOSITION: TEMPORARY RULE ADOPTED**

A temporary rule is needed to ensure that an Oregon natural gas customer, whose service has been involuntarily disconnected, is reconnected in a timely manner, once the customer is eligible for and has requested reconnection of service. Currently, there is no Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) that specifies when a natural gas utility must reconnect involuntarily disconnected gas service.

The issue of timely reconnection recently came to Staff's attention when customers complained that Northwest Natural Gas Company (NW Natural) was quoting six to 10 days for reconnection. Staff obtained information from the three natural gas utilities serving Oregon customers and reviewed the rules governing reconnections adopted in the states of Washington and Idaho. Based on its findings, Staff concluded that NW Natural's new policy of a maximum three-business-day turnaround time for reconnection of involuntarily disconnected gas service results in serious harm to customers.

ORS 183.335(5) allows an agency to temporarily adopt, amend or suspend a rule without prior notice or hearing, or upon any abbreviated notice or hearing, that is practicable if it complies with specific temporary rulemaking requirements. The requirements include an agency finding, based on specific reasons, that failure of the agency to act promptly will result in serious harm to the public interest.

Generally, an apparent deficiency in customer service by a single utility would not justify the adoption of a temporary administrative rule. However, in this case the Commission is concerned about the Oregon customers that include children, the elderly, and the infirm who are now sitting at home for up to three business days, or in some cases five calendar days, with no natural gas service for everything from heat, hot water, or cooking equipment. Accordingly, the Commission finds that failure to act promptly will result in serious harm to the public interest.

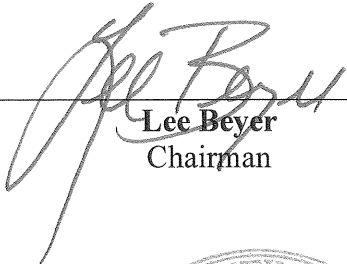
At its public meeting on February 7, 2006, the Commission considered and adopted Staff's proposed temporary rule with certain modifications. The temporary rule, as adopted by the Commission, is set forth in Appendix A. The rule applies where a customer, who had been involuntarily disconnected by a natural gas utility for reasons not


related to an emergency situation, later meets the conditions for reconnection and requests reconnection. Under the rule, the gas utility must reconnect service as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than the end of the next day. The gas utility must charge its standard reconnection rate even if it must schedule reconnection during a time other than when its standard reconnection charge would generally apply. The rule does not apply to situations where the customer requests a later date for reconnection, at which time all applicable tariff charges would apply.


**ORDER**

IT IS ORDERED that the temporary rule, OAR 860-021-0328 that is incorporated in Appendix A, is adopted and becomes effective upon filing with the Secretary of State.

Made, entered, and effective FEB 16 2006.

  
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**Lee Beyer**  
Chairman

  
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**John Savage**  
Commissioner

  
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**Ray Baum**  
Commissioner



A person may petition the Commission for the amendment or repeal of a rule pursuant to ORS 183.390. A person may petition the Court of Appeals to determine the validity of a rule pursuant to ORS 183.400.

860-021-0328

Reconnection of Natural Gas Service

A natural gas utility must reconnect service after an involuntary disconnection, if the applicant has satisfied the requirements for reconnection. Service must be reconnected as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than the end of the next day after the applicant meets the conditions for reconnection and requests reconnection.

Stat. Auth.: ORS Ch. 183 & 756

Stats. Implemented: ORS 756.040

Hist.: NEW