

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF WEST VIRGINIA  
CHARLESTON**

At as session of the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WEST VIRGINIA in the City of Charleston on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020.

GENERAL ORDER NO. 262.1

COMMISSION GENERAL ORDER REGARDING WAIVER OF ELECTRIC, GAS, AND WATER RULES RELATED TO MONTHLY INSIDE METER READINGS DURING COVID-19 WEST VIRGINIA STATE OF EMERGENCY

**COMMISSION ORDER**

The Commission temporarily waives requirements that electric, gas, and water utilities perform readings of meters located inside homes which require manual meter reads.

**BACKGROUND**

Commission rules governing electric, gas and water utilities contemplate instances of utility service meters being located within dwellings.<sup>1</sup> For some utilities, Commission rules and/or utility tariffs provide that utilities will read meters on a monthly basis.<sup>2</sup> Although some utilities have the ability to read meters remotely, other meters require manual meter reading.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 virus to be a global pandemic. On March 16, 2020, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice declared a COVID-19 state of emergency for all West Virginia counties (WV State of Emergency). Federal and State authorities are recommending social distancing and limiting person-to-person contact to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

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<sup>1</sup> Rule 3.2.a. of the Rules for the Government of Water Utilities, 150 C.S.R. 7; Rule 3.2.4. of the Rules for the Government of Electric Utilities, 150 C.S.R. 3, Rule 3.4.1.a. of the Rules for the Government of Gas Utilities and Gas Pipeline Safety, 150 C.S.R. 4 (Gas Rules).

<sup>2</sup> Gas Rule 3.4.2; applicable utility tariffs.

## **DISCUSSION**

In furtherance of Federal and State guidelines to maintain social distance and limit person-to-person interaction, it is appropriate to temporarily waive Commission rules and applicable utility tariff provisions that require utilities to enter residences to read utility meters. During the WV State of Emergency, electric, water and gas utilities should issue monthly bills based on estimated usage of customers with inside meters that cannot be read remotely. Utilities should true-up actual customer usage and bills when the utility obtains an actual meter reading after the WV State of Emergency is over.

## **FINDING OF FACT**

Commission rules and utility tariffs contemplate instances where meters may be located inside dwellings, and for some utilities, Commission rules and/or utility tariffs require monthly meter readings.

## **CONCLUSION OF LAW**

In consideration of health risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is appropriate to temporarily waive all rules and utility tariffs that gas, electric and water utilities perform manual meter readings of inside meters for the duration of the WV State of Emergency.

## **ORDER**

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that for the duration of the WV State of Emergency Commission rules and utility tariffs that require electric, gas, and water utilities to conduct monthly manual meter readings of inside meters are waived.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that for the duration of the WV State of Emergency electric, water, and gas utilities shall issue monthly bills based on estimated usage to customers with inside meters that cannot be read remotely.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that on entry of this order this case shall be removed from the Commission docket of open cases.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Executive Secretary serve this Order upon the Commission and its Staff by hand delivery, upon all parties of record who have filed an e-service agreement with the Commission by electronic service and upon all other parties by United States Certified Mail, return receipt requested.

A True Copy, Teste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie Graley".

Connie Graley, Executive Secretary

JML/rt  
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