

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the)	Application No. NG-101/PI-224
Commission, on its own motion,)	
opening an investigatory docket)	
for the purpose of general)	ORDER REQUIRING QUARTERLY
monitoring of issues regarding)	WRITTEN UPDATES
the natural gas industry and)	
jurisdictional utilities in)	
Nebraska.)	
)	
Black Hills Nebraska Gas, LLC)	Docket No. NG-101.1
)	
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)	
NorthWestern Corporation d/b/a)	Docket No. NG-101.2
NorthWestern Energy)	
)	
)	Entered: August 4, 2020

BY THE COMMISSION:

On May 14, 2019, The Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission"), on its own motion, opened this docket in order to monitor issues faced by the Nebraska natural gas industry and Nebraska jurisdictional utilities outside individually docketed proceedings. Since the opening of this docket, the Commission has been meeting with Black Hills Nebraska Gas, LLC¹ ("Black Hills") and Northwestern Energy ("NorthWestern") (collectively "the utilities") for the purpose of facilitating open communication and effective regulation of the State's natural gas public utilities.

On March 13, 2020, the Governor of Nebraska declared a state of emergency in Nebraska with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following that declaration, on March 24, 2020, the Commission issued an order in Docket No. PI-231 setting forth a temporary ban on residential natural gas disconnections. In Progression Order #3 in that docket, on July 28, 2020, the Commission ordered that the ban on natural gas disconnections will end on August 15, 2020.

¹ Since the opening of this docket, the two Black Hills entities, Black Hills Gas Distribution, LLC, and Black Hills/Nebraska Gas Utility Company, LLC, have consolidated into Black Hills Nebraska Gas, LLC.

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I hereby find that in order for the Commission to monitor the status of customer accounts, following the end of the temporary ban on natural gas disconnections, the companies shall provide the information listed below, current to September 15, 2020, on or before **September 21, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time**. Following the submission of the initial report, reports will be submitted on a quarterly basis, in conjunction with the status meetings held in this docket. If no quarterly status meeting is held, the utilities shall still submit the reports on a quarterly basis. Each item listed should be reported separately for residential and non-residential customer classes. Any information which a utility wishes to submit under confidential seal must be clearly labeled as confidential, in accordance with the Protective Order issued in this docket on June 4, 2019.

The requested information is as follows:

1. The total number of customer accounts;
2. The number of accounts that are in arrears;
3. The average and median arrears balance in accounts;
4. The total dollar amount of arrears which are 30 days or older;
5. The total dollar amount of arrears which are 90 days or older;
6. The number of customers, and percentage of total customers, that have not made a payment since March 2020;
7. The number of customers that took advantage of payment plans in the quarter covered by each report;
8. The average monthly payment for customers on payment plans;
9. The number of customers placed on level budget billing;
10. The average and median monthly payment for budget bill customers;
11. The amount of assistance funds that have been received. Please include source of funding if known (i.e., LIHEAP, CARES Act funds, other government assistance programs, private/non-profit groups, other);
12. The number of accounts which have been sent disconnection notices for non-payment since August 31, 2020;

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13. The number of accounts which have been disconnected for non-payment since August 31, 2020; and
14. Any other measures the utility is taking to prevent customer disconnections.

Additionally, in the report submitted by September 21, 2020, utilities are asked to report 1) the average wait times for customer service during the months of March and August 2020, and 2) the number of contacts from customers seeking assistance in March and August 2020.

Utilities are also asked to include in each of their reports any additional information the Commission may find helpful, including but not limited to descriptions of any obstacles customers are reporting they are facing in receiving assistance, as well as any relevant suggestions for the Commission going forward in navigating customer hardships caused by the pandemic.

The first report submitted by the utilities shall be due to the Commission on or before **September 21, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time**. This report shall contain the above-listed information, current to September 15, 2020. Thereafter, quarterly reports shall be submitted to the Commission on or before the 15th day of the month following the end of the quarter, or one week prior to the utility's quarterly meeting with the Commission in this docket, whichever is earlier. Utilities must continue to submit this information regardless of whether a quarterly meeting is scheduled until further order in this docket. Reports shall be submitted electronically to psc.naturalgas@nebraska.gov.

The utilities are encouraged to contact the Commission with any questions or further suggestions regarding these reports. The Commission appreciates the utilities' efforts in preparing this information.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above-described reports shall be submitted to the Commission by Black Hills Nebraska Gas and NorthWestern Energy each quarter until further order.

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ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 4th day
of August, 2020.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rod Johnson", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Commissioner Rod Johnson
Hearing Officer