

G,E-999/CI-90-1008 ORDER RELIEVING SPECIFIED UTILITIES FROM  
REQUIREMENT TO DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE CUSTOMER BROCHURE

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Don Storm	Chair
Tom Burton	Commissioner
Cynthia A. Kitlinski	Commissioner
Dee Knaak	Commissioner
Norma McKanna	Commissioner

In the Matter of an  
Investigation into the  
Competitive Impact of Appliance  
Sales and Service Practices of  
Minnesota Gas and Electric  
Utilities

ISSUE DATE: May 15, 1992

DOCKET NO. G,E-999/CI-90-1008

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**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On January 4, 1991 the Commission issued an Order opening an investigation into the appliance sales and service practices of all Minnesota gas and electric utilities. The investigation was to focus on accounting allocation and separations issues, and on allegations of discrimination against customers who did not patronize utilities' appliance sales and service operations.

On August 28, 1991 the Commission issued an Order requiring all gas and electric utilities to make a three-part filing containing the following items: (1) an explanation of their method of separating the costs of regulated and unregulated operations; (2) their actual 1990 cost separations data; (3) a proposed customer brochure explaining the difference between their regulated and unregulated operations and the customer's right to choose an appliance dealer or repair service other than the utility.

The filings made in response to the August 28 Order showed a wide range of utility involvement in appliance sales and service, from none at all to a significant market presence. On May 5, 1992 the Commission met on its own motion to consider excusing utilities with negligible appliance sales and service operations from developing and distributing customer brochures.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Five Minnesota energy utilities either have no appliance sales and service operations or have such small operations that the cost of preparing and distributing customer brochures would exceed their appliance sales and service profits. Those utilities are Northwestern Wisconsin Electric Company, Dakota Electric Association, Interstate Power Company, Great Plains Natural Gas Company, and Otter Tail Power Company.

The Commission finds it unnecessary to require these five companies to prepare and distribute customer brochures. The purpose of the brochure is to ensure that customers know they do not have to use their utility's appliance sales and service operations and that using them will not result in preferential treatment in the delivery of utility service. Clearly, this is not an issue for customers of utilities that do not sell or repair appliances. It is also reasonable to assume that it is not an issue for customers of utilities with negligible appliance sales and service operations. Therefore, the Commission will not require these utilities to incur the expense of developing and distributing the brochure.

**ORDER**

1. Northwestern Wisconsin Electric Company, Dakota Electric Association, Interstate Power Company, Great Plains Natural Gas Company, and Otter Tail Power Company are exempted from the requirement to develop and distribute a customer brochure explaining the relationship between their regulated operations and their appliance sales and service operations, if any.
2. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Richard R. Lancaster  
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)