



March 25, 2020

To: Minnesota Electric and Gas Utilities

Re: Responsive Measures to the Outbreak of COVID-19

On March 13, 2020, Governor Walz issued Emergency Executive Order 20-01, declaring a peacetime emergency to protect Minnesotans from the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States that has spread to the State of Minnesota.

Your response to help Minnesotans through these unprecedented times is greatly appreciated. Many utility providers are already taking steps to expand and extend cold weather rule protections, suspend customer shut-offs, reconnect customers, arrange payment plans, and otherwise help their customers in these difficult circumstances. Thank you for these proactive and very important measures.

The services you provide are critical to the health and well-being of Minnesotans. During this time of uncertainty, Minnesotans are seeking the assurance that the measures you have taken thus far will extend throughout the peacetime emergency. The Department of Commerce and Public Utilities Commission are requesting your commitment that Minnesotans will not have to worry about their utility service during this time. Therefore, we request all utility providers to commit to work with affected customers and communities by undertaking -- at minimum -- the following voluntary actions for the duration of the national security or peacetime emergency:

- I. Extend the protections of Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule provided under Minnesota Statutes sections 216B.096 (public utilities), 216B.097 (electric cooperatives and municipal utilities) and 216B.16, subdivisions 12 and 12a (small gas utility and small electric utility, respectively) by restricting disconnection of residential customers for non-payment of utility bills and reconnecting customers who have been disconnected for the duration of the national security or state peacetime emergency. This request shall not affect the utility's ability to disconnect a customer's service for public safety concerns unrelated to non-payment of services;
- II. Waive late fees that any residential or small business customer incurs because of the economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic.
- III. Arrange payment plans for customers requesting help during this time that is based on the financial resources and circumstances of the customer.

In order to provide government officials and Minnesotans with accurate information on the steps your utility is taking during this emergency, please eFile your responses to these specific requests in Docket E,G999/CI-20-375 by April 3. We recognize that providing critical services during this this unprecedented crisis should remain your top priority. If eFiling your response poses an unmanageable regulatory burden in the short term, please share your response in the most efficient way possible, for example by email, or through your trade association(s) to Jessica Burdette, Department of Commerce Jessica.burdette@state.mn.us and Will Seuffert, Public Utilities Commission will.seuffert@state.mn.us. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica and/or Will.

Our agencies appreciate the unprecedented actions that are being requested of utilities in Minnesota during this emergency. The Commerce Department and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission will continue to monitor the situation and may consider additional actions, as allowed by Minnesota law and rules, if required to address the needs of the utilities and the Minnesotans you serve.

We appreciate your cooperation as we work together to keep Minnesotans safe during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



Steve Kelley, Commissioner
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Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
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