

WAC 480-70-271 Customer notice requirements. A company must provide notice to its customers at least once, either before (see subsection (1) of this section) or after (see subsection (2) of this section) final commission action, depending on the type of filing.

(1) **Customer notice before commission action.**

(a) **Thirty days' customer notice requirement.** A company must provide each affected customer a notice at least thirty days before the requested effective date when a company proposes to (see exceptions in subsection (2) of this section):

(i) Increase recurring monthly rates;

(ii) File a general rate case;

(iii) Institute a charge for a service that was formerly provided without charge; or

(iv) Restrict access to services (e.g., discontinue a service or limit access to service by imposing a new usage level on existing services).

(b) **Who must receive a notice.** A company must provide a customer notice to:

(i) Each customer that will be affected by the company's proposal;

(ii) County commissioners or council members in all counties where affected customers reside;

(iii) The senior officials of affected cities (e.g., mayor or city manager) where affected customers reside; and

(iv) The commission's designee for public affairs.

(c) **Content of notice.** The customer notice must contain, at a minimum:

(i) The date the notice is issued;

(ii) The company's name and address;

(iii) A clear explanation of the reason(s) the company has requested the rate change (e.g., increase in labor costs, recovery of new plant investment, or increased office expenses, such as, postage, and customer billing);

(iv) For services the company proposes to change, a comparison of current and proposed rates that, at a minimum, must include:

(A) The minimum volume of service offered (e.g., mini can service);

(B) The four most used services, or if fewer than four services are offered in the customer class, all services (e.g., one-can, two-can, etc.);

(C) How often the rates will be billed (for example, monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly);

(D) Separately stated rates for recycling service, yardwaste service, and solid waste service, if applicable;

(E) If a service is not listed in the notice, but the rates are affected, the company must list a range of percentage increases (e.g., five to ten percent increase), and explain how a customer can get more information, if needed, by listing a toll-free telephone number;

(v) The requested effective date and, if different, the implementation date;

(vi) An explanation that the commission has authority to set final rates that may vary from the company's request, depending on the results of the commission's investigation;

(vii) A description of how customers may contact the company toll-free if they have questions or need additional information about the proposal; and

(viii) Public involvement language. A company may choose from (A) commission-suggested language, or (B) company-developed language.

(A) Commission-suggested language:

If you would like to comment on this proposal, it is important for you to do so now. Comments may be submitted in writing or presented at the commission's open public meeting. If you have questions, or you would like to be added to the mailing list for this case, you may contact the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission at P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504-7250; 1-800-562-6150; comments@wutc.wa.gov; or 360-664-3604 (telefacsimile).

(B) Company-developed language must provide:

- A brief explanation of how to participate in the commission's process by attending an open meeting, writing a letter, email (comments@wutc.wa.gov) or telefacsimile; and

- How to contact the commission for information about the process or notification of the scheduled open meeting date, providing the commission's mailing address, and toll-free telephone number (1-800-562-6150).

(d) **Notice methods permitted.**

(i) Notice may be provided by bill insert, bill message, message printed on the back of the billing envelope, separate mailing, or by can tag.

(ii) A company may use separate customer notices for its residential customers and commercial customers as long as each affected customer receives notice.

(2) **Customer notice after final commission action.**

(a) **Notice required.** Each affected customer must receive notice on or with the first bill after the final commission decision when a company increases rates for:

(i) Nonrecurring charges (e.g., late payment fees, NSF fees, one-time charge, etc.);

(ii) Local taxes;

(iii) Disposal fee increases;

(iv) Fuel surcharges;

(v) Credits or refunds; and

(vi) Commodity credits and charges.

(b) **Who must receive notice.** In addition to each affected customer, a company must provide notice to:

(i) County commissioners or council members in all counties where affected customers reside;

(ii) The senior officials of affected cities (e.g., mayor or city manager) where affected customers reside; and

(iii) The commission's designee for public affairs.

(c) **Content of the notice.** At a minimum, the notice provided after final commission action must include:

(i) The effective date;

(ii) A clear description of changes to rates and services; and

(iii) A toll-free company contact number where customers may seek additional information.

(d) **Methods of notice permitted.** Notice may be provided by bill insert, bill message, message printed on the back of the billing envelope, separate mailing, or by can tag.

(3) **Commission assistance on the customer notice.** The commission's public affairs section is available to:

(a) Assist companies with customer notice questions;

(b) Review draft customer notice language; and

(c) Offer suggestions on draft customer notice language. If a company would like assistance, the company must submit the notice for review at least two working days before the planned notice printing date.

(4) **Other customer notice.** The commission may require additional notification to customers other than described in this rule when the commission is holding a public hearing in a contested case, or when the effect of a company's proposal may have a significant impact on:

(a) Customer rates;

(b) Access to services; or

(c) When the commission determines that additional customer education is needed.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 81.04.160, 81.77.030 and 80.01.040. WSR 01-08-012 (Docket No. TG-990161, General Order No. R-479), § 480-70-271, filed 3/23/01, effective 4/23/01.]