

WAC 480-90-194 Publication of proposed tariff changes to increase charges or restrict access to services. Each gas utility offering service under tariff must publish or provide electronically all proposed changes to its tariff for at least thirty days, as required by RCW 80.28.060. For any proposed tariff change that would increase recurring charges, except purchased gas adjustment (PGA) filings as provided in subsection (5) of this section, or restrict access to services (e.g., discontinue a service, or limit access to service by imposing a new usage level on existing services), a utility must fulfill the requirements of subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section. For any other proposed tariffs, the utility must fulfill the requirements of WAC 480-90-195. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.

The utility will not be required to accomplish publication under this section if it has agreed to suspend its tariff filing and to provide notice as provided under WAC 480-90-197.

(1) **Thirty-day notice to individual customers.** To comply under this method, the utility must, at least thirty days before the stated effective date of the proposed change, mail or provide electronically the posting to each customer that would be affected by the proposed change. The posting must include the information listed in subsection (4) of this section. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information.

(2) **Published notice.** To comply under this method, the utility must, at least thirty days before the stated effective date of the proposed change, publish notice of the proposed change within the geographical areas where it offers service. To meet minimum publication requirements, a utility must:

(a) Distribute copies of the published notice to community agencies and organizations in the geographic area where the utility offers service for posting and publication by the agency or organization. The utility must include in its distribution list any agency or organization that requests these notices;

(b) Cause to be printed in large print, as a paid advertisement, a complete copy of the published notice in the daily newspaper of general circulation with the greatest number of subscribers in each geographic area or each of the areas affected by the proposed tariff;

(c) Provide to the news editor of every newspaper, television station, and radio station, in the geographic area within which it offers service a news release or public service announcement summarizing the published notice. The release or announcement must include a toll-free number that customers can use to obtain more information from the utility. The commission will maintain a list of area newspapers, television, and radio stations and will provide it on request to any utility; and

(d) Post a complete copy of the published notice on an Internet web site accessible to the public using generally available browser software.

(3) **Reduced publication with shortened notice to individual customers.** To comply under this method, the utility must:

(a) Mail or provide electronically the posting to each customer that would be affected by the proposed change at least fifteen days before the stated effective date of the proposed change. The utility may provide this information in an electronic format consistent with

provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information;

(b) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, distribute copies of the published notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(a) of this section;

(c) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, provide news media notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(c) of this section; and

(d) At the time of the utility's filing with the commission, post a complete copy of the published notice in the same manner as provided in subsection (2)(d) of this section.

(4) **Content of postings.** The published notice required by this rule must include, when applicable:

(a) The date the notice is issued;

(b) The utility's name and address;

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

(d) A comparison of current and proposed rates by service;

(e) An example showing the monthly increase of the average customer's bill based on the proposed rates (e.g., "based on the proposed rates, a typical gas customer using an average of eighty therms per month would see an average monthly increase of \$2.74.");

(f) When the rates will be billed (i.e., monthly or bimonthly);

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

(h) A statement that the commission has the authority to set final rates that may vary from the utility's request, which may be either higher or lower depending on the results of the investigation;

(i) A description of how customers may contact the utility if they have specific questions or need additional information about the proposal; and

(j) Public involvement language. A utility may choose from:

(i) Commission-suggested language that is available from the commission's designated public affairs officer; or

(ii) Utility-developed language that must include the commission's mailing address, toll-free number, and docket number, if known, and a brief explanation of:

(A) How to participate in the commission's process by mailing or faxing a letter, or submitting an email; and

(B) How to contact the commission for process questions or to be notified of the scheduled open meeting at which the proposal will be considered by the commission.

(5) **Optional method of publication for purchase gas adjustment (PGA).** A utility that publishes notice of a PGA filing pursuant to this subsection is not required to publish notice of the filing pursuant to subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section.

(a) The utility must provide notice to affected customers before and after final commission disposition. Notice before commission disposition is to educate customers of a potential increase in natural gas prices. Notice after commission disposition is to inform customers of the new rates.

(b) Prior PGA notice. The notice must:

(i) Clearly define what a PGA is and explain how it works;

(ii) State whether the utility expects an increase or decrease in the upcoming filing; and

(iii) Include a utility contact phone number for additional information.

(c) The utility must provide the notice to each affected customer by mail or by electronic means consistent with the provisions in this chapter governing the use of electronic information. The utility must also send the notice or a press release about the increase to every daily paper within its service territory.

(d) A newsletter, bill insert, bill message, or separate mailing to customers is permitted for prior notice.

(e) Customer notice after final commission disposition must be provided pursuant to WAC 480-90-195.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 80.01.040 and 80.04.160. WSR 11-06-032 (Docket U-100523, General Order R-563), § 480-90-194, filed 2/25/11, effective 3/28/11. Statutory Authority: RCW 80.01.040 and 80.04.180. WSR 02-11-081 (Docket No. U-991301, General Order No. R-498), § 480-90-194, filed 5/14/02, effective 6/17/02.]