

WSR 22-07-072
PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

[Filed March 18, 2022, 11:41 a.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: This rule making concerns potential changes to current customer notice, credit, and collection rules applicable to the provision of electric and natural gas utility service, including the possibility of permanently eliminating late fees, disconnection fees, and reconnection fees. Topics for consideration include those found in chapters 480-90 and 480-100 WAC, including electric and natural gas service applications, responsibilities, connections, disconnections, reconnections, refusals, interruptions, deposits, fees, payment arrangements and programs, customer information, billing requirements, billing payments, customer notice, credit, collections, and other related topics.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 80.01.040, 80.04.160; and chapter 80.28 RCW.

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: RCW 80.01.040 and 80.04.160 task the commission with regulating the provision of natural gas and electric service. The commission enacted rules regarding the provision of electric and natural gas service in chapters 480-90 and 480-100 WAC.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous challenges, especially for customers struggling to pay bills during a global crisis. Utility companies, in support of and in compliance with the governor's moratorium on utility disconnections, changed fee, disconnection, and reconnection practices by suspending them through September 30, 2021.

On October 20, 2020, the commission in Docket U-200281, *In the Matter of Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, issued Order 01, Extending suspension of disconnection of energy services for nonpayment and adopting related requirements. In that order, the commission determined that it should open a proceeding, when reasonably practicable, "to consider potential long-term changes and improvements to customer notice, credit, and collection rules, including permanent elimination of late fees, disconnection and reconnection fees, and deposits" Having seen the impact of changed practices on electric and natural gas customers and the utilities that serve them, the commission finds it in the public interest to consider if longer term changes should be incorporated into chapters 480-90 and 480-100 WAC. Topics for consideration include those found in chapters 480-90 and 480-100 WAC, including electric and natural gas service applications, responsibilities, connections, disconnections, reconnections, refusals, interruptions, deposits, fees, payment arrangements and programs, customer information, billing requirements, billing payments, customer notice, credit, collections, and other related topics.

Process for Developing New Rule: The utilities and transportation commission (UTC) uses a collaborative rule-making process that includes stakeholder workshops, formal comments, and draft rules.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Amanda Maxwell, UTC, P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504-7250, phone 360-664-1234, TTY 711 or 1-800-833-6384, email records@utc.wa.gov, website www.utc.wa.gov/e-filing.

March 18, 2022
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