



Media Release

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Date: February 25, 2021

OREGON UTILITY REGULATORS EXTEND CUSTOMER PROTECTIONS COVID-19 late fee and disconnection moratorium extended through June 30

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved an extended moratorium on disconnections for electric and natural gas customers of investor-owned utilities as Oregonians continue to experience financial hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The moratorium, previously set to expire on April 1, was extended to June 30.

The PUC extended the moratorium to waive late fees and discontinue energy service disconnections due to nonpayment for customers of Portland General Electric (PGE), PacifiCorp, Idaho Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural, and Avista, through June 30, with the first 15-day late notice to be issued no earlier than June 15.

As of December 2020, the number of electric and natural gas customers with past-due balances of investor-owned utilities had increased to just over 97,000 customers who are 90-plus days behind in paying their energy bills. This is a 272 percent increase when compared to data prior to the pandemic. Additionally, the total amount of past due balances for residential customers has increased to \$48.3 million, a 631 percent increase.

“As the economic impacts of the pandemic continue, the extension of the moratorium provides families continued access to essential utility services at a time that so many are struggling to make ends meet and relying on these essential services to attend school and work,” said Megan Decker, PUC Chair. “This extension, however, does not mean that utility service can be provided at no cost. Paying what you can now or getting connected with energy assistance programs will help avoid large balances once the moratorium ends.”

To further benefit Oregonians, the PUC directed investor-owned electric and natural gas companies to file arrearage management program plans for approval. PGE’s program has been filed and approved by the PUC, while the plans for the remaining investor-owned utilities will be reviewed at a special public meeting scheduled for March 23. These programs, which would go into effect April 1, offer additional options for energy customers experiencing difficulty in paying their utility bills. Funding for these programs is limited to one percent of each utility’s 2019 Oregon retail revenues, or approximately \$39 million overall.

Customers having difficulty paying their utility bills should contact their service provider directly for information on arrearage management programs, payment plan options, and programs specific for qualifying low-income customers. For additional information, contact the PUC at puc.consumer@state.or.us or call 503-378-6600 or 800-522-2404.

The PUC will hold a follow-up public meeting in mid-May to further review the impacts of the pandemic on energy customers.

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The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulates customer rates and services of the state's investor-owned electric, natural gas and telephone utilities, as well as select water companies. The PUC mission is to ensure Oregon utility customers have access to safe, reliable, and high quality utility services at just and reasonable rates, which is accomplished through thorough analysis and independent decision-making conducted in an open and fair process.