

Nebraska Public Service Commission

COMMISSIONERS:

ROD JOHNSON
FRANK E. LANDIS
CRYSTAL RHOADES
MARY RIDDER
TIM SCHRAM



300 The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
Post Office Box 94927, Lincoln, NE 68509-4927
Website: psc.nebraska.gov
Phone: (402) 471-3101
Fax: (402) 471-0254

NEBRASKA CONSUMER HOTLINE:
1-800-526-0017

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

MICHAEL G. HYBL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER KICKS-OFF NEBRASKA'S NATURAL GAS COLD WEATHER RULE

LINCOLN, OCTOBER 23, 2017- Beginning November 1, the Nebraska Public Service Commission's (PSC) cold weather rule will provide financially strapped customers of Nebraska's jurisdictional natural gas utilities a little extra time to pay their bills.

The PSC's cold weather rule applies only to customers of the state's jurisdictional utilities, Black Hills Energy, which now includes both Black Hills and legacy SourceGas Distribution service territories, and Northwestern Energy.

From November 1-through-March 31, Black Hills and Northwestern may not shut off service to customers without allowing an additional 30 days to pay beyond the normal bill due date.

"Nebraska winters can be long and sometimes quite brutal," said Commission chair Tim Schram. "It's also a time when natural gas bills are the highest. The cold weather rule is a way for customers and natural gas suppliers to work together to ensure everyone has service during the winter months."

Customers finding it difficult to pay natural gas bills should contact the company to arrange payment. Customers can also contact local public assistance agencies for help with natural gas bills.

There are several strategies for customers seeking to minimize the impact of higher natural gas bills during the winter. Such strategies include setting the thermostat a little cooler, gas utilities recommend 68 degrees or lower, and reduce thermostat settings when a home or building is unoccupied. Check gas appliances and space-heating equipment for efficient operation. Obtain a home energy audit to identify ways to conserve energy and participate in a gas company's yearly budget plan to spread gas costs throughout the year.

Other ideas include improving the insulation in a home by installing storm windows and doors, attaching clear plastic to the inside or outside of windows and screen doors, caulking around windows and doorframes, and covering window air conditioners.

The PSC implemented the cold weather rule when it was given regulatory authority over the state's jurisdictional utilities in 2003. Nebraska communities served by municipally owned natural gas utilities are not subject to regulation by the Commission and not required to comply with the cold weather rule. ###

Contact:

Deb Collins- Media & Communications Mgr.

(402) 471-0226

deb.collins@nebraska.gov