

PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST

Nebraska Public Service Commission

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PSC Natural Gas Department

Since 2003, the Natural Gas Department of the Public Service Commission has regulated rates and service quality of investor-owned natural gas public utilities.

There are two investor-owned jurisdictional utilities operating in Nebraska that provide natural gas services, Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy.

The Commission's regulatory oversight works to maintain the efficiency of the company while acting as a substitute for competition as natural gas utilities are natural monopolies, with no direct competitors due to the costly nature of the infrastructure.



"The goal of the Natural Gas department is to work collaboratively with the companies we regulate to ensure safe, efficient, reliable and affordable natural gas service in Nebraska," Nichole Mulcahy, Director, PSC Natural Gas Department.



In addition to regulating jurisdictional natural gas utilities the Commission's Natural Gas Department has limited jurisdiction over the construction, operation, and maintenance of high voltage transmission lines located outside the limits of incorporated cities and villages running over, under, along or contiguously to public highways within prescribed distances from other facilities.



The department also reviews applications filed under the Major Oil Pipeline Siting Act passed by the Unicameral in 2012.

Read more about the PSC [Natural Gas Department](#) and its mission on the [PSC website](#).

MEET YOUR NATURAL GAS DEPARTMENT TEAM

The Natural Gas Department is under the direction of Nichole Mulcahy. Ms. Mulcahy served as legal counsel for multiple departments within in the Commission before her appointment to director of the Natural Gas department in 2017. A native of Lincoln, she earned her Juris Doctorate from the University Of Nebraska College Of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree from UNL.

She is assisted in her duties by Consumer Advocate Deena Ackerman, a 30 year veteran of the State of Nebraska. And Sallie Dietrich who has served as the Department's Attorney since 2018.



PSC Natural Gas Department
Sallie Dietrich-Attorney, Nichole Mulcahy-Director, Deena Ackerman-Consumer Advocate



Understanding the Choice Gas Program

It's selection time for consumers served by Black Hills Gas Distribution (formerly SourceGas and Kinder Morgan). Selection for the agricultural sector ended February 19, while residential/commercial selection period runs April 10-through the-23.

The [Nebraska Consumer Choice Gas Program](#), allows Black Hills Energy residential, commercial and ag customers residing in the area of Nebraska served by Black Hills Gas Distribution to choose a 3rd party supplier to supply their natural gas.

"Participation in this program is dependent upon where you reside in the state," said Nichole Mulcahy, Director PSC Natural Gas Department. "The PSC is working with Black Hills Energy and 3rd party providers to provide information designed to aide consumers in making an informed selection."

We want to know how you feel about the Choice Gas Program. Take our survey @ < <http://tiny.cc/ChoiceGasConsumerSurvey> >. Need more information? Visit the PSC [Consumer Choice Program](#) webpage.

Consumers unsure if they are in an area served by the Choice Gas Program, are encouraged contact Black Hills Energy at 1-877-245-3506.





Rate Review Proceeding Planned for Black Hills Energy

The PSC Natural Gas Department is planning for a statewide rate review proceeding involving Black Hills Energy.

A jurisdictional natural gas utility regulated by the PSC, Black Hills Energy (including Black Hills Legacy and Black Hills Gas Distribution), has indicated it will file a consolidated rate review with the PSC in 2020 to increase the rates it currently charges consumers.

"It has been 10-years since we've had a rate review for Black Hills Energy," said Nichole Mulcahy, Director, Natural Gas Department. "We look forward to working with the parties on this proceeding."

Once the rate case is filed, the PSC will undergo a comprehensive review of the utilities financials to include expenses, revenues and what customers are currently being charged.

During the rate review proceeding, Black Hills Energy can institute increased rates for customers on an interim basis. If the rate increase is not approved by the PSC at the amount charged, customers would receive a refund for the difference.



Nebraska's Natural Gas Cold Weather Rule In Effect

The Nebraska Public Service Commission's (PSC) natural gas cold weather rule remains in effect until March 31.

The cold weather rule provides financially strapped customers of Nebraska's jurisdictional natural gas utilities a little extra time to pay their bills.

Beginning November 1 and running through March 31, Black Hills Nebraska Gas, LLC and NorthWestern Energy may not shut-off service to customers without allowing an additional 30 days to pay beyond the normal bill due date.

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.

Nebraska communities served by municipally owned natural gas utilities are not subject to regulation by the PSC and are not required to comply with the cold weather rule. *****Note: Due to the COVID-19 virus jurisdictional natural gas utilities are temporarily suspending nonpayment disconnections. Contact your gas company for details. *******

If you suspect a Gas Leak:

- ⚠ Leave the house immediately and take others with you.
- ⚠ Don't use your home phone or cell phone; call your gas supplier or the telephone operator for assistance from a neighbor's house.
- ⚠ Don't light a match, cigarette, or candle.
- ⚠ Don't turn on a light.
- ⚠ Don't switch on anything electrical, including appliances and computers.



For more public safety announcements visit the ["For Consumers" page of the PSC website](#) and click on [Natural Gas](#)



The Nebraska Public Service Commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas jurisdictional utilities, major oil pipeline, railroad safety, household goods movers and passenger carriers, grain warehouses and dealers, construction of manufactured and modular homes and recreation vehicles, high voltage electric transmission lines, and private water company rates.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
1200 N STREET, SUITE 300
LINCOLN, NE 687508
www.psc.nebraska.gov

1.8.00.526.0017 (NE only)
402.471.3101

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