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August 28, 2002

Advice No. 3183 (U 904 G)

Public Utilities Commission of the State of California

## **Subject: Participation in California Utility Exchange**

Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) hereby informs the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) of its participation in an inter-utility exchange called California Utility Exchange (CUE) offered and managed by Equifax Credit Information Services, Inc. ("Equifax"), a credit reporting agency.

### **Background**

The CUE, managed by Equifax, offers subscribing utilities and telephone companies, an automated information service, which files, stores and retrieves information on new customer accounts and delinquent accounts for the purpose of identifying potential financial risks and locating consumers who have delinquent accounts. Currently, the CUE is comprised of several utilities such as Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison Company, Department of Water and Power, SoCalGas, and Long Beach Gas & Water as well as various telecommunication companies.

#### <u>Information</u>

SoCalGas' contract with Equifax provides that: All information filed, stored and processed through the EXCHANGE System is treated confidentially and is provided a unique identification code, which identifies SoCalGas and prevents unauthorized access and retrieval. Equifax keeps SoCalGas' information completely separate from other subscriber information. Both Equifax and SoCalGas consider this material to be confidential and proprietary in nature.

SoCalGas does not release any Equifax information it obtains to San Diego Gas & Electric Company or to any other party (except as permitted by law for collection action) and makes no use of the Equifax information for marketing purposes. SoCalGas has expressly agreed in the contract as follows:

SoCalGas agrees that EXCHANGE match information will be requested only for its exclusive use and all EXCHANGE match information received will be held in strict confidence, except to the extent that disclosure to others is required by law. (Paragraph 3.)

SoCalGas understands that EXCHANGE reports are consumer reports, as defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and it certifies that it will order reports, only when it intends to use the report: (a) in accordance with the FCRA and all state law FCRA counterparts and (b) for one of the following FCRA permissible purposes: (i) in connection with a credit transaction involving the consumer on whom the consumer report is to be furnished and involving the extension of credit to, or review or collection of an account of, the consumer; (ii) when SoCalGas otherwise has a legitimate business need for the information either in connection with a business transaction that is initiated by the consumer, or to review an account to determine whether the consumer continues to meet the terms of the account; or (iii) in accordance with the written instructions of the consumer to whom it relates. SoCalGas will use each consumer report ordered from Equifax for one of the foregoing purposes and for no other purpose. SoCalGas will otherwise comply with the FCRA and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and its applicable regulations. (Paragraph 7.)

SoCalGas began a 12-month pilot program in February 2002 to determine the value of its participation in the CUE. After the 12 months, SoCalGas will evaluate the results and will either discontinue or make the pilot program permanent. SoCalGas uses the system primarily to locate customers who have a closed account with a delinquent balance of \$25 or more.

#### **Protest**

Anyone may protest this Advice Letter to the Commission. The protest must state the grounds upon which it is based, including such items as financial and service impact, and should be submitted expeditiously. The protest must be made in writing and must be received within 20 days of the date this Advice Letter. There is no restriction on who may file a protest. The address for mailing or delivering a protest to the Commission is:

Energy Division - IMC Branch California Public Utilities Commission 505 Van Ness Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor San Francisco, CA 94102

Copies of the protest should also be sent via e-mail to the attention of both Jerry Royer (<a href="mailto:ijr@cpuc.ca.gov">ijr@cpuc.ca.gov</a>) and to Honesto Gatchalian (<a href="mailto:inj@cpuc.ca.gov">inj@cpuc.ca.gov</a>) of the Energy Division. A copy of the protest should also be sent via both e-mail <a href="mailto:and">and</a> facsimile to the address shown below on the same date it is mailed or delivered to the Commission.

Attn: Sid Newsom Tariff Manager - GT14D6 555 West Fifth Street Los Angeles, CA 90013-1011 Facsimile No. (213) 244-4957

E-mail: snewsom@SempraUtilities.com

## **Effective Date**

SoCalGas respectfully requests that this filing become effective October 7, 2002, which is not less than forty (40) days regular statutory notice. This advice filing will not increase any rate or charge, cause the withdrawal of service, or conflict with any other schedule or rule. Therefore, SoCalGas believes that no resolution is needed to approve this filing.

## **Notice**

In accordance with Section III-G of General Order No. 96-A, a copy of this advice letter is being sent to the parties shown on Attachment A.

J. STEVE RAHON
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Attachments

# **ATTACHMENT A**

Advice No. 3183

(See Attached Service List)

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