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January 12, 2024

Advice No. 6248-G
(U 904 G)

Public Utilities Commission of the State of California

Subject: Conclusion of Emergency Disaster Relief Program in Southern California Gas Company's Service Territory for Winter Storms for Residential Customer and Non-Residential Customer Protections Pursuant to Decision (D.) 19-07-015

Purpose

Pursuant to Ordering Paragraph (OP) 7 of D.19-07-015, Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) hereby submits this Advice Letter (AL) to conclude the emergency customer protection period of residential and small businesses affected by the Winter Storms in SoCalGas' service territory, which include the counties of Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Kern, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial, and to detail the protections offered, the start and end periods these customers received protections, outreach efforts conducted, customer impacts, and associated costs.

Background

On January 4, 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom (Governor) issued an emergency proclamation, due to the effects of the Winter Storms, which swept through and impacted SoCalGas' service territory, causing damage and destruction of property and evacuations of customers. Pursuant to D.19-07-015, SoCalGas submitted AL 6086 on January 18, 2023 to implement protections for residential and small business customers affected by the Winter Storms that have either: 1) resulted in the loss or disruption of the delivery or receipt of natural gas service; and/or 2) resulted in the degradation of the quality of natural gas service. AL 6086 was approved on March 2, 2023 with an effective date of January 1, 2023. SoCalGas provided the following emergency customer protections available to affected customers beginning January 4, 2023 and ending on January 4, 2024:

Eligibility Requirements for Emergency Customer Protections

SoCalGas worked with the appropriate county agencies to identify and verify homes and small businesses that were destroyed or damaged as a result of the winter storms.

SoCalGas conducted field verifications to validate the information and place each home or small business. A total of 12 homes or small businesses were destroyed or damaged by the winter storms. These accounts remained flagged through January 4, 2024.

Billing and Credit Protections

SoCalGas flagged a total of 144 accounts in SoCalGas' CIS as eligible for billing and credit protections and provided the following billing and credit protections through January 4, 2024.

(1) waive deposit requirements for affected residential customers seeking to reestablish service for one year and expedite move in and move out service requests;

In compliance with D.20-06-003, SoCalGas no longer collects deposits from residential customers. The relief offered by this customer protection is obsolete.

(2) stop estimated usage for billing attributed to the time period when the home/unit was unoccupied as result of the emergency;

SoCalGas makes an attempt to use actual reads to bill all customers directly affected by the winter storms. For the 12 homes and small businesses destroyed or damaged by the winter storms, SoCalGas closed the customer accounts in CIS and therefore did not estimate usage. A total of 69 accounts were granted volumetric adjustments for gas registered on the meter but were not billed to the customer's account. Additionally, 30 accounts were identified that required no billing adjustments. SoCalGas made necessary corrections so that the estimated usage billed to other accounts in the impacted area reflected reduced consumption during the period the home or unit may have been unoccupied as a result of the winter storms. All customers within the winter storm zones with communicating advanced meter devices were billed using the actual reads from the meter. SoCalGas only estimates a customer's usage if an actual meter read is not available. SoCalGas reviewed the system estimates of bills to confirm its reasonableness.

(3) discontinue billing;

SoCalGas closed 12 customers' accounts for customers with destroyed, or damaged and uninhabitable residential or non-residential units. SoCalGas reviewed and granted bill forgiveness to these accounts. SoCalGas also fully refunded any existing deposit on the accounts after forgiving any bills.

(4) prorate any monthly access charge or minimum charges;

SoCalGas applied this relief to residential and non-residential (small business) customers whose property were destroyed or damaged and uninhabitable. A total of 33 accounts required adjustment to the temporary closing date to ensure the correct daily charges. SoCalGas does not assess access or minimum charges on residential accounts. SoCalGas closed eligible customers' accounts to prevent additional charges from being assessed for customers directly impacted.

(5) implement payment plan options for residential customers;

SoCalGas reviewed the accounts of residential eligible customers to forgive outstanding recent charges when SoCalGas issues the closing bills for customers whose residences are physically destroyed or damaged and uninhabitable by the winter storms. There were no payment arrangements requested by impacted customers.

(6) suspend disconnection for non-payment and associated fees, waive deposit and late fee requirements for residential customers;

SoCalGas identified 4 affected customers and confirmed that customer accounts were flagged to suspend all collections activity through January 4, 2024 for all customers directly affected by the winter storms. SoCalGas did not disconnect service at the new residences of customers whose homes were damaged or destroyed by the winter storms through January 4, 2024. SoCalGas does not require deposits or reconnection fees from residential customers.

(7) support low-income residential customers, in disaster impacted zip codes which may include all zip codes in a county depending on circumstances, by:**(a) freezing all standard and high-usage reviews for CARE program eligibility until, at least, the end of the year and potentially longer, as warranted;**

SoCalGas reviewed customer accounts directly affected by the winter storms and placed a memo on any CARE enrolled accounts for emergency customer protections beginning January 2023. Directly impacted CARE customers are not subject to eligibility recertification or verification until January 4, 2024, unless further extended by the Utility or the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission).

(b) contacting all community outreach contractors, the CBOs who assist in enrolling hard-to-reach low-income customers into CARE, to help better inform customers of these eligibility changes;

SoCalGas had discussions with CBOs/FBOs or Community partners on the emergency customer protections available to impacted customers.

(c) partnering with the program administrator of the customer funded emergency assistance program for low-income customers and increase the assistance limit amount for the next 12 months for impacted customers; and

SoCalGas and United Way received 3 Gas Assistance Fund (GAF) applications from affected customers and provided grant funding to support these customers.

(d) indicate how the Energy Savings Assistance Program (ESAP) can be deployed to assist impacted customers;

Customers in the affected areas were made aware of the ESA Program and directed to the Customer Assistance Program webpage for ESA Program enrollment and program services.

(8) suspend all CARE and FERA program removals to avoid unintentional loss of the discounted rate during the period for which the customer is protected under these customer protections; and

CARE customers directly affected by the winter storms were not subject to program removal until January 4, 2024, unless further extended by SoCalGas or the Commission. The FERA program is not applicable to SoCalGas.

(9) discontinue generating all recertification and verification requests that require customers to provide their current income information.

SoCalGas discontinued generating recertification and verification requests to directly affected CARE customers. CARE customers directly affected by the winter storms were not required to return recertification and verification requests. CARE customers directly affected by the winter storms were not subject to eligibility recertification and verification until January 4, 2024, unless further extended by SoCalGas or the Commission.

Communications Plan

SoCalGas communicated the availability of emergency customer protections to customers in its impacted service territory using the following communication channels: community outreach through SoCalGas' Regional Public Affairs manager that worked directly with local/community government communications, socialgas.com homepage, a dedicated informational web page, and social media posts. Social media posts directed impacted customers to a dedicated webpage located on SoCalGas' website, <https://www.socialgas.com/billing-support>. The page was established to explain available protections for customers.

Emergency Customer Protections Memorandum Account (ECPMA)

SoCalGas records costs associated with the emergency customer protections described herein in the ECPMA. SoCalGas will seek recovery of the costs recorded in the ECPMA in a General Rate Case or other appropriate ratemaking proceeding. The protections detailed in this AL were in effect until January 4, 2024.

Protests

In accordance with General Order (GO) 96-B, General Rule 6.2, this information-only AL is not subject to protest.

Effective Date

This submittal is subject to Energy Division disposition and should be classified as Tier 1 (effective pending disposition) pursuant to General Order (GO) 96-B. It is submitted in compliance with OP 7 of D.19-07-015. Therefore, SoCalGas respectfully requests that this submittal be approved and made effective January 12, 2024.

Notice

A copy of this Advice Letter is being sent to SoCalGas' General Order (GO) 96-B service list and the Commission's service list in R.18-03-011. Address change requests to the GO 96-B service list should be directed via e-mail to Tariffs@socalgas.com or call 213-244-2424. For changes to all other service lists, please contact the Commission's Process Office at 415-703-2021 or via e-mail at Process_office@cpuc.ca.gov.

/s/ Joseph Mock
Joseph Mock
Director – Regulatory Affairs

Attachments



ADVICE LETTER SUMMARY

ENERGY UTILITY



MUST BE COMPLETED BY UTILITY (Attach additional pages as needed)

Company name/CPUC Utility No.:

Utility type:

- ELC GAS WATER
 PLC HEAT

Contact Person:

Phone #:
E-mail:
E-mail Disposition Notice to:

EXPLANATION OF UTILITY TYPE

ELC = Electric GAS = Gas WATER = Water
 PLC = Pipeline HEAT = Heat

(Date Submitted / Received Stamp by CPUC)

Advice Letter (AL) #:

Tier Designation:

Subject of AL:

Keywords (choose from CPUC listing):

AL Type: Monthly Quarterly Annual One-Time Other:

If AL submitted in compliance with a Commission order, indicate relevant Decision/Resolution #:

Does AL replace a withdrawn or rejected AL? If so, identify the prior AL:

Summarize differences between the AL and the prior withdrawn or rejected AL:

Confidential treatment requested? Yes No

If yes, specification of confidential information:

Confidential information will be made available to appropriate parties who execute a nondisclosure agreement. Name and contact information to request nondisclosure agreement/ access to confidential information:

Resolution required? Yes No

Requested effective date:

No. of tariff sheets:

Estimated system annual revenue effect (%):

Estimated system average rate effect (%):

When rates are affected by AL, include attachment in AL showing average rate effects on customer classes (residential, small commercial, large C/I, agricultural, lighting).

Tariff schedules affected:

Service affected and changes proposed¹:

Pending advice letters that revise the same tariff sheets:

¹Discuss in AL if more space is needed.

Protests and all other correspondence regarding this AL are due no later than 20 days after the date of this submittal, unless otherwise authorized by the Commission, and shall be sent to:

CPUC, Energy Division
Attention: Tariff Unit
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102
Email: EDTariffUnit@cpuc.ca.gov

Name:
Title:
Utility Name:
Address:
City:
State: Zip:
Telephone (xxx) xxx-xxxx:
Facsimile (xxx) xxx-xxxx:
Email:

Name:
Title:
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Address:
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