

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
UTILITIES COMMISSION
RALEIGH**

DOCKET NO. M-100, SUB 158
DOCKET NO. E-2, SUB 1214
DOCKET NO. E-2, SUB 1228
DOCKET NO. E-2, SUB 1258
DOCKET NO. E-7, SUB 1210
DOCKET NO. E-7, SUB 1236
DOCKET NO. E-7, SUB 1241
DOCKET NO. E-22, SUB 583
DOCKET NO. G-5, SUB 617
DOCKET NO. G-9, SUB 767

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of		
Investigation of Necessary and Appropriate)	ORDER EXTENDING DOOR
Responses to the Novel Coronavirus)	HANGER NOTICE
COVID-19)	REQUIREMENT

BY THE COMMISSION: On June 14, 2019, Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC (DEC), and Duke Energy Progress, LLC (DEP), filed a Petition for a Limited Waiver of Commission Rule R12-11(m)(2) in Docket Nos. E-2, Sub 1214 and E-7, Sub 1210. The advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) installed by DEP and DEC enables the remote disconnection of electric utility service. Accordingly, the Companies requested a limited waiver of the Commission Rule R12-11(m)(2) requirement that utility personnel physically appear at residential customers' premises on the day of disconnection and, in lieu thereof, authorization to initiate alternate efforts intended to inform customers of the disconnection. On November 15, 2019, the Commission issued an order granting DEP and DEC a waiver of the personal contact required by Commission Rule R12-11(m)(2), with some limitations. The waiver expires on June 30, 2021, unless expressly extended by order of the Commission prior to that date.

On March 10, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order (EO) No. 116 declaring a State of Emergency in North Carolina to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. The EO stated it was effective immediately and "shall remain in effect until rescinded." EO No. 116 at § 25. To date, EO No. 116 remains in effect.

On March 19, 2020, in response to EO No. 116, the Commission issued an Order Suspending Utility Disconnections for Nonpayment, Allowing Reconnection, and Waiving Certain Fees in Docket No. M-100, Sub 158 (Public Utility Waiver Order).

On March 31, 2020, Governor Cooper issued EO No. 124. In pertinent part, EO No. 124 required public utilities to report implementation information weekly to the Commission.

On May 30, 2020, Governor Cooper issued EO No. 142, which extended the May 30, 2020 expiration date of EO No. 124 to midnight on July 29, 2020, and required public utilities to continue to report implementation information to the Commission on a monthly basis.

On July 29, 2020, the Commission issued an Order Lifting Disconnection Moratorium and Allowing Collection of Arrearages Pursuant to Special Repayment Plans (July 29, 2020 Order) in Docket Nos. M-100, Sub 158, E-2, Sub 1228, E-7, Sub 1236, E-22, Sub 583, G-5, Sub 617, and G-9, Sub 767.

On September 9, 2020, the Commission issued an Order Finalizing COVID-19 State of Emergency Monthly Reporting Form (September 9, 2020 Order), which requires that on a monthly basis or until further order of the Commission, all jurisdictional electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater public utilities, excluding resellers and Class C water and wastewater public utilities, shall submit the mandatory COVID-19 State of Emergency Monthly Reporting Form on or before the fifteenth day of the month following the reporting period. The reporting made pursuant to the September 9, 2020 Order is ongoing.

On February 11, 2021, DEP, DEC, and PNG (the Companies) made an informational filing in Docket Nos. M-100, Sub 158, E-2, Sub 1228, E-2, Sub 1258, E-7, Sub 1236, E-7, Sub 1241, and G-9, Sub 767 stating their intent to broaden eligibility for the winter disconnection moratorium, established pursuant to Commission Rules R12-11(l)(6) and R12-10(h)(6), by broadening eligibility to include all Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) beneficiaries. Additionally, the Companies state they will grant eligible customers a 12-month payment arrangement on an opt-out basis for their outstanding balances prior to their April 2021 bill (for DEP and PNG) or their May 2021 bill (for DEC).

On February 23, 2021, the Commission issued an Order Suspending Disconnections and Providing for Extended Special Repayment Plans for Certain Vulnerable Residential Customers and Requiring Door Hanger Notices (February 23, 2021 Order), which is applicable to the Companies as well as Virginia Electric and Power Company, d/b/a Dominion Energy North Carolina (DENC), Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. (PNG), Public Service Company of North Carolina, Inc. (PSNC), Carolina Water Service, Inc. of North Carolina (CWS), and Aqua North Carolina, Inc. (Aqua). Pertinent to this Order, the February 23, 2021 Order states:

That, notwithstanding the waiver granted to DEC and DEP in Docket Nos. E-2, Sub 1214 and E-7, Sub 1210, effective immediately through March 31, 2021, DEC, DEP, DENC, PNG, PSNC, CWS, and Aqua shall place a service disconnect door-hanger at all residences within 24 to

36 hours prior to disconnection, advising residential customers of their options to avoid disconnection.

February 23, 2021 Order at 4.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As the COVID-19 State of Emergency continues, impacts from the State of Emergency and the coronavirus pandemic remain a concern for utility customers and utilities serving the State. The Commission has and will continue to monitor diligently the impacts of the pandemic on customers and on public utilities through the data reported through the COVID-19 State of Emergency Monthly Reporting Forms. As the pandemic persists, North Carolinians continue to fall behind on their utility bills. The July 29, 2020 Order states:

The Commission is concerned that the accumulation of significant unpaid utility charges over a continuing and most-likely extended period of time into the future will put both customers and utilities in financial positions where it may be difficult or in some cases even impossible for customers to repay and utilities to recoup the revenues uncollected during the State of Emergency. The growing unpaid charges could potentially, contrary to the public interest, place continuation of utility service in some areas in jeopardy.

Id. at 6.

These issues continue to concern the Commission. Nonetheless, with the expiration of the winter disconnect moratorium on March 31, 2021, it is more than likely that residential disconnections will increase. Therefore, to prevent as many disconnections as possible, the Commission finds good cause to extend through June 30, 2021, the requirement that DEC, DEP, DENC, PNG, PSNC, CWS, and Aqua place a service disconnect door hanger at all residences within 24 to 36 hours prior to disconnection, advising residential customers of their options to avoid disconnection.

The Commission continues to strongly urge public utilities to be flexible in working with all customers during and after the State of Emergency, particularly those customers most vulnerable to COVID-19-related hardship. The Commission further impresses that all jurisdictional electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater public utilities need to make every possible effort to accept and enable customer use of all federal, state, and nonprofit

assistance programs so as to limit customer disconnections to the greatest extent practicable.

IT IS, THEREFORE, SO ORDERED.

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION.

This the 24th day of March, 2021.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberley A. Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kimberley A. Campbell, Chief Clerk