

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF WEST VIRGINIA
CHARLESTON**

At a session of the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WEST VIRGINIA
in the City of Charleston on the 22nd day of May 2024.

CASE NO 24-0338-G-W-E-CTV-GI

A general investigation into notifications by utilities and cable service
providers regarding utility and cable service outages.

COMMISSION ORDER

The Commission creates a task force to recommend best practices and
universal procedures for notifications by utilities and cable service providers
regarding utility and cable service outages.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

By Order dated April 8, 2024, the Commission opened a general investigation into notifications by utilities and cable service providers regarding utility and cable service outages. The Commission named the following utilities and cable service providers as respondents in the proceeding and required responses from them regarding their notification procedures: Mountaineer Gas Company (Mountaineer), Hope Gas Inc. (Hope), Consumers Gas Utility Company (Consumers), Union Oil & Gas, Inc. (Union), Cardinal Natural Gas Company (Cardinal), West Virginia American Water Company (WVAWC), Beckley Water Company (Beckley Water), Appalachian Power Company and Wheeling Power Company (APCo/WPCo), Monongahela Power/Potomac Edison Power Company (Mon Power/PE), Morgantown Utility Board (MUB), Frontier West Virginia Inc. (Frontier), and Optimum.

The Commission required the respondents to explain how they notify their individual affected customers of service outages; what plans they have, if any, to add, expand, modify, or improve notification systems; describe any technical or physical barriers that exist to providing electronic notifications by email or text message; and describe procedures in place to notify mass communication media of outages.

On April 29, 2024, the Commission received the respondents' responses.

DISCUSSION

The Commission reviewed the responses regarding how the respondents notify their customers of planned and unplanned outages. The Commission learned that each utility and cable service provider has differing practices and procedures for notifying their customers of outages. The respondents use varying methods such as door hangers, telephone calls, e-mails, text messages, website, and/or social media posts to notify customers of outages.

The Commission will create a Utility and Cable Service Notification Task Force to discuss and recommend best practices and universal procedures for notifying customers of utility and cable service outages. The Commission will require Commission Staff to lead the task force and will require the respondents to participate in the Task Force.

FINDING OF FACT

The responses to the Commission's April 8, 2024 Order revealed that utilities and cable service providers have various methods of notifying their customers of planned and unplanned utility and cable service outages that include, but are not limited to door hangers, telephone calls, e-mails, text messages, website, and/or social media posts.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission should establish a Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force to discuss and recommend best practices and universal procedures for notifying customers of planned and unplanned utility and cable service outages.

2. The Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force should meet as soon as possible, but no later than June 14, 2024.

3. The Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force should file a report with its recommendations for best practices and universal procedures within 60 days of the date of this Order.

ORDER

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Commission creates the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force for the purposes as described in this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Legal Division Director appoint one representative to serve as the chair and administrator of the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Mountaineer Gas Company, Hope Gas Inc., Consumers Gas Utility Company, Union Oil & Gas, Inc., Cardinal Natural Gas Company, West Virginia American Water Company, Beckley Water Company, Appalachian Power Company and Wheeling Power Company, Monongahela Power/Potomac Edison Power Company, Morgantown Utility Board, Frontier West Virginia Inc., and Optimum shall participate on the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Consumer Advocate Division and a representative from the Commission's Communications Division attend the Task Force meeting(s).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that those participating on the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force shall file a Notice of Participation that includes the persons representing the Task Force members and their contact information within ten days of the date of this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force shall conduct its initial meeting as soon as possible, but no later than June 14, 2024.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that within one week of the first Task Force meeting the Chairperson of the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force shall file an initial memorandum indicating that the Task Force has met and identify the members of the Task Force.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force shall file jointly recommended best practices and universal procedures no later than sixty days after the date of this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that members of the Task Force may file comments no later than 30 days after the Utility and Cable Service Outage Notification Task Force files its report.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Executive Secretary of the Commission serve a copy of this Order by electronic service on all parties of record who have filed an e-service agreement and by the United States First Class Mail on all parties of record who have not filed an e-service agreement, and on Commission Staff by hand delivery.

A True Copy, Teste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Buckley".

Karen Buckley, Executive Secretary

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