

May 31, 2024

Re: Comments on Draft 3.300 Rule Changes 24-1079-Rule

Dear Mr. Burke:

Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) and Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) support the speedy adoption of these draft rule changes to facilitate remote notice and disconnection processes. We appreciate the effort that has been put into these changes that will help us to keep our field staff safe. Frankly, we will be glad to see this update made as soon as possible, in advance of an avoidable and potentially tragic incident in the field. The draft changes will also help to modernize notice and system processes which will result in cost savings to Co-op members.

We do have a few minor suggestions for your consideration as you move to adopt a final rule.

- 1. Landlord Contact Information. Delete the first sentence of 3.302 (C) (1) (a).** The requirement for utilities to retain provided landlord contact information is covered in the last sentence of that paragraph, and the last sentence is clearer that the landlord is responsible for providing the information.

~~Utilities must retain contact information for property owners of residential rental locations.~~
Property owners must contact the utility to provide their contact information, and it is the property owner's responsibility to contact the utility to maintain up-to-date contact information.
Utilities must retain contact information provided by property owners of residential rental locations.

- 2. Follow up written notice. Delete 3.302 (C) (3).**

The new requirement to mail the property owner a follow-up written notice of disconnection of services within two business days, if they have requested written notice, adds unnecessary cost and workload to the utility that we have no mechanism to recoup. It is our opinion that the landlord will receive adequate notification due to the new same day notification requirement in 3.302 (C)(2). Moreover, it could be confusing due to the time delay for the landlord to receive a mailed notice after the tenant has already re-established service. We recommend that the initial notification to the landlord on the day of disconnection be implemented and if this system is not working well the rule can be updated to add a mailed notification.

- 3. 3.303 Disconnection fees.**

The draft rule specifies that fees may not be charged for remote disconnection. VEC does not support this provision and believes fair fees should be able to be approved in utility tariffs so costs are not shifted to other co-op ratepayers.



4. 3.304 Winter Disconnections. Notification Timeframe and Sequence.

We recommended changing the initial notification timeframe in (A) from 72 hours to 96 hours in advance of any planned disconnection. This will provide opportunity for earlier notice to the member.

(A) The utility must make a reasonable attempt to orally contact the customer within ~~72~~ 96 hours in advance of any planned disconnection. The utility may use alternative forms of communication such as text or email to satisfy the notice requirement. An additional contact (phone call, email, or SMS text message) must be made within 24 hours of a pending remote disconnection. One of these contacts must be made outside of typical business hours—for example, after 5:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m.

(A) (3) is not clear that if we are to remote disconnect, and need to make an additional contact call within 24 hours, that this additional call does not need to be made outside of typical business hours. A call outside of typical business hours would already be required under (A). We recommend that (A)(3) read instead:

.....For any intended remote disconnection, even if previous oral notice has been given, the utility must make an additional contact (phone call, email, or SMS text) within 24 hours of a pending remote disconnection. ~~One of these contacts must be made outside of typical business hours—for example, after 5:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m.~~

The timing sequence in (B) is not entirely clear to us, and might have conflicting direction. We recommend the first part of (B) be changed to read as follows:

If the utility is unable to reach the customer orally or does not receive confirmation of receipt of notice sent electronically via email or SMS text, the utility must make three additional attempts to contact the customer. These three attempts must be at least three hours apart, with one of these attempts ~~One attempt to reach the customer must be made between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Unanswered calls must be allowed to ring for at least 60 seconds. Calls resulting in a busy signal do not count as one of the three required attempts. An additional~~ One of these three contact attempts (phone call, email, or text) must be made within 24 hours of a pending remote disconnection. ~~One of these contacts must be made outside of typical business hours; for example, after 5:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m.....~~

Thank you very much for your consideration.



Andrea Cohen, Government Relations
Vermont Electric Cooperative



Louis Porter, General Manager
Washington Electric Cooperative

