



Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc

P.O. Box 8, 40 Church Street
East Montpelier, Vermont 05651

Telephone: 802-223-5245; Fax 802-223-6780
www.washingtonelectric.coop

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March 1, 2021

Holly Anderson, Clerk
Vermont Public Utility Commission
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2701

RE: Case No. 20-0703-PET: Washington Electric Coop Response to Commission questions
Disconnection Moratorium Order Dated December 22, 2020.

Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) hereby submits a response to the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) order issued on December 22, 2020. The PUC requested utilities file no later than March 1, 2021 information on their customer arrearages and levels of payment agreements.

The PUC directed utilities to file regarding the following items:

a. The magnitude of customer balances that are more than 60 days past due, the number of customers with balances that are more than 60 days past due, and how these data compare with the same time period in 2020.

As of February 28, 2021:

60 days past due – 570 members totaling \$84,099
90 days past due – 360 members totaling \$173,327

Compared to January 2020

60 days past due – 448 members totaling \$57,520
90 days past due – 173 members totaling \$25,590

b. The number of customers with whom the utility has interacted to set up a payment agreement between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021.

WEC is sending letters and emails requesting members call and set up payment arrangements or contact service organizations such as Capstone, Salvation Army, or call 211 that are 90 days past due.

c. The number of payment agreements entered into between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021.

Thus far we have 11 members that have set up special arrangements to pay their bills during this time frame.

d. The number of payment agreements successfully adhered to by the customer between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021.

From the order through February 23, only 3 members have kept their extended/special arrangements.

e. Comments on whether the moratorium should be extended beyond March 31, 2021.

The most important thing members can do that are having difficulty paying their bills is to contact us. We will work with members to help set up payment arrangements and we too want to avoid disconnections. WEC has found that two tools have been successful to help members pay their bills (availability of financial help and disconnection notices).

WEC is sympathetic to those members that have financial difficulty paying their bills. Over the past several months, we actively promoted and made members aware of the state's financial assistance offers from the VCAAP program. WEC supports continuation of the moratorium if financial assistance is available to help those impacted by the pandemic. We find having real and tangible help allows members to make meaningful progress toward either taking action to pay their balances or talking with us about options. Without this assistance, members having financial difficulties due to the pandemic will continue to suffer. In short, if members know financial help is available through WEC, they are more likely to call us and get started. Once they reach out to us, we can make plans and help.

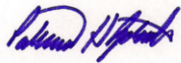
WEC had 237 members make use of VCAAP funding for a total of \$214,491. Of these 237 members, two were commercial members (\$4,445) and 235 were residential members (\$210,046). VCAAP funds are a significant help, and it will lessen the financial impacts on members and WEC from those that are unable to pay their bills. Had these funds not been available, WEC's balance of 60 and 90 day late payments would be far greater.

Without the state's VCAAP program or comparable financial help, use of the disconnection notice does assist WEC to encourage members to pay their bills. Having the ability to send disconnection notices motivates some members to take action even if it is a blunt tool. Therefore, we support discontinuation of the moratorium effective April 1 if no new financial help materializes to replace the VCAAP program. WEC will work with members to make payment arrangement and we will commit to longer than one year payment timeframes and hold off on disconnects for anyone that has set up a payment

plan. We want to encourage an approach for longer term payments and set members up for success to pay off bills. To help members get started the potential of disconnections can help. Therefore, WEC supports discontinuing the moratorium April 1, 2021 if no financial help to replace the VCAAP help occurs. We will work with members to avoid disconnections and extend payment time frames but in the end the threat of disconnections can help members get started.

WEC appreciates the opportunity to respond and for your consideration in this matter. If you need additional information do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Patricia H. Richards
General Manger, Washington Electric Coop