

# District of Columbia Municipal Regulations

## Chapter: 15-3 CONSUMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Title: 15 PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CABLE TELEVISION

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## **300 PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY**

- 300.1 Technological changes, new federal and District of Columbia laws, and the actions of the Public Service Commission have created competitive natural gas, electricity and telecommunications service markets in the District of Columbia providing residential consumers with new choices. Consumers have access to an array of competitive Service Provider services as well as continued access to the regulated services of Utilities. The purpose of this chapter is to set forth residential consumer rights, responsibilities and rules for the initiation and acquisition of services, such as, but not limited to Meter reading, Billing, Deposits, Disconnections and Reconnections of service and the resolution of Complaints between residential consumers and a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider.
- 300.2 This chapter applies to those Residential Services regulated by the Public Service Commission (“Commission”) provided by Electric, Natural Gas and Telephone Utilities, and Residential Services provided by Energy Suppliers and Telecommunications Service Providers licensed or certified by the Commission.
- 300.3 No residential Customer shall be discriminated against or penalized by a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider for exercising any right granted by this chapter.
- 300.4 Utilities, Energy Suppliers or Telecommunications Service Providers shall not discriminate against any Customer based wholly or partly on the race, color, creed, national origin, geographic location, sex, or sexual orientation of the Customer or for any arbitrary, capricious, or unfairly discriminatory reason.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10389 (June 1, 1979); Final Rulemaking published at 27 DCR 1834 (April 24, 1981); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **301 LOCATION OF ENERGY SERVICE METERS AND RELATED EQUIPMENT**

### **301.1 Electric Meters and Equipment**

- (a) Electric Meters shall be located outdoors whenever possible unless the relocation of the Meter will result in an unsafe condition.
- (b) When an indoor electric Meter installation is replaced due to modifications in electric service equipment by the Electric Utility, the electric Meter shall be relocated outdoors at no expense to the Customer. If the electric Meter relocation is for the convenience of the Customer, it shall be at the Customer's expense and calculated in accordance with the Electric Utility's approved Tariff for this service. The cost of connecting the Meter to the Customer's electric service panel shall remain with the Customer.
- (c) Customers must grant access to the electric Meter for maintenance or service Disconnection within the provisions of Subsection 310.1. If a Customer refuses to grant access, the utility may relocate the electric Meter to an accessible location and the Customer shall bear the relocation cost.
- (d) The Electric Utility shall provide Customers with a fifteen (15) day notice prior to replacing or relocating electric Meters located on the Customer's premises or property. No such notice is required in emergencies and for routine meter exchanges that result in a momentary interruption of electric service of five (5) minutes or less.
- (e) The notice required by Subsection 301.1(d) shall inform the Customer that the Electric Utility proposes to relocate or replace the electric Meter, the planned new location, and how to contact the Electric Utility to provide supplemental information, such as the building's historic status or any private property line limitations. The notice shall include contact information for the Commission and OPC.
- (f) The Electric Utility shall develop and implement detailed protocols for determining the location of electric Meters, consistent with these rules, and shall inform Customers of these protocols.

### **301.2 Gas Meters and Natural Gas Equipment**

- (a) Gas Meters, Natural Gas Service Regulators, and Natural Gas Equipment shall be located outdoors whenever possible unless the relocation will result in an unsafe condition or as otherwise authorized by Subsection 301.2.

- (b) When new Natural Gas Service Lines are installed, or existing ones are replaced, gas Meters shall be placed outdoors at no expense to the Customer. If the gas Meter relocation is for the convenience of the Customer, it shall be at the Customer's expense and calculated in accordance with the Natural Gas Utility's approved Tariff for this service.
- (c) Customers must grant access to the gas Meter for maintenance or service Disconnection within the provisions of Subsection 310.1. If a Customer refuses to grant access, the utility may relocate the gas Meter to an accessible location and the Customer shall bear the relocation cost.
- (d) The Natural Gas Utility shall provide Customers with a fifteen (15) day notice prior to replacing or relocating Natural Gas Equipment located on the Customer's premise or property. No such notice is required in emergencies.
- (e) The notice required by Subsection 301.2(d) shall inform the Customer of the Natural Gas Equipment that the Natural Gas Utility proposes to replace or relocate, the planned new location, and how to contact the Natural Gas Utility to provide supplemental information, such as the building's historic status or any private property line limitations. The notice shall include contact information for the Commission and OPC.
- (f) The Natural Gas Utility shall determine the location of indoor or outdoor Natural Gas Equipment, subject to the provisions of this Section, all applicable pipeline safety industry practices, federal and District of Columbia laws and regulations, including the Design Guideline for Utility Meters issued by the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board, and any applicable District laws and regulations.
- (g) Where exterior gas Meters, Natural Gas Service Regulators, Shut-Off Valves or other Natural Gas Equipment cannot be installed in front of the Customer's premises, the Natural Gas Utility, after consultation with the Customer, shall employ best efforts to avoid installing Natural Gas Equipment on the principal street façades (of building/dwelling) and to place the Natural Gas Equipment to the rear and secondary façades (side of building/dwelling) of the Customer's premises. If it is necessary and safe to place a gas Meter on a rear or secondary façade (side of building/dwelling) wall, the Natural Gas Utility shall select a location that provides reasonable access to the gas Meter. The Natural Gas Utility shall employ best efforts to preserve the integrity and appearance of the building and its façades.

- (h) When installing gas Meters, Natural Gas Service Regulators, Shut-Off Valves or other Natural Gas Equipment outdoors, the Natural Gas Utility shall:
  - (1) Locate all Shut-Off Valves outdoors in a readily accessible location;
  - (2) Consider the potential damage to the Natural Gas Equipment;
  - (3) Select a location that accommodates access to gas Meter reading, inspection, repairs, testing, and safe changing and operation of the natural gas Shut-Off Valves, and service Disconnections;
  - (4) Consider an outdoor location consistent with the adjoining buildings and Natural Gas Equipment locations;
  - (5) Consider, to the extent feasible and safe, locating the Natural Gas Equipment behind existing landscaping to make it least visible from the street;
  - (6) Consult with Customers prior to conducting outdoor gas Meter relocation or replacement on the potential impact of the building's aesthetics;
  - (7) When safe to do so, install outdoor gas Meters and Natural Gas Service Regulators above ground in a protected location adjacent to the building served, and as close as possible to the point where the Natural Gas Service Line connects to the Natural Gas Main Line;
  - (8) Determine the location of Natural Gas Service Regulators outdoors, when safe to do so. Otherwise, Natural Gas Service Regulators shall be located indoors as near as practicable to the point where the Natural Gas Service Line enters the building and shall be vented to the outside;
  - (9) Avoid placing Natural Gas Equipment in front of windows or other building openings that may directly obstruct emergency fire exits and building entryways; and
  - (10) Place Natural Gas Equipment under exterior stairways only when deemed safe by the Natural Gas Utility and when no other safe location is available.
  
- (i) At the Customer's request and only when deemed safe to do so, the Natural Gas Utility may locate the gas Meter and associated gas piping up to five (5) feet in length from the Natural Gas Utility's preferred

installation location at no cost to the Customer. If a Customer requests an installation location that is safe to complete but is further than five (5) feet in length from the Natural Gas Utility's preferred installation location, then the Customer shall be responsible for the costs associated with the additional piping beyond five (5) feet from the Natural Gas Utility's preferred location to the location selected by the Customer. The cost shall be calculated in accordance with the Commission-approved Tariff for this service.

- (j) The placement of gas Meters indoors shall be considered only when one or more of these circumstances are present:
  - (1) The Natural Gas Service Line pressure is less than ten (10) pounds per square inch gauge;
  - (2) The gas Meter could not be installed safely on the private property surrounding the building and would have to be placed in an area that would violate traffic laws or interfere with the public right-of-way;
  - (3) A Natural Gas Utility determines that a gas Meter and associated Natural Gas equipment is subject to a high risk of damage based on the Natural Gas Utility's prior experience; and
  - (4) Protection from ambient temperatures is necessary to avoid gas Meter freeze-ups, flooding or icing, or other extreme weather conditions that could impact the safe and accurate operation of the gas Meter.
  
- (k) If gas Meters are placed indoors, the Natural Gas Utility shall ensure:
  - (1) Indoor gas Meters shall be supported in such a manner as to be as free as possible from damage that will render them unsafe or inaccurate;
  - (2) Gas Meters are located in a ventilated place not less than three (3) feet away from a source of ignition or source of heat which may damage the gas Meter; and
  - (3) The Customer is informed in writing of any safety measures that the Customer needs to adhere to, including but not limited to, ventilation requirements and proximity of ignition source or heat to the gas Meter and Natural Gas Equipment.
  
- (l) All gas Meters, Natural Gas Service Regulators, Shut-Off Valves, and Natural Gas Equipment installed indoors at multi-family buildings, commercial buildings, or multiple connected residential dwellings shall be

inspected by the Natural Gas Utility at intervals not exceeding twenty-seven (27) months, but at least once every two (2) calendar years, beginning July 1, 2020.

- (m) The Natural Gas Utility shall develop and implement detailed protocols for determining the location of Natural Gas Equipment, consistent with these rules, and shall inform Customers of these protocols.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10389 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 27 DCR 1834 (April 24, 1981); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 6833 (June 5, 2020); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 12436 (October 23, 2020).

## **302**

## **UTILITY METER READING REQUIREMENTS**

- 302.1 Natural Gas and Electric Utilities, if applicable, shall schedule residential Meters for readings at regular monthly intervals and read within three (3) Business Days of the scheduled date unless the Meter is inaccessible, extreme weather exists, or in the event of other extraordinary conditions.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10389 (June 1, 1979); Final Rulemaking published at 27 DCR 1834 (April 24, 1981); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

### **303 METERS READ BY CUSTOMERS**

- 303.1 Whenever a Meter reader is on the premises and cannot make an actual reading, the Utility shall provide Customers with an electronic or telephonic means to report a Customer Meter reading. The Utility shall furnish a Customer a Meter reading card upon request.
- 303.2 Any Natural Gas or Electric Utility Customer may routinely read his/her own Meter and report the reading to the Utility by the means stated in subsection 303.6, so long as the usage is reported accurately and on the schedule specified by the Utility. A Customer's Bill based on a reading by the Customer is subject to increase or decrease based upon later actual reading by the Utility.
- 303.3 If a Utility determines that actual Meter readings have not been made of the Customer's Meter after two (2) consecutive Billing Cycles, the Utility shall provide the Customer with the means to read and report the meter reading to the Utility, as provided in subsection 303.6. The Customer's Meter reading shall be used for billing purposes, except in the following circumstances:
- (a) There has been an actual reading of the Meter by the Utility;
  - (b) The Meter reading has not been timely forwarded to the Utility; or
  - (c) The Customer's reported reading varies significantly from the Utility's estimate of usage; if this occurs, the Utility is required to make an actual reading within seven (7) Business Days unless the Customer does not allow access.
- 303.4 At a Utility's request, the Customer shall provide access to the Meter in order for the Utility to verify the accuracy of readings reported under this subsection. This subsection shall not prevent a Utility from reading Meters on a regular basis.
- 303.5 If a Utility's estimate is used in lieu of the reading submitted by the Customer, the Utility shall make an actual Meter reading when the Meter is accessible.
- 303.6 The Utility shall provide the Customer with instructions on proper Meter reading, the date the Meter must be read and the date the Customer must report a Meter reading to the Utility. A Customer can report a Meter reading by any of the following methods:
- (a) Telephone or telecommunications device;

- (b) Internet;
- (c) Postage prepaid Meter reading card supplied by the Utility; or
- (d) Such other technological means generally available to the Customer and approved by the Commission.

303.7 Upon a Customer initiating service, and annually thereafter, the Utility shall provide information regarding Customer meter readings, including instructions on how to read the Meter and how to obtain the date on which the Meter should be read and the date by which the Customer Meter reading must be returned to the Utility.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10391 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **304 BILLING AND BILLING ERROR NOTIFICATION**

- 304.1 A Customer shall be provided a Bill at least once during each Billing Cycle, unless otherwise agreed to by the Customer.
- 304.2 An energy Bill shall be based upon an actual Meter reading, estimated Meter reading or Customer Meter reading, except as outlined in subsections 303.3(c) and 304.3.
- 304.3 Each estimated energy Bill shall be clearly and conspicuously identified as such. An estimated energy Bill may be rendered only in the following circumstances:
- (a) When a Meter is not scheduled to be read, and the Customer Meter reading is not timely reported;
  - (b) When a Meter has not been read due to the inaccessibility of the Meter, extreme weather, or other conditions; or
  - (c) When a Customer's reading varies significantly from the estimated usage.
- 304.4 Whenever three (3) or more estimated energy Bills have been rendered in succession, an actual meter reading shall be rendered at the Customer's request at a mutually agreeable time.
- 304.5 The date of rendition of a Bill shall be the date stated on the Bill.
- 304.6 If a billing rendition date is changed by more than seven (7) Days, the Customer shall be provided written or electronic notice within ten (10) Days prior to the date of the change.
- 304.7 Each energy Bill rendered shall state clearly the following information:
- (a) The beginning and ending Meter reading of the Billing Cycle and the difference between the two Meter readings, if such data is available;
  - (b) The beginning and ending dates of the Billing Cycle;
  - (c) The due date by which payment must be made and the date after which the payment will be considered overdue or late;
  - (d) The previous balance, if any;
  - (e) Stated separately, the amount due for residential Utility services, Distribution Service Charge, Transmission service, Purchased Gas Charge, Natural Gas supply service or Generation Service Charge, as applicable;

- (f) A listing of the amount due for other tariffed Charges, as applicable;
- (g) A listing of the amount due for non-tariffed Charges, as applicable;
- (h) The total amount due;
- (i) The rate elements of the generation, transmission and Distribution Service Charges identified for basic Utility service.
- (j) Amount of all payments or other credits made to the Customer's Account during current Billing Cycle;
- (k) Any amount overdue;
- (l) The statement, "Any inquiry or complaint about this bill should be made prior to the due date, in order to avoid late charges";
- (m) The address and telephone number to which an inquiry or Complaint should be directed;
- (n) As applicable, the statement: "[This Utility] is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia."
- (o) The name, address and telephone number of the Public Service Commission;
- (p) Whether the Bill is based upon an actual Meter reading, a Customer Meter reading, or an estimate of usage, if such data is known;
- (q) The name, address and telephone number of The Office of the People's Counsel;
- (r) Any other information that the Public Service Commission may from time to time require;
- (s) If applicable, the energy Utility shall include an itemization of usage, payments made, and account balance; and
- (t) If applicable, the energy Utility shall include either an energy usage history or a gas usage profile.

304.8 Each telecommunications Bill rendered to a residential Customer shall state clearly the following information:

- (a) The telephone number and Account number for which the Bill is rendered.

- (b) The due date;
- (c) The previous balance, if any;
- (d) The beginning and ending dates of the Billing Cycle;
- (e) The total amount due for local service Charges, identified as the total amount due for local Charges, taxes, and other applicable surcharges, as well as toll service, except where provided as part of a Bundled Service;
- (f) An itemization of all authorized Charges for message toll calls, including the date, time, duration, type, place and telephone number called when available, and the applicable Charge, except where provided as part of a Bundle of Services;
- (g) A monthly or semi-annual itemization and amount for optional recurring charges selected by the customer;
- (h) The address and telephone number to which an inquiry or Complaint should be directed;
- (i) A statement indicating that [This Utility] and some of the services contained in the Bill are regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia;
- (j) The name, address and telephone number of the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia;
- (k) The name and address of the Office of the People's Counsel; and
- (l) Any other information that the Public Service Commission may from time to time require.

304.9 An unpaid balance may be transferred from a Customer's former residential Account in the District of Columbia to the Customer's next residential Account in the District of Columbia.

304.10 A Natural Gas or Electric Utility may, at the election of a Customer, bill a Customer in accordance with a level payment billing program or budget payment plan. The Utility shall inform the Customer of this option and explain how the monthly payments will be calculated. Prior to implementation of the plan, the Utility shall provide the Customer with the following information in written or electronic form:

- (a) An acknowledgement that the Customer shall be on the plan effective the next available Billing Cycle;

- (b) An estimate of the Customer's use on an annual basis and an explanation of how the equal monthly payment has been calculated;
- (c) The final Bill for the plan effective period will reflect the last level payment installment or budgeted payment installment adjusted for any difference between actual and budgeted usage. Amounts overpaid will be credited to the Customer's Account or refunded, if requested by the Customer. Amounts underpaid that are equal to or greater than the monthly payment can be paid in up to three (3) monthly installments; and
- (d) Final Bills are issued when either a Customer account is closed or in the case of Customers with third party suppliers, the supply contract is closed or changed. Any budget plan in effect will be reconciled upon rendering of the final Bill. Amounts underpaid will be due within 20 days of final Bill rendering. Amounts overpaid will be refunded to the Customer.

304.11 The Natural Gas or Electric Utility shall perform a periodic analysis of the Customer's plan and notify the Customer, within twenty-one (21) Days thereafter, if actual usage varies significantly from that upon which the plan was based and give the Customer an opportunity for revision of the plan.

304.12 A Utility may require an Applicant for service to pay a previously unpaid Account balance for the same class of service furnished to the Applicant in the District of Columbia.

304.13 In the case of a transfer of a previously unpaid District of Columbia residential Account balance for service rendered in the District of Columbia to a Customer's Account pursuant to this chapter, the Utility and Telecommunications Service Provider shall notify the Customer in writing of the reason for the charge, what the Customer must do to obtain or continue service, and how the Customer can dispute the charge.

304.14 An Energy Supplier may include other Bill components. If an Energy Supplier elects to bill for multiple services, each service shall be clearly identified on the Bill.

304.15 Every Bill rendered by an Energy Supplier for residential natural gas or electric service, whether a separate Bill or a Consolidated Bill, shall include the following Bill components, if such data is available to the Energy Supplier:

- (a) Meter readings, such that, current, prior months and differences between the two may be presented in the same place;

- (b) Meter reading date, which may be presented in a single place on a consolidated Bill;
- (c) Number and kind of units measured;
- (d) Applicable rate schedule;
- (e) Taxes and surcharges, with each appropriate tax and surcharge separately displayed;
- (f) Notice of potential late payment charges;
- (g) Total amount due, provided that for consolidated bills, subtotals for the Company's and the energy supplier's portions of the Bill and a total amount due;
- (h) Payment due date, provided that where Bills are separate, then payment dates may differ;
- (i) For estimated Bills, a distinctive indication where a Bill is based on an estimated Meter reading;
- (j) Business address and telephone numbers for billing inquiries;
- (k) Conversion from Meter reading units to billing units, including computation;
- (l) Service address, shown on first page of Bill;
- (m) Mailing address, shown on first page of Bill;
- (n) The Company account number, shown on each page if multiple pages;
- (o) Customer name and account number, shown on each page if multiple pages;
- (p) Bill payment plans, where applicable;
- (q) Emergency number for Washington Gas or PEPCO, whichever is applicable;
- (r) Required notices, e.g., Customer Bill of Rights, legal notices, which may be included as an insert;
- (s) Next Meter reading date;

- (t) Prior Bill amount and summary of energy supplier and/or Washington Gas or PEPCO charges;
- (u) Disclosure of previous payment activity;
- (v) Meter number/identification;
- (w) Number of days in Billing Cycle;
- (x) Billing Cycle;
- (y) Public Service Commission's address and telephone number;
- (z) Address to which payments are to be sent;
- (aa) How the check should be made payable;
- (bb) Collection messages;
- (cc) Bill step computations;
- (dd) Date of Bill issuance; and
- (ee) The Office of the People's Counsel's address and phone number.

304.16

When a billing error has occurred, the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or the Energy Suppliers shall:

- (a) Notify the Commission and the Office of the People's Counsel when a billing error has affected one hundred (100) or more customers or when the number of affected customers is equal to or more than two (2) percent of the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier's customer base in the District, whichever is fewer. The Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier with a customer base of fewer than one hundred (100) customers shall report errors when two (2) or more customers are affected.
- (b) Submit an initial billing error notification within five (5) business days of discovering or being notified of the error. After submitting the initial notification, the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier must submit a follow-up written report within fourteen (14) calendar days and a final written report within sixty (60) calendar days.
- (c) Send the initial billing error notification via e-mail to the Commission's Office of Compliance & Enforcement and the Office of the People's Counsel, and subsequently file the notice required by Subsection

304.16(b) with the Commission and provide a copy to the Office of the People's Counsel.

304.17 The initial billing error notification shall contain the following information:

- (a) Type(s) of billing error(s) found;
- (b) Date and time the billing error(s) was discovered;
- (c) How the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier discovered the error(s); and
- (d) Approximate number of customers affected.

304.18 The Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier shall file a follow-up written report with the Commission, with a copy provided to the Office of the People's Counsel, within fourteen (14) calendar days of the initial report. The follow-up written report, shall contain the following information:

- (a) Type(s) of billing error(s);
- (b) Date and time of the billing error(s);
- (c) Number of customers affected;
- (d) Cause of the error and status of any and all corrective action(s) taken; and
- (e) Timeline for completing any and all other required corrective action(s) which must include the provision of refunds and/or credits, to be received by the customer, no later than 60 days after the billing error(s) was discovered, as necessary to correct the billing error(s).

304.19 The Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier shall file a final written report with the Commission and provide a copy to the Office of the People's Counsel. The final written report shall contain the following information:

- (a) Type(s) of billing error(s);
- (b) Date and time of billing error(s);
- (c) Number of customers affected, and the dollar amount involved;
- (d) Duration of the billing error(s);

- (e) Cause of the error, corrective action(s) and preventative measure(s) taken; and
- (f) Lessons learned, if any.

304.20 Upon receipt of the final written report, the Commission shall determine whether any further investigation is necessary.

304.21 No later than sixty (60) days after the date the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier discovers or is notified of the billing error(s), consistent with the requirements of Subsection 304.16, it shall notify each affected customer of the following:

- (a) The nature of the error;
- (b) The amount by which the customer's previous bill(s) was inaccurate;
- (c) If appropriate, the steps the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier will take to ensure that the customer receives a full refund if overbilled, or when customers will be required to make payment if underbilled, no later than sixty (60) days; and
- (d) The Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier shall by letter, bill insert, or any other means by which the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier and the customer have agreed to communicate, summarily describe to customers the nature of the billing error and the corrective action that the company intends to implement. If a refund or outstanding balance appears on a customer's billing statement, the Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier shall provide a clear description and explanation of the reason(s) for the error in the letter, bill insert, or other means by which the customer has agreed to receive communication.

304.22 Any Electric Utility, Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier that violates this section may be subject to Sanctions as determined by the Commission consistent with D.C. Official Code §§ 34-706 *et seq.*

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10391 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 4551 (April 24, 2020).

## **305 PAYMENTS**

- 305.1 Payments shall be due within twenty (20) Days after the date the Bill is rendered. If the due date falls on a non-business Day, the due date shall be the next Business Day.
- 305.2 The date of payment shall be considered as the Day the payment is received at the offices of the Utility, Energy Supplier, Telecommunications Service Provider or an authorized agent. The Customer shall provide an accurate account number for prompt payment posting. Payments received without sufficient information to identify the Customer's account will be credited when the Utility is able to identify the account. Payments submitted electronically, by phone or computer, must be received within the Utility's established computer processing times for same day posting.
- 305.3 No late payment charge shall be levied on any amounts, including deferred payment installments, paid by the due date, or on amounts in dispute before the Commission. Utilities may levy a late payment charge on amounts that are not paid by the due date. Such late payment charges shall be established by tariffs in accordance with the procedure required by the Commission.
- 305.4 Customer payments shall be applied in the following order: first to the applicable Utility for arrears for Commission regulated Charges, oldest item first; next to arrears for non-regulated Charges (i.e., Energy Supplier Charges for gas supply or electricity); next to the Utility for current Commission-regulated Charges; finally, to current non-regulated Charges.
- 305.5 For Energy or Telecommunications services, subsections 305.1 through 305.4 shall not apply when the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer agree to different payment terms.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10393 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## 306

## DEFERRED PAYMENT AGREEMENTS

- 306.1 The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer may enter into a Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA). The Utility shall include the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider past due balances as part of its DPA. No Charges, other than those accrued as of the date of settlement, and no interest shall be charged as part of the Deferred Payment Agreement.
- 306.2 Every DPA negotiated and agreed to between the Customer and the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be provided to the Customer in writing within ten (10) Business Days and shall include the following information:
- (a) The date of the DPA;
  - (b) The amount overdue and the payment terms of the DPA, including down payment amount and installment terms;
  - (c) The process that the Utility, Energy or Telecommunications Service Provider will follow, including a notice of Disconnection, to enforce the terms of the DPA;
  - (d) A Customer's failure to make a scheduled payment under the DPA when due is a default and places the Account in delinquent status as of the date of default. Late payment Charges shall apply to any default of a DPA and may cause the DPA to become void; and
  - (e) The DPA shall state that all subsequent Bills must be paid on or before the due date. Failure to pay all such subsequent Bills as stated will cause the DPA to become void. In such cases, normal collection activities, up to and including Disconnection may resume.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10397 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## 307 DEPOSITS

- 307.1 A Utility shall not require a Deposit or guarantee from a person who has never been a Customer of the Utility.
- 307.2 A Utility shall not require a Deposit as a condition of new or continued Utility service on the basis of income level, home ownership, residence location, race, color, creed, sex, age, or national origin.
- 307.3 A utility shall not require a Deposit as a condition of new service to a person who has been a Customer of a utility before, except under the following circumstances:
- (a) The service of the Customer has been disconnected for nonpayment of a past due balance not in dispute within the previous twelve (12) months; or
  - (b) The Customer has in an unauthorized manner, used, diverted or interfered with the service of the utility situated or delivered on or about the Customer's premises within the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the Customer's request for new service; provided, that the following requirements are met:
    - (1) The Customer's service was last disconnected for this reason within the last five (5) years and that the Utility had so notified the Customer in writing, either by U.S. mail or electronically, to this effect; or
    - (2) The Customer either did not file a Complaint with the Commission regarding the Disconnection; or, if a Complaint was filed, final administrative action was taken thereon unfavorable to the Customer.
  - (c) The Customer's Account has been delinquent in excess of sixty (60) Days within the previous twelve (12) months.
  - (d) The Customer has an outstanding balance due the utility for utility services. In any such event, the provision of new service may be conditioned upon payment of the outstanding balance.
- 307.4 When a Deposit is required as a condition of new service to a former Customer, the Customer shall be notified in writing of the reason therefore and the amount of Deposit required.
- 307.5 A Utility shall not require a Deposit as a condition of continued service to a Customer, except under the following circumstances:

- (a) Utility service at the Customer's residence has been used, interfered with, or diverted in an unauthorized manner within the previous twelve (12) months; or
- (b) The Customer's Account has been delinquent in excess of sixty (60) days within the previous twelve (12) months.

307.6 When a Deposit is required of a Customer with service connected, the Customer shall be notified in writing of the reason therefore, the amount of Deposit required, the date due (not less than fourteen (14) days from the date of the first written notice), and that it may be paid in installments.

307.7 No Deposit for Utility service shall exceed the lesser of \$100 or 2/12<sup>th</sup> the estimated annual Bill; provided however, that any company or entity that is subject to or becomes subject to an order of the Commission that is contrary to this provision shall comply with the Commission's order for the duration of the order and any extension thereof. The Utility shall notify the Customer in writing of the reason for the Deposit, the amount, date by which it must be paid, the fact that it may be paid in installments, and the payment options for the Deposit. If the Deposit requirement is thirty-five dollars (\$35.00) or more, the Deposit may be paid in a minimum of three equal monthly installments with the first installment due prior to reconnection.

307.8 Each Utility shall be liable for interest on Deposits held from the date the Deposit is made until the date the Deposit has been refunded, or until an effort has been made to refund the Deposit. Each Utility shall pay simple interest on deposits with the rate being established not later than January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, equal to the average annual yields of one-year Treasury bills for September, October, and November of the preceding year.

307.9 The Deposit with accrued interest shall be credited to any final Bill and any remaining balance shall be returned to the Customer.

307.10 A Deposit and accrued interest shall be refunded promptly or credited to the Customer's account by the Utility upon payment by the Customer of all proper Charges for Utility service for twelve (12) consecutive months.

307.11 A Utility shall maintain a record of all Deposits, showing the customer's name and address or other identifying data, the amount of the Deposit, the date it was paid, and the interest earned and paid thereon.

307.12 Each Customer posting a Deposit shall receive confirmation containing, at a minimum, the following information:

- (a) The Customer's name;
- (b) The date of the payment;
- (c) The amount of payment; and
- (d) A statement of the terms and conditions applicable to Deposits.

307.13 When a customer is entitled to a return of a Deposit it shall be paid upon presentation of proper identification or verification of the account information.

307.14 An Energy Supplier may require a Deposit from any Customer if authorized by its license.

307.15 In lieu of a Deposit a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider may offer to accept a written guarantee of payment from a responsible party. A responsible party shall include any customer of the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider whose account has not been delinquent during the preceding twelve (12) months. A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider is not obligated to accept a written guarantee from a party who is not a Customer. The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall not require a written payment guarantee from any Customer ready, willing and able to make a deposit as authorized by this chapter.

307.16 A guarantee shall be in writing on a form approved by the Commission and shall contain the following provisions unless otherwise agreed to by the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and the guarantor:

- (a) That it is for an initial term of one (1) year;
- (b) That the guarantor agrees to pay the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider within ten (10) days of demanding the balance outstanding in the guaranteed account upon termination of service to the account. The guarantor shall be liable only for amounts accruing to the account of the customer during the term of the guarantee;
- (c) That upon failure of the guarantor to satisfy a written demand within ten (10) days, the Utility Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall include the amount in the guarantor's next monthly billing. In such event, the amount transferred to the guarantor's bill shall be considered to have been incurred in providing service to the guarantor. The guarantor shall

have the same right to challenge an account balance as is enjoyed by the customer. Should the guarantor receive service from another service provider other than the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, that is a party to the guarantee, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider may pursue its right to recover under applicable District of Columbia law. That, notwithstanding the terms of such guarantee, the guarantee agreement shall terminate upon satisfactory payment by the Customer of all proper charges for services for a period of twelve (12) consecutive months. Payment is deemed satisfactory if the Customer's service is not terminated involuntarily, or if the Customer's account has not been delinquent for an excess of sixty (60) days within the previous twelve (12) months. The Utility Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider may withhold the release of the guarantor pending the resolution of any dispute regarding the Customer's account or amounts transferred to the guarantor's account; and

- (d) Prior to the signing of a guarantee agreement, a Utility Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider employee shall explain to the potential guarantor the consequences of the agreement. The employee shall obtain written acknowledgement from the guarantor that the oral explanation took place.

307.17 The deposit and guarantee provisions of this section shall apply only to those cases in which the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider requests a deposit from a Customer.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10398 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 40 DCR 5589 (July 30, 1993); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **308 USE OF CUSTOMER'S INFORMATION**

- 308.1 An Applicant or a Customer need not disclose his or her Social Security number to the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider to obtain or maintain service. Upon requesting a Customer's Social Security number, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall inform the Customer that the provision of this number is voluntary and will not affect the provision of service to that Customer.
- 308.2 A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall not disclose information that reveals the status of the Account of any individual Customer without the Customer's consent or upon dictate of lawful authority. A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider may rely upon written or oral representation of the Commission or the Office of the People's Counsel that consent has been granted.
- 308.3 Unless a Customer consents in writing or through electronic means such as Third-Party Verification, recorded voice or electronic signature, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider may not disclose or use Customer information or the Customer's use of service (types and amounts) except to the Commission and in accordance with the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider's Privacy Policy. The Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall reasonably protect the confidentiality of customer information.
- 308.4 The restrictions in §§ 308.2 and 308.3 above do not apply to lawful disclosures for bill collection, credit rating reports, provision of service, legitimate business activities, to assist Customers who have had, or may have, their service involuntarily disconnected, or as otherwise authorized by law. It shall be the responsibility of the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider to obtain and maintain the written or electronic consent, referred to in Subsections 308.2 and 308.3 above. A Customer's information shall be made available to the Commission upon request.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 34 DCR 3966 (June 19 1987); Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

**309****PRIVACY PROTECTION POLICY**

309.1

Each Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall institute a Privacy Protection Policy to protect against the unauthorized disclosure of Customer information or a Customer's use of service (types and amounts). A copy of that Policy shall be made available once a year, including any updates or changes, through electronic means or a hardcopy to the Customer and to the Commission and posted in a prominent place on each company's website.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

**GROUNDS FOR DISCONNECTION**

310.1 A Utility may disconnect service for any of the following reasons:

- (a) The Customer does not pay;
- (b) The Customer does not enter into a DPA or breaches an applicable DPA;
- (c) Service is being used but no occupant or other person has applied for Customer status at the location;
- (d) There is unauthorized use, diversion or interference with utility service on or about the customer's premises;
- (e) The Customer fails to allow access to the premises to inspect, service, install, replace, read, or remove a Meter or remote recording device or allow access to other equipment, when the Utility has requested access in writing;
- (f) There is an unsafe condition or an adverse effect on the integrity of an energy or telecommunications delivery system or violation of a government statute, regulation or Commission-approved Tariff provision;
- (g) The Utility has reason to believe that there is fraud or that the Customer has misrepresented his or her identity in order to obtain Utility service;
- (h) Application for utility service was made in the name of an individual who is not an occupant of the dwelling unit without disclosure of the individual's actual address and without written authorization by such individual;
- (i) Application for utility service was made in the name of a third party without disclosing that fact or without bona fide authority from the third party;
- (j) Application was made by an individual for the purpose of assisting another occupant of a dwelling unit to avoid payment of that occupant's prior outstanding bill;
- (k) Application was made by an individual who cannot legally enter into or contract for service, such as an un-emancipated minor; or
- (l) Failure to comply with an order of the Commission.

310.2 A Natural Gas or Electric Utility shall not initiate Disconnection of service or disconnect service without the consent of the Customer in the following circumstances:

- (a) The amount overdue stated on the Disconnection notice includes an unpaid amount owed from a different Account, unless the amount was properly transferred to the Customer's Account balance; or an amount owed from Estimated Bills, unless the Utility has attempted reasonable alternatives to obtain a reading of the Meter; or
- (b) Failure of a Customer to pay for merchandise, appliances or nonresidential Utility services.

310.3 Disconnection of natural gas or electric utility service for non-payment of bills, failure to post a cash Security Deposit, or failure to comply with the terms of a DPA where natural gas or electricity is used as the primary source of heating or cooling the residence is prohibited:

- (a) An Electric Utility shall not disconnect residential electric service during the day preceding and the day of a forecast of extreme temperature, or if the forecast of extreme temperature precedes a holiday or weekend day, or on any day during a holiday or weekend, when the National Weather Service (NWS) forecast for the District of Columbia is ninety-five (95°) degrees Fahrenheit or above or thirty-two (32°) degrees Fahrenheit or below during any time of a day as based on the NWS actual temperature forecasts and NWS wind chill factor and heat index temperature forecasts; or
- (b) A Natural Gas Utility shall not disconnect residential gas service during the day preceding and the day of a forecast of extreme temperature, or if the forecast of extreme temperature precedes a holiday or weekend day, or on any day during a holiday or weekend, when the NWS forecast for the District of Columbia is thirty-two (32°) degrees Fahrenheit or below during any time of a day as based on the NWS actual temperature forecasts and NWS wind chill factor.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10405 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 66 DCR 16242 (December 13, 2019).

**311****PROCEDURES FOR UTILITY DISCONNECTION**

- 311.1 A Utility shall postpone the Disconnection of service for a reasonable time not to exceed twenty-one (21) Days if the Utility is provided with a physician's certificate or notice from a public health official which states that Disconnection would be detrimental to the health and safety of a bona fide occupant of the premises; provided that the Customer enters into a DPA. The postponement may be extended for one (1) additional period of not more than twenty-one (21) Days by renewal of the certificate or notice.
- 311.2 A Utility shall not disconnect service when a dispute involving the Account in question has been filed with the Office of Consumer Services and the dispute is still pending at the Public Service Commission, provided, that payments are made for amounts not in dispute.
- 311.3 A Utility shall not disconnect Residential Service unless a Disconnection notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least fifteen (15) Days prior to the date of proposed Disconnection. The Utility providing telecommunications services shall not suspend Residential Service unless a suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least ten (10) Days prior to the date of proposed suspension. Any notice required to be sent to a Customer prior to Disconnection or suspension of service may be sent along with the Bill for service; however, the notice of Disconnection or suspension of service must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in bold print. Upon request of the Customer, a duplicate copy of the notice shall be sent by either first class mail or Internet or other technological means to a designated third party. The third party assumes no obligation for the Customer's Account.
- 311.4 Nothing in this section shall preclude a Utility from taking immediate action necessary to correct any condition which threatens the health or safety of the Customer, the public or the integrity of the Utility's distribution system or action taken in cooperation with civil or law enforcement authorities. However, where that corrective action is taken, the Utility shall not thereupon discontinue service to any Customer whom it believes to be responsible for creation of that condition until it has complied with the notice provisions of this section. The notice and reconnection required by this rule shall not be required in the event that service has been disconnected for theft of services, unauthorized use, diversion or interference with utility service on or about the Customer's premises.
- 311.5 The disconnection notice shall state the following information:

- (a) The Customer's name, address and Account number;
- (b) The address where service is to be discontinued, if different;
- (c) The Charges for reconnection of service, if any;
- (d) A statement of the total amount due, if applicable;
- (e) The reason for the proposed Disconnection of service;
- (f) The earliest date on which service will be disconnected in the absence of payment or adjustment;
- (g) The telephone number and address of the Utility, and an invitation to contact the Utility to resolve the matter;
- (h) The Customer's right to delay Disconnection of service for medical reasons;
- (i) The possibility of deferred payments; and
- (j) The right to file a complaint with the Public Service Commission, and the availability of legal representation and assistance by the Office of the People's Counsel and the address and telephone number of the Office of the People's Counsel.

311.6 Utility service shall not be disconnected and shall be restored if Disconnected where a Customer has established or is reinstated to a DPA for utility charges that are the basis of the notice of Disconnection and the Customer has not defaulted on such DPA.

311.7 A Utility shall not disconnect service for the period after 5:00 p.m. Thursday and before 8:00 a.m. Monday, and it may not disconnect on a legal holiday, or on a Day that the Utility is closed to the public, except as provided in subsections 311.8 and 311.9.

311.8 A Utility may disconnect service on Friday or Saturday if the following applies:

- (a) The Meter is located on the inside of the premises or is otherwise not readily accessible; and
- (b) The Utility has previously and unsuccessfully attempted to gain access to the premise as stated in subsection 310.1(e), on at least two (2) week days.

311.9 Subsections 311.7 and 311.8 shall not apply to service disconnections to abandoned buildings, where the customer has requested disconnection in circumstances of unsafe conditions or of theft of natural gas or electricity, or to disconnect telephone service where there is evidence of toll abuse or fraud.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10405 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 33 DCR 443 (January 24, 1986); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

**312 PERSONAL CONTACT BEFORE UTILITY DISCONNECTION**

- 312.1 A Utility shall make, at minimum, two (2) attempts to contact the Customer prior to Disconnection as specified in this section.
- 312.2 At least two (2) Days before the date set for Disconnection of service, a Utility shall make reasonable efforts to contact the Customer, by telephone, in person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection.
- 312.3 Immediately preceding the physical Disconnection of natural gas or electric service, the representative of the Utility designated to perform that function shall make a reasonable effort to identify himself or herself to the Customer or other responsible person then on the premises and announce the purpose of his or her presence; a telephone Utility shall make a second attempt to contact the customer.
- 312.4 If contact has not been made as provided in §312.2 and the Customer or other responsible Person is not on the premises, Disconnection of natural gas or electric service shall not occur. The field service representative shall leave a notice reasonably calculated to be seen by the Person residing in the house in the same manner as the notice required by §314, indicating that service may be disconnected as soon as the next Business Day unless outstanding Bills are paid.
- 312.5 The Utility shall not deliver more than two (2) consecutive notices of Disconnection for past due Bills without attempting contact with the Customer as required by subsections 312.1 and 312.2.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10405 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

### **313 FIELD SERVICE IDENTIFICATION AND PAYMENT PROCEDURES**

- 313.1 The field representative shall produce an identification badge containing the Utility's name and logo, the field representative picture and full name, and, if applicable, the representative shall wear a company uniform bearing the company's name and logo.
- 313.2 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall have a statement of the amount due and inquire whether the Bill has been paid. If evidence is presented which reasonably indicates that the Bill has been paid, that a DPA has been entered into, that the Bill is currently the subject of a pending proceeding before the Commission, or that the Customer has demonstrated a medical emergency consistent with the provisions of this chapter, service shall not be disconnected.
- 313.3 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall be authorized to accept payment. If payment in full of all Charges due and owing is tendered, service shall not be disconnected. Tender of payment by personal check shall be accepted unless the Customer has within the past twelve (12) months paid the Utility with a check not honored by a bank. However, the natural gas or electric field representative shall not accept payment by cash. Where the customer offers full payment of all charges by cash, the natural gas or electric field service representative shall make other payment arrangements with the customer to avoid disconnection.
- 313.4 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall seek authorization from his or her supervisor to accept partial payments or to override his or her orders to disconnect service upon a reasonable explanation by the Customer of the delinquency.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10408 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

## **314 DISCONNECTION OF UTILITY SERVICE**

- 314.1 If the requirement to make an attempt to contact a Customer is satisfied, the Utility may disconnect service to a residential Customer on the date specified in the notice or within a reasonable time thereafter.
- 314.2 When natural gas or electric service is disconnected, the Utility shall leave a notice reasonably calculated to be seen by Persons residing on the premises stating that service has been disconnected and the address and telephone number of the Utility where the Customer may arrange to have service restored. The notice shall also state procedures to be followed where a medical or safety emergency exists on the premises.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10409 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

**315 RECONNECTION OF SERVICE**

315.1 A Utility shall reconnect service within twenty-four (24) hours of cure of the cause for Disconnection.

315.2 The Utility may Charge the Customer for reconnection of service in an amount authorized by the Commission.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10410 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **316            CUSTOMER DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE**

- 316.1            A Customer shall be permitted to discontinue service with a Utility either by telephone, in writing, or in person at the business office of the Utility, provided that the Customer contacts the Utility at least three (3) Business Days before the date discontinuance is desired and grants access to discontinue the service.
- 316.2            The Customer shall be responsible for all electricity and natural gas consumed for three (3) Business Days after contacting the Utility pursuant to section 316.1, unless the Utility obtains an actual meter reading sooner than the third Day.
- 316.3            The Customer shall be responsible for all telephone Charges due for the period service has been rendered.

Source: Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).







## **320**

## **CUSTOMER INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS**

- 320.1 This section applies to Utility companies, Energy Suppliers and Telecommunications Service Providers. A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall, in accordance with this section, establish written procedures that will ensure the prompt, efficient, and thorough receipt, investigation and, where possible, resolution of all Customer inquiries, service requests and Complaints regarding residential Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider services and Charges.
- 320.2 Qualified Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider personnel shall be available and prepared at all times during normal business hours to receive and discuss Customer inquiries, service requests and Complaints. All Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Providers shall make necessary arrangements to ensure that Spanish language-speaking personnel are made available to assist the Spanish speaking public or maintain a toll-free or local telephone number for Customer service inquires from such persons.
- 320.3 Supervisory personnel shall be available during normal business hours to discuss Customer complaints that are not resolved through contact with customer service representatives.
- 320.4 Qualified personnel authorized to enter into a DPA on behalf of the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be available during normal business hours.
- 320.5 Every Utility, or Telecommunications Service Provider that provides distribution services or telecommunications services to a customer shall have qualified personnel available at all times to respond to Customer calls regarding interruption of service due to the existence of emergency conditions. This provision does not apply to any service provider that does not, as a matter of regular business practice, provide for the remediation of emergency conditions.
- 320.6 When a Complaint cannot be resolved between the Customer and his or her Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall inform the Customer of the right to contact the Commission for resolution. The Utility, Energy Supplier, and Telecommunications Service Provider shall also advise the Customer of the availability of OPC to assist in resolving a dispute before the Commission.

- 320.7 In every dispute between a Customer and the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the first attempt at resolution shall be made directly between the parties unless the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider has been notified that the Customer is represented by counsel.
- 320.8 When the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider concludes that there is a mistake in an amount billed, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall adjust the amount due, and shall reflect the adjustment during the next Billing Cycle or as soon as reasonably possible.
- 320.9 A Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider and a Customer may agree upon a DPA to pay any amount due the Utility or service provider. No charges, other than those accrued as of the date of settlement, and no interest shall be charged to the Customer as part of the DPA.
- 320.10 When a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider cannot resolve a dispute with a Customer, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall refer the Customer to the Commission for resolution.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10411 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## 321

## PUBLICATION OF CONSUMER PAMPHLET

- 321.1 Each Utility, Energy Supplier, and Telecommunications Service Provider shall prepare a consumer pamphlet in English and Spanish in layman's terms summarizing the rights and responsibilities of Customers in accordance with the utilities' tariff provisions and the Commission's regulations. Prior to distribution, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunication Service Provider shall provide the Commission and OPC with a copy of the consumer pamphlet. OPC shall submit any comments on the consumer pamphlet to the Commission and to the Utility, Energy Supplier, and Telecommunication Service Provider within ten (10) business days. If the Commission does not reject or otherwise act on the pamphlet within thirty (30) days of its filing, the consumer pamphlet shall be deemed approved.
- 321.2 The pamphlet shall be available at every Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider location open to the general public.
- 321.3 The pamphlet will be provided upon request at no charge to Customers. Each new Customer shall be offered a pamphlet free of charge.
- 321.4 The pamphlet shall cover, if applicable, the following items:
- (a) Billing procedures and estimation standards;
  - (b) Methods for a Customer to verify billing accuracy;
  - (c) Customer's right to have Meter tested free of charge by the utility once every twelve (12) months as well as a referee Meter test pursuant to 15 DCMR §2368 *et seq.*;
  - (d) Customer payment standards and procedures;
  - (e) Security Deposit;
  - (f) Disconnection and reconnection of service;
  - (g) Inquiry, service and complaint procedures;
  - (h) Public Service Commission Consumer Complaint resolution procedures and the availability of assistance and legal representation by the Office of the People's Counsel;
  - (i) The availability of DPA for payment of Bills or Deposits; and
  - (j) Customer access to information required to be made available to them.

- 321.5 The cover of the pamphlet shall indicate conspicuously that the pamphlet is provided in accordance with the rules of the Commission and shall indicate in English and Spanish that a Spanish version is available upon request.
- 321.6 Each Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall have accessible during business hours a Spanish-speaking interpreter or maintain a toll free or local telephone number for Spanish-speaking persons who seek information about the rights and responsibilities of Customers, services, and programs of the service provider.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10412 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

**322****PUBLIC ACCESS TO RULES AND RATES**

- 322.1 Every Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall keep available for free public inspection during normal business hours in every office open to the general public, copies of this chapter, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider's schedule of rates, and its terms and conditions of service.
- 322.2 Every Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall have available translation services during normal business hours for the translation of its Tariff to Spanish at no cost to the Customer.
- 322.3 Suitable signs shall be posted at each office open to the public calling attention to the public that the items are available for inspection. Upon request, the Utility or Service Provider shall provide a copy of this chapter and advise Customers where copies of rate schedules and general service provisions may be obtained.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10413 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **323 OFFICE OF CONSUMER SERVICES**

- 323.1 There is established within the Public Service Commission an Office of Consumer Services.
- 323.2 The Office of Consumer Services shall do the following:
- (a) Answer inquiries regarding residential utility service, the services provided by each Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider and the procedures for resolving disputes;
  - (b) Assist in the informal resolution of Customer complaints and disputes that have not been resolved under the Utility's or Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's own procedures; and
  - (c) Refer to the Commission for formal adjudication any Customer's complaint that cannot be resolved informally.
- 323.3 Any applicant for utility, energy or Telecommunications services, or the Applicant's or Customer's designated representative, as the case may be, may complain to the Commission concerning a Deposit requirement, the service provided, or a Utility or an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider's Bill. Should a party other than the Applicant, Customer of record, or the Office of the People's Counsel file such a Complaint, the Applicant or Customer of record shall file a notarized letter authorizing the designee to act on his or her behalf, and the individual or entity shall file a notice that authorizes it to act on the Applicant's or Customer's behalf.
- 323.4 If a Complaint addresses a matter that has failed to be resolved under the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's procedures, the Office of Consumer Services shall handle the matter as an Informal Complaint for resolution. If the Complaint has not been referred to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider of the service in question, the matter shall be referred to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider for an attempt at direct resolution. In every case of a dispute between a Customer and a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the first attempt at resolution shall be made directly between the parties.
- 323.5 The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall respond to the Informal Complaint or similar Customer related referral to the Office of Consumer Services within fourteen (14) Business Days or within such time as shall be specified by any extension of time

that may be granted by that office. If the Complaint or matter is not resolved within that time, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall refer the matter back to the Office of Consumer Services.

323.6 If the Office of Consumer Services handles a matter informally, the office shall notify the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider by telephone, in writing or other technological means to investigate the matter and attempt through mediation to resolve the matter.

323.7 If the Office of Consumer Services determines that a matter cannot be resolved informally, then within five (5) Business Days, the Office of Consumer Services shall notify the Complainant in writing and invite the Complainant to file a Formal Complaint with the Commission. The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be copied on this notification. The notification shall:

- (a) State that the Complainant has the right to file, at no cost, a Formal Complaint, if he or she so desires;
- (b) State that a Formal Complaint must be filed within fourteen (14) Days of the date of mailing of the notification or the matter shall be dismissed;
- (c) Indicate the availability of assistance and legal representation by the Office of the People's Counsel and the address and telephone number of the Office of the People's Counsel;
- (d) Indicate that the Complainant may be represented by him or herself, by counsel, by the Office of the People's Counsel, or by a third party of the Complainant's choosing; and
- (e) Set forth the Commission's Formal Complaint and hearing procedures.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10415 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **324 FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

- 324.1 A Formal Complaint shall be in writing, signed by the Complainant or legal counsel, and shall state facts necessary to state a claim upon which relief may be granted and the specific relief requested. The Complainant or legal counsel shall submit the Complaint in a format approved by the Office of Consumer Services or consistent with the requirements set forth in Chapter 1 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as applicable. 15 D.C.M.R. § 100 *et seq.* The Office of Consumer Services, or the Customer's designated representative, may assist in completing a Complaint. The Complaint shall be filed with the Office of the Commission Secretary.
- 324.2 If a review of the Complaint by the Office of Consumer Services determines that a complaint should be revised to more clearly or fairly set forth the matter at issue, the complainant shall be so notified and offered assistance by the OPC or the Office of Consumer Services to amend the Complaint.
- 324.3 Within two (2) Business Days of the filing of the Complaint, the Office of the Commission Secretary shall notify and provide the affected Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider a copy of the Complaint in writing by facsimile, U.S. mail or other technological means. Each Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider shall provide the name, address, and telephone number of its designated contact Person or office for delivery of such notification.
- 324.4 A written answer to the Complaint shall be filed with the Commission within fourteen (14) Days from the date of notice, setting forth the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's position with respect to the allegations contained in the Complaint. The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall also serve a copy of its answer on the Customer or Customer's Designated Representative or their legal counsel.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10417 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

## **325                    FORMAL HEARING PROCEDURES**

- 325.1            A formal hearing shall, if appropriate, be scheduled within forty-five (45) Days of the filing of the Complaint answer. Except in special cases, hearings shall be held during business hours of the Commission. The Commission shall designate a hearing officer who has not participated in the investigation of the Complaint to preside over the proceeding.
- 325.2            If the Formal Complaint fails to state all the facts necessary to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, the Hearing Officer may order the Complainant to amend the Complaint or may dismiss the complaint.
- 325.3            If a review of the Formal Complaint by the Hearing Officer determines that the Complainant is solely requesting monetary damages, compensatory or punitive damages, or if the Complaint alleges matters or legal grounds otherwise not within the Commission's jurisdiction, the Hearing Officer shall issue an order dismissing the case with prejudice for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted or for lack of jurisdiction by the Commission.
- 325.4            The Commission shall provide notice of the hearing by first-class mail or other technological means, as authorized by the Commission, to the Customer and the Customer's Designated Representative and to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider. Service shall be made by first-class mail postage prepaid at least fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing date unless the parties agree on a shorter time. The notice shall also state that in the event that the Complainant fails to attend a scheduled hearing without evidence of good cause, the Hearing Officer may dismiss the Complaint with prejudice. The Hearing Officer may reschedule any hearing to a date or time agreed upon by the parties or, upon notice and for good cause shown, at the request of any party.
- 325.5            A party requesting a second continuance will be required to provide good cause for the continuance. If the party is the Complainant and he or she does not provide good cause, as determined by the Hearing Officer, the Complaint may be dismissed, with prejudice. If the party is a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and it fails to provide good cause, the matter may be heard, without continuance. The Hearing Officer may, at his or her discretion, postpone or adjourn a hearing for reasonable cause. If a hearing is continued, adequate notice shall be provided to the parties.
- 325.6            In the event the Complainant fails to attend any scheduled hearing without good cause, the Hearing Officer may dismiss the Complaint with prejudice.
- 325.7            In the event a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider fails to attend a scheduled hearing without good cause, the Hearing Officer may hear evidence and render a decision.

- 325.8 Upon a reasonable request from each other, the parties shall, within the timeframe prescribed in Chapter 1 of Title 15, provide all information they have that is relevant to the matters at issue in the Complaint including relevant documents, Account data, files and the names of witnesses. Nothing herein shall preclude a party from filing a request or motion to compel responses to information requests.
- 325.9 Parties may examine any relevant records of the Commission. However, information deemed to be confidential may be reviewed in a manner that is consistent with the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.
- 325.10 On any evidentiary issue or procedure where Chapter 3 of Title 15 is silent, the Hearing Officer may at his or her discretion utilize Chapter 1 of Title 15 regulations as appropriate.
- 325.11 Parties may represent themselves or be represented by counsel, conservator, legal guardian or someone with power of attorney. If a Complainant proceeds *pro se*, the Hearing Officer may construe the pleadings liberally. If it appears to the hearing officer that a party appearing without an attorney should be represented by an attorney, the Hearing Officer shall suggest that the party secure counsel or contact the Office of the People's Counsel concerning representation and allow a reasonable time to secure such representation.
- 325.12 Parties shall have the right to present evidence, call witnesses, and present written and oral argument.
- 325.13 Witnesses shall testify under oath, and the parties shall have the right to examine and cross-examine all witnesses.
- 325.14 The Hearing Officer may, in his or her discretion, limit any line of questioning, testimony and the time for argument.
- 325.15 Unless otherwise ordered by the Hearing Officer, the Complainant's witnesses shall testify first, followed by the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's witnesses. A reasonable opportunity will be afforded all parties to present rebuttal evidence.
- 325.16 The Hearing Officer may elicit testimony from any witness regarding the issue(s) in dispute.
- 325.17 The Hearing Officer has the obligation, especially when a Complainant is not represented by counsel, to ensure that all material facts are developed to the fullest extent consistent with his or her responsibility to preside impartially throughout the proceeding.
- 325.18 The formal rules of evidence shall not apply, but the Hearing Officer shall exclude irrelevant or unduly repetitious evidence.

325.19 Parties may stipulate to any facts, and such stipulation shall be put into evidence.

325.20 All proceedings shall be recorded or transcribed by a certified court reporter. The transcriptions shall be made available promptly to any party upon request, at the party's expense.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10417 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

**DECISION AND APPEALS**

- 326.1 Within thirty (30) Days after the close of the record, the hearing officer shall issue a written decision which states the issues and makes findings of fact, conclusions of law, and his or her disposition of the matter.
- 326.2 When reviewing the matter for disposition, the hearing officer has available the following remedies:
- (a) Upon a factual finding of a complainant's meritorious claim, the hearing officer may award, as the facts in each individual case may warrant, a refund to Complainant for overpayment to a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider; a credit to Complainant's account with a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider; a reduction in the amount owed on a Bill to a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider; or any other equitable or injunctive relief as permitted by these rules;
  - (b) In no instance may a hearing officer award a Complainant compensatory or punitive damages; and
  - (c) Complaints requesting monetary, compensatory or punitive damages as the sole basis for relief shall be dismissed with prejudice by the Hearing Officer for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted or for lack of jurisdiction by the Commission.
- 326.3 In cases involving billing disputes in which the hearing officer has concluded that all or part of the amount in dispute is owed, the hearing officer may, for good cause stated in the decision, direct that the amount found outstanding be paid in installments.
- 326.4 Copies of the hearing officer's decision shall be served upon the parties either personally, by regular mail or other technological means on the Day the decision is issued, together with instructions on how to appeal the decision to the Commission and indicating the last date the appeal may be filed.
- 326.5 The decision of the hearing officer shall be final if there is no appeal to the Commission within the time specified in this section.
- 326.6 Any party may appeal the hearing officer's decision to the Commission by filing a Petition for Review with the Commission Secretary's Office within ten (10) Days of personal service or service by other technological means or twelve (12) Days of service by mail of the decision.

- 326.7 The appeal shall be signed by the party or his or her designated representative, identifying the decision appealed and specifying the grounds on which the appeal is based.
- 326.8 The appealing party shall serve the opposing party with a copy of the petition for review within one (1) Day of the date of its filing with the Commission. Service may be made personally, by first class mail or other technological means.
- 326.9 The opposing party's response or cross-appeal shall be filed within seven (7) Days of personal service or other technological means and ten (10) Days of service by first class mail.
- 326.10 Within ten (10) Days of the filing of a Petition for Review, the record shall be prepared, certified as complete and forwarded by the Commission Secretary to the Commission.
- 326.11 The Commission shall review the decision and rule on the Petition for Review within thirty (30) Days after the record is prepared, certified as complete and forwarded by the Commission Secretary.
- 326.12 Upon review of the record, and after giving consideration to the matters raised on appeal in the Petition for Review, the Commission shall:
- (a) Adopt the decision of the hearing officer;
  - (b) Issue a Commission decision;
  - (c) Remand the matter to the hearing officer for further proceedings;  
or
  - (d) Take such other action as the Commission may deem appropriate.
- 326.13 If the Commission is unable to render a decision pursuant to 326.12 within thirty (30) Days, then the hearing officer's decision becomes the final decision of the Commission. The decision will become final unless a tolling order is issued by the Commission extending the time for the Commission's decision.
- 326.14 Any party may request reconsideration of a final Commission decision within thirty (30) Days of the issuance of the decision. The filing of such request shall act as a stay upon the execution of the order or decision of the Commission until the Commission takes final action; provided, that upon written consent of the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider such order or decision shall not be stayed unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. The Commission, within thirty (30) Days after the filing of the request for reconsideration, shall issue an order either granting or denying the request. In granting the request, the Commission shall, either with or without hearing,

rescind, modify, or affirm its order or decision. If the Commission is unable to render a decision within thirty (30) Days, and does not issue a tolling order, then the decision of the hearing officer becomes final and is appealable pursuant to § 326.15.

- 326.15 Review of a final Commission decision shall be to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals pursuant to D.C. Code §§ 34-604 and 34-605 (2001). An appeal of any order of the Commission cannot be made unless a request for reconsideration shall have been first made pursuant to section 326.14. Any Person affected by a final order or decision of the Commission may, within sixty (60) Days after final action of the Commission upon request for reconsideration, file with the Clerk of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals a petition of appeal setting forth the reasons for such appeal and the relief sought; at the same time such appellant shall file with the Commission notice in writing of the appeal together with a copy of the petition filed in the Court of Appeals.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 25 DCR 10381, 10411 (June 1, 1979); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 32 DCR 7497 (December 20, 1985); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018).

## **327 CUSTOMER PROTECTION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ENERGY SUPPLIERS**

- 327.1 This section sets forth billing, Deposit, Enrollment, Termination of Contract, supplier switching, advertising and minimum Contract standards that apply to Energy Suppliers, Marketers, Aggregators, and Consolidators licensed to provide competitive electric and gas services by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia. If a Customer has a Complaint about an alleged violation of this section, the Complaint procedures in § 320 of these regulations shall apply.
- 327.2 An Energy Supplier may not engage in a marketing, advertising, Solicitation or trade practice that is unlawful, misleading, or deceptive as set forth in D.C. Code § 28-3904.
- 327.3 An Energy Supplier shall not engage in Cramming.
- 327.4 An Energy Supplier shall not engage in Slamming.
- 327.5 Any prohibition regarding the disclosure of Account status and Customer information should not preclude Energy Suppliers from obtaining or providing Account status and Customer information for acquisition or sale of a book of business as long as the review of such information during a proposed acquisition or sale is subject to confidentiality agreements.
- 327.6 Energy Suppliers must maintain documentation to substantiate any advertisement of energy supply that contains specific environmental claims. Such documentation shall be made available, upon request, through a hard copy or other technological means.
- 327.7 Any Solicitation of energy supply that contains any specific offering to a residential Customer must at a minimum include the following:
- (a) The Energy Supplier's name, address, telephone number, and web site address, if applicable;
  - (b) The Energy Supplier's District of Columbia license number in a clear and conspicuous manner;
  - (c) The price offered for natural gas supply or electricity supply may be either a fixed or variable rate. An explanation of a variable rate should indicate that:
    - (1) A variable rate may be based on market conditions; and

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- (2) A variable rate may result in higher or lower costs over an initial introductory rate;
- (d) A statement that the advertised rate is only for the specified natural gas supply or electricity supply and does not include any additional tax, Utility Distribution Service Charge, or other Utility fee or Charge;
- (e) Any minimum Contract duration necessary to obtain an advertised price;
- (f) A statement of minimum use requirements, if any; and
- (g) If the advertisement offers several services and does not break out individual prices for the services, the following disclaimer must accompany the advertisement: “Disclaimer: This offer includes several services at a single price. You should compare this price to the total of the prices you currently pay for each of the individual services.”

327.8

An electricity supply or natural gas supply Contract with a Customer shall, at a minimum, contain the following material terms and conditions:

- (a) A list and description of the Contract services;
- (b) A statement of minimum use requirements, if any;
- (c) A description of any time of use restrictions, including the time of day or season;
- (d) A price description of each service, including all fixed and variable costs;
- (e) A notice that the Contract does not include Utility Charges;
- (f) A billing procedure description;
- (g) In the case of consolidated billing, a notice that the Customer acknowledges that Customer billing and payment information may be provided to the Energy Supplier;
- (h) A statement of Contract duration, including initial time period and any rollover provision;
- (i) A Deposit requirement, if any, including: the amount of the Deposit; a description of when and under what circumstances the Deposit shall be returned; a description of how the Deposit may be used; and a description of how the Deposit shall be protected;

- (j) A description of any fee or Charge and the circumstances under which a Customer may incur a fee or Charge;
- (k) A statement that the Customer may rescind the Contract within three (3) business days from the start of the Rescission Period;
- (l) A statement that the Energy Supplier may terminate the Contract early including the circumstances under which early cancellation by the Energy Supplier may occur; the manner in which the Energy Supplier shall notify the Customer of the early cancellation of the Contract; the duration of the notice period before early cancellation; remedies available to the Customer if early cancellation occurs;
- (m) A statement that the Customer may terminate the Contract early including the circumstances under which early cancellation by the Customer may occur; the manner in which the Customer shall notify the Energy Supplier of the early cancellation of the Contract; the duration of the notice period before early cancellation; and remedies available to the Energy Supplier if early cancellation occurs; and the amount of any early cancellation fee;
- (n) A statement describing Contract renewal procedures, if any;
- (o) A dispute resolution procedure;
- (p) The Commission's telephone number and website address; and
- (q) The Office of the People's Counsel's telephone number and website address.

327.9 If an Energy Supplier receives a request from a Customer not to receive any Solicitations from that solicitor, the Energy Supplier shall no longer contact the Customer. If an Energy Supplier receives a request from a Customer not to receive a particular type of Solicitation from that solicitor, which includes, but is not limited to, in-person Solicitation, telephone Solicitation, electronic Solicitation or any form of mail or post card by the solicitor, the Energy Supplier shall not use that type of Solicitation with that Customer in the future.

327.10 Nothing in these regulations shall affect the applicability of any Federal or District Telephone Solicitation and consumer protection laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the fines and penalties thereunder for violation of such laws and regulations. Any Energy Supplier soliciting customers by telephone shall comply with all applicable District and federal laws, including the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 (15 USC §§ 6151 *et seq.*) and the Telemarketing Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act of 1994 (15 USC §§ 6101 *et seq.*).

- 327.11 There are three (3) principal ways in which a Customer may enter into a Contract with an Energy Supplier:
- (a) Through a recorded verbal consent via telephone Solicitation;
  - (b) Electronic Contract; or
  - (c) Written Contract.
- 327.12 An Energy Supplier may not use “negative option contracts,” in which Contracts are created if the Customer takes no action. Therefore, an Energy Supplier may not enter into a Contract with a Customer if the Customer simply refrains from action. However, Contract renewals are not negative option contracts.
- 327.13 If a Customer wishes to enter into a Contract with an Energy Supplier, the Energy Supplier may request from the Customer the following information, by telephone, in writing, or Internet or other technological means:
- (a) The customer’s name;
  - (b) Billing address;
  - (c) Service address;
  - (d) Electronic mail address;
  - (e) Telephone number;
  - (f) Utility Account and any other number designated by the utility as necessary to process an enrollment;
  - (g) Employment information; and
  - (h) Usage information.
- 327.14 An Energy Supplier may ask for additional information beyond that specified in Subsection 327.13 only after first informing the Customer of his or her right not to provide such information.
- 327.15 An Energy Supplier shall advise a Customer that he/she has the right to rescind the Contract agreement within the three (3) business day Rescission Period that begins on one of the following dates, as applicable:
- (a) When the Customer signs the Contract;
  - (b) On the date that a positive Third-Party Verification or electronic recording has been made;

- (c) When the Customer transmits the electronic acceptance of the Contract electronically; or
- (d) When the Completed Written Contract is received by U.S. Mail; there is a rebuttable presumption that a Contract correctly addressed to a Customer, with sufficient first-class postage attached, shall be received by the Customer three (3) days after depositing in the U.S. Mail.

327.16

**FOR A TELEPHONE SOLICITATION:** Telephone Solicitations shall be made only between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. If a Customer is solicited to enter into a Contract by telephone, whether the Energy Supplier or its authorized agent first contacts the Customer, or the Customer calls the Energy Supplier or its authorized agent in response to a direct mail Solicitation, the Energy Supplier or its authorized representative shall:

- (a) Begin the conversation by accurately stating the following:
  - (1) His or her name;
  - (2) The name of the business or organization calling;
  - (3) The nature of the call, *i.e.*, a Solicitation;
  - (4) A brief description of the subject-matter being solicited; and
  - (5) An offer to the Customer to hear the full Solicitation;
- (b) Describe the rates, terms, and conditions of the Contract;
- (c) Arrange to have the Customer's intent to contract with the Energy Supplier independently verified. To verify a residential Customer's intent to contract with an Energy Supplier by telephone, an Energy Supplier must utilize either:
  - (1) An Independent Third-Party telephone verification;
  - (2) An automated, computerized system; or
  - (3) An electronic recording of the entire conversation between the Customer and the Energy Supplier which the Energy Supplier shall maintain for three (3) years.

327.17

All verifications performed pursuant to Subsection 327.16 shall be required to ask the Customer the following questions:

- (a) "Are you the Customer of record?";
- (b) "Did you agree to switch your natural gas supply service or electric supply service to [New Supplier]?"; and

- (c) “Is [Customer’s address] your correct address?” or “Is [Customer’s Utility Account number] your correct Utility Account number?”

327.18 Once the Customer’s choice of Energy Supplier is verified by an Independent Third-Party Verifier or an electronic recording is made, the Energy Supplier shall, within five (5) business days from the day the Customer agreed telephonically to Contract with the Energy Supplier, provide to the Customer via U.S. Mail or electronic mail a copy of the Completed Written Contract.

327.19 Once a positive verification has been obtained or an electronic recording has been made, and a written Contract has been sent to the Customer, and after the Rescission Period has expired, the Energy Supplier shall transmit the Enrollment transaction to the Natural Gas or the Electric Utility, whichever is appropriate.

327.20 **FOR AN INTERNET SOLICITATION:** The Energy Supplier may post on its website an electronic version of its Solicitation for the supply of natural gas or electricity. The electronic solicitation shall include:

- (a) An electronic application form for the Customer to enter into a Contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity;
- (b) An electronic version of the actual Contract;
- (c) Instructions on how the Customer may rescind the Contract; and
- (d) A link to the Commission’s website to obtain the applicable rules and regulations governing the relationship between the Customer and the Energy Supplier.

327.21 After the Customer completes the electronic application form and electronically accepts the Contract terms and conditions, the Customer has a three (3) business day Rescission Period from the completed online Contract authorization date to rescind his or her Contract.

327.22 Upon receipt of the Customer’s electronic application and electronic acceptance of the Contract terms and conditions and after the Rescission Period has expired, the Energy Supplier shall transmit the enrollment transaction to the Natural Gas Utility or the Electric Utility, whichever is appropriate.

327.23 **FOR HOME SOLICITATIONS:** Home Solicitations shall be limited to the hours between 9:00 a.m. and sunset. During a home Solicitation, the Energy Supplier or its authorized agent shall:

- (a) Present the Customer with a photo identification card that identifies the name of the person making the solicitation and the name of the Energy Supplier that he or she is representing;
- (b) Begin the conversation by stating the following:

- (1) The name of the business or organization;
  - (2) The nature of the visit, *i.e.*, a Solicitation;
  - (3) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited;
  - (4) Ask the customer if he/she would like to hear the full Solicitation;
- (c) Present the Customer with a complete copy of the written or electronic Contract being offered and obtain the Customer's consent consistent with one of the methods described in Subsection 327.11;
  - (d) Obtain either an Independent Third-Party telephone verification of the Customer's intent or obtain a signed contract that includes a statement in the Contract under the conspicuous Caption "BUYER'S RIGHT TO CANCEL" which states: "If this agreement was solicited at or near your residence, and you do not want the goods or services, you may cancel this agreement by mailing a notice to the seller. The notice must say that you do not want the goods or services and must be mailed before midnight on the third business day after you signed this agreement. This notice must be mailed to: (name and address of seller)"; and
  - (e) Transmit the enrollment transaction to the Natural Gas Utility or the Electric Utility, after the Rescission Period has expired.

327.24 **FOR DIRECT MAIL SOLICITATIONS:** If a Customer is solicited at home through a direct mail Solicitation by an Energy Supplier, the Energy Supplier shall follow the Solicitation and contracting requirements in Subsections 327.7 and 327.8, respectively, and Subsections 327.13 and 327.14 with respect to telephone Solicitation where the customer calls the Energy Supplier or its authorized representative in response to the direct mail Solicitation.

327.25 In the event of a dispute over the existence of a Contract, the Energy Supplier shall bear the burden of proving the Contract's existence.

327.26 When using any of the permitted forms of Solicitation, the Energy Supplier shall provide the Customer with a notification of his or her right to rescind the Contract pursuant to Subsection 327.15.

327.27 Upon completion of the Customer's electronic enrollment request and after the Recession Period has expired, the Energy Supplier shall transmit the enrollment transaction to the Natural Gas Utility or Electric Utility, whichever is appropriate.

327.28 For purposes of these rules, the electronic submission by the Customer of the application to Contract with the Energy Supplier constitutes an "electronic signature" and an executed Contract.

- 327.29 If the Customer submits an electronic application and electronic Contract, the Energy Supplier shall acknowledge the Customer's submission with a Confirmation of receipt of the electronic enrollment within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
- 327.30 It is the responsibility of the Energy Supplier to provide its website address to the Commission. The Natural Gas Utility, Electric Utility, and Energy Suppliers shall prominently display on their websites' homepages links to the Commission's website pages for Customer Retail Choice and Consumer Suppliers' Offers.
- 327.31 For electronic contracting, the Energy Supplier's website shall allow a Customer to print or save a copy of the Contract.
- 327.32 During the electronic enrollment procedure, each web screen shall clearly display a "Cancel" icon enabling the Customer to terminate the Enrollment transaction at any time. In addition, the cancellation feature shall be clearly explained to the Customer at the beginning of the electronic enrollment process.
- 327.33 At the completion of the electronic enrollment process, and at the end of the three (3) business day Rescission Period, the Energy Supplier, at the Customer's request, shall provide a secure website location or a telephone number where the Customer can verify that he or she has been enrolled in the Energy Supplier's program.
- 327.34 All online transactions between Energy Suppliers and Customers shall be encrypted using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) or similar encryption standards to ensure the privacy of Customer's information consistent with Subsection 309.1.
- 327.35 The Electric Utility shall transfer a Customer to a competitive electricity supplier in no later than three (3) business days after receiving the notice of an enrollment transaction from the competitive electricity supplier. The Electric Utility shall transfer a Customer to Standard Offer Service in no later than 3 business days after receiving the Customer's request. The Electric Utility shall accept the last enrollment received from the Energy Supplier at the relevant days' end.
- ...
- 327.38 Energy Suppliers must process all Customer cancellation requests within three (3) business days after receipt of the cancellation request.
- 327.39 The transmittal of an EDI Transaction by the Electric Supplier to the Electric Utility shall not occur until after the three (3) business day Rescission Period.
- 327.40 The transmittal of an enrollment transaction by the Gas Supplier to the Gas Utility shall not occur until after the three (3) business day Rescission Period.

- 327.41 Upon an Energy Supplier's Enrollment of a Customer, the Energy Supplier shall provide to the Customer, within a reasonable period of time the following:
- (a) A statement of enrollment;
  - (b) A description of the agreed-upon billing option and the Company's billing date, if applicable and if different from the Utility's; and
  - (c) Customer service information (including toll-free telephone number, mailing address, and dispute resolution process information).
- 327.42 The Customer shall notify the Energy Supplier, not the Utility, of his or her intent to rescind the Contract within the Rescission Period. If the Customer does request to rescind their Contract within the three (3) business day Rescission Period, the Enrollment shall be considered effective. If the Customer notifies the Energy Supplier of his or her intent to rescind the Contract within the three (3) business day Rescission Period, the Contract is deemed invalid and non-binding.
- 327.43 After the three (3) business day Rescission Period expires and the enrollment is processed by the Utility, the relationship between the Customer and the Energy Supplier shall be governed by the terms and conditions contained in the Contract.
- 327.44 An Energy Supplier shall provide the Customer with written notice of Contract expiration or termination at least thirty-five (35) days before the expiration or termination of the current Contract. The Energy Supplier's written expiration or termination notice shall include the following:
- (a) Final Bill payment instructions;
  - (b) A statement informing the Customer that unless the Customer selects a new Energy Supplier, Termination of Contract shall return the Customer to the Utility; and
  - (c) The Commission's telephone number and website address.
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- 327.45 If an Energy Supplier's Contract provides for voluntary renewal of the Contract or for automatic renewal of the Contract (also known as an "Evergreen Contract"):

- (a) The Energy Supplier shall provide written notice to the Customer of the pending renewal of the Contract at least forty-five (45) days before the renewal is scheduled to occur;
- (b) Written notice of any changes to the material terms and conditions (including, but not limited to, changes to the rate, the billing option or the Billing Cycle), shall be provided with or before the forty-five (45) day written notice. The notification of renewal and of any change in Contract terms shall be highlighted and clearly stated; and
- (c) If the Contract is an Evergreen Contract, the forty-five (45) day written notice shall inform the Customer how to terminate the renewal of the Contract without penalty and advise the Customer that terminating the Evergreen Contract without selecting another Energy Supplier shall return the Customer to Natural Gas Sales Service or Electric Standard Offer Service. The written notice shall also inform the Customer that the Commission has additional information on the energy supply choices available to the Customer. The telephone number and website for the Commission shall be included in the written notice.

327.46

#### ASSIGNMENT OF CONTRACT

- (a) At least thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of any assignment or transfer of an Energy Supplier contract from one District of Columbia licensed Energy Supplier to another, the Energy Suppliers shall jointly provide written notice to the Customers of the Energy Supplier, the Commission, the utility and the Office of the People's Counsel of the assignment or transfer.
  - (1) Notice to Customer. The Energy Suppliers shall jointly send a letter to the Customer informing them of the assignment or transfer. The letter shall include:
    - (A) A description of the transaction in clear and concise language including the effective date of the assignment or transfer; and
    - (B) Customer service Contact information for the assignee;
  - (2) The terms and conditions of the Customer's Contract at the time of assignment shall remain the same for the remainder of the contract term; and
  - (3) The Energy Suppliers shall file a notice with the Commission, with a copy to the Office of the People's Counsel and the utility, of the assignment or transfer of the Customer Contracts and include a copy of the letter sent to Customers;

- (b) Upon request by the Commission, the assignee shall be responsible for providing documents and records related to the assigned Contracts. Records shall be maintained for a period of three years or until the Contracts are expired, whichever is longer; and
- (c) An assignment or transfer of an Energy Supplier Contract from one Energy Supplier to another is not an enrollment or drop.

327.47 An Energy Supplier shall post on its website current and understandable information about its rates, charges and services.

327.48 An Energy Supplier shall not conduct Meter test.

327.49 If an Energy Supplier's charges are based on usage, an Energy Supplier shall rely on the Meter reading (actual, estimated, or customer meter readings) provided to it by the respective Utility, unless the Energy Supplier has installed, owns, and reads metering equipment, consistent with the applicable Utility's tariff.

327.50 An Energy Supplier may, at the election of a Customer, Bill a Customer in accordance with a level payment billing plan. If an Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of a Utility, an Energy Supplier may use the level payment plan as part of the Utility's billing service. The Energy Supplier shall inform the Customer of this option and explain how the monthly payments are calculated. Prior to implementation of the level payment billing plan, the Energy Supplier shall provide the Customer with the following information in writing:

- (a) An acknowledgement that the Customer shall be on the level payment billing plan effective the next billing period;
- (b) An estimate of the Customer's use on an annual basis and an explanation of how the monthly payment has been calculated;
- (c) An indication that the final bill for the level payment billing plan effective period shall reflect the last level payment billing plan installment adjusted for any difference between actual and budgeted usage. Amounts overpaid shall be credited to the Customer's account or refunded, if requested by the Customer. Amounts underpaid that are equal to or greater than the monthly payment may be paid in up to three (3) monthly installments; and
- (d) Final bills are issued when either a Customer account is closed or in the case of a Customer with an Energy Supplier, the supply Contract is closed or changed. Any level payment billing plan in effect shall be reconciled upon rendering the final bill. Amounts underpaid shall be due within twenty (20) days of final bill rendering. Amounts overpaid shall be refunded or credited to the Customer's utility account within twenty (20) days of final bill rendering.

- 327.51 The Energy Supplier may perform a periodic analysis of a Customer's level payment billing plan and notify the Customer, within twenty-one (21) days thereafter, if actual usage varies significantly from that upon which the level payment billing plan was based and give the Customer an opportunity for revision of the level payment billing plan. If an Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of a Utility, the Customer may have an opportunity for revision of the level payment billing plan at the same time as the Utility allows under the Utility's level payment billing plan procedures or at a time designated by the Energy Supplier.
- 327.52 If the Customer enters into a Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) with the Utility pursuant to § 306, and the Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of the Utility, the Utility may include the Energy Supplier's balance as part of its DPA.
- 327.53 Pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 34-1671.11 (d)(1) and § 34-1508 (b)(1), any Energy Supplier that violates this section, either directly or through its authorized agent, may be subject to Sanctions and Penalties including license revocation, upon notice given by the Commission.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 9968 (September 28, 2018); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 66 DCR 16242 (December 13, 2019).

## **328 CUSTOMER PROTECTION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- 328.1 The purpose of the Telecommunications Service Provider Consumer Protection Standards is to establish uniform standards for billing, security deposits, Disconnections and reconnections of service, resolution of complaints, enrollment procedures, advertising, termination of contracts, and switching of service of Telecommunications Service Providers.
- 328.2 This section applies to service provided to residential Customers by Telecommunications Service Providers who have received certification to provide local telecommunications services.
- 328.3 A Telecommunications Service Provider may not engage in a marketing, advertising, Solicitation or trade practice that is unlawful, misleading, or deceptive as set forth in D. C. Code §28-3904.
- 328.4 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not engage in Cramming.
- 328.5 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not engage in Slamming.
- 328.6 Any prohibition regarding the disclosure of Account status and Customer information should not preclude Telecommunications Service Providers from obtaining or providing Account status and Customer information for acquisition or sale of a book of business as long as the review of such information during a proposed acquisition or sale is subject to confidentiality agreements.
- 328.7 Telecommunications Service Providers must follow the Federal Communications Commission rules regarding Customer Proprietary Network Information.
- 328.8 Advertising of Telecommunications Service Providers shall be neither false nor misleading.
- 328.9 Information contained in a Telecommunications Service Provider's advertising must be clear, accurate and supportable. In addition, any advertisement that contains any specific statement, claim, comparison or assertion regarding rates, that could reasonably be construed as an attempt to persuade consumers that the a Telecommunications Service Provider's rate offering is better than the comparable rate offering of the incumbent local exchange carrier's or another Telecommunications Service Provider's offering must include:
- (a) The rate for service offered, including a disclosure that the rate excludes local and federal taxes, fees and charges and that the total Bill will include such charges in addition to Telecommunications service charges. If the rate for service offered is not available because it is part of a bundled package, then the disclosure shall be in accordance with § 328.10(b) *infra*.

- (b) Any taxes, fees and charges, other than for Telecommunications service to be provided, which will automatically be charged to consumers who contract for the advertised service; and
- (c) Any minimum contract duration necessary to obtain an advertised rate.

328.10 Any print Solicitation must contain all material terms and conditions, including, but not limited to, any of the following, if any is a material term or condition:

- (a) Telecommunications Service Provider's name, address, Customer contact, telephone number, and website address (if applicable);
- (b) Itemization of services provided;
- (c) Price of service;
- (d) Description of proposed Contract items;
- (e) Duration of the agreement (including initial time period, rollover provisions with mandatory notice, and early cancellation penalties);
- (f) Notice that there may be a Deposit required, including the amount of the Deposit, return procedures, use of and protection for such Deposits;
- (g) All applicable fees and charges and the circumstances under which the Customers will incur them;
- (h) Notice concerning early termination by the provider and the options open to the Customer if termination occurs; and
- (i) Notice concerning early termination by the Customer and the options open to the Customer if termination occurs.

328.11 If the Telecommunications Service Provider is providing Bundled Service and does not break out the individual rates for services in its Solicitation, a disclaimer must accompany the Solicitation.

328.12 Telephone Solicitations shall be limited to the hours between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. and comply with applicable Federal "Do Not Call" rules. Should a conflict between this section and the Federal rules exist, the Federal rules shall apply.

328.13 The party making the telephone Solicitation must begin the conversation by stating the following:

- (a) The name of the business or organization calling;

- (b) The nature of the call, i.e., a solicitation; and
- (c) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited.

328.14 Home Solicitations shall be limited between the hours of 8 a.m. and sunset. The soliciting party must produce a picture identification badge and begin the conversation by stating or asking the following:

- (a) The name of the business or organization;
- (b) The nature of the visit, i.e., a solicitation;
- (c) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited; and
- (d) If the Customer would like to hear the full Solicitation.

328.15 In any Contract solicited at a Customer's home, the soliciting Telecommunications Service Provider must include a statement under the Conspicuous Caption: "BUYER'S RIGHT TO CANCEL" which states: If this agreement was solicited at or near your residence, and you do not want the goods and services, you may cancel this agreement by mailing a notice to the seller. The notice must say that you do not want the goods or services and must be mailed before midnight on the third Business Day after you signed this agreement. This notice must be mailed to: (name and address of seller). If you cancel, the seller may not keep any of your cash down payment.

328.16 Each Telecommunications Service Provider must comply with all federal "Do Not Call" rules and maintain its own "Do Not Call" List. If a Telecommunications Service Provider receives a request from a Customer not to receive Solicitations from that solicitor, the Customer's name must appear on the list and the Customer shall no longer be contacted by the solicitor.

328.17 Any Telecommunications Service Provider that violates this section is subject to having its certification revoked by the Commission, after due process.

328.18 Nothing in these regulations will affect the applicability of any Federal or District telephone Solicitation and consumer protection law and regulations, including but not limited to, the fines and penalties thereunder for violation of such laws and regulations.

328.19 A Customer may not enter into a new Contract with a Telecommunications Service Provider by refraining from action except when complying with Federal rules governing Customer Proprietary Network Information.

328.20 If a Customer wishes to enter into a Contract with a Telecommunications Service Provider, the Telecommunications Service Provider may request, by telephone, in

writing, or by Internet or other technological means, information including, but not limited to the following:

- (a) The customer's name;
- (b) The customer's billing address;
- (c) The customer's service address;
- (d) The customer's electronic mail address;
- (e) The customer's telephone number;
- (f) The customer's employment information; and
- (g) The name of a third party responsible for the Bill.

328.21 The Telecommunications Service Provider may ask for additional information only after first informing the customer of his or her right not to provide such information.

328.22 If a contract is entered into electronically, the following conditions must be met:

- (a) The Telecommunications Service Provider shall post on its web site an electronic version of the solicitation for the Telecommunications service. The electronic solicitation must include:
  - (1) An electronic application form to enter into a Contract for Telecommunications service,
  - (2) An electronic version of the actual Contract, and
  - (3) An electronic version of any applicable rules and regulations governing the relationship between the customer and the Telecommunications service provider.
- (b) The electronic submission of the application to Contract with the Telecommunications Service Provider shall constitute a valid and binding "electronic signature;"
- (c) The Telecommunications Service Provider must acknowledge the Customer's submission of the application to Contract with a confirmation of receipt of application within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt;
- (d) The Telecommunications Service Provider is not required to furnish a hard copy of the Contract or of any and all applicable rules and regulations if

the same are posted in full and are available for download from the website of the Telecommunications Service Provider;

- (e) The Telecommunications Service Provider's website must be configured to prompt the Customer to print or save the terms and conditions to which the Customer agrees; and
- (f) At the completion of the Enrollment process, the Telecommunications Service Provider's website must display that the Customer has agreed to receive service from the Telecommunications Service Provider.
- (g) All electronic transactions and communications via the Internet between the Customer and the Telecommunications Service Provider shall be protected in such a manner as to ensure privacy of the Customer's information.

328.23 If applicable, a written Contract requires a written signature of the Customer.

328.24 In the event of a dispute over the existence of a Contract, the Telecommunications Service Provider shall bear the burden of proving the Contract's existence.

328.25 Upon initiation of service, the Telecommunications Service Provider shall send, within a reasonable period of time, to the Customer:

- (a) A statement of enrollment;
- (b) A description of the agreed-upon type of service; and
- (c) Customer service information (including a local or toll-free telephone number).

328.26 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall post on the Internet information about its services and rates for Customers that is current and understandable.

328.27 Upon request by the Commission, a Telecommunications Service Provider may be required to provide information regarding a Customer's request for its service. If such information is not provided, that Telecommunications Service Provider may be subject to Sanctions as determined by the Commission.

328.28 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not be obligated to provide service to an applicant who owes the Telecommunications Service Provider money for Telecommunications service provided to a prior account in his or her name, unless:

- (a) The applicant makes full payment for such service provided to any such prior account in his or her name;

- (b) The Telecommunications Service Provider agrees to accept payments under a Deferred Payment Agreement of any amount due for Telecommunications service to a prior Account in the Applicant's name;
- (c) The applicant has pending a billing dispute pursuant to § 320 of these rules with respect to any amounts due for service to a prior account in his or her name and has paid any amounts required to be paid pursuant to those provisions; or
- (d) The Commission directs the Telecommunications Service Provider to provide services to a Customer.

328.29 The Telecommunications Service Provider may request either a Deposit, guarantee or other payment option, but not both, as a condition of service.

328.30 An oral application for service shall be deemed completed when an applicant who meets the requirements of subsection 328.29 provides his or her name, address, and address of prior account or prior telephone number, if any. A Telecommunications service provider may establish non-discriminatory procedures to require an applicant to provide reasonable proof of the applicant's identity.

328.31 An application for service not approved within three (3) Business Days may be deemed denied.

328.32 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall deny an application for service or condition service upon Deposit, guarantee or other payment option without advising the Applicant verbally or in writing within three (3) Business Days of receipt of the application for service of:

- (a) The reason or reasons for the denial, or the requirement for a Deposit, guarantee, or other payment option;
- (b) Precisely what the Applicant must do to qualify for service or satisfy the requirement; and
- (c) His or her right to an investigation and review by the Commission of the denial or request for a Deposit, guarantee, or other payment option. The Telecommunications Service Provider shall advise the Applicant of the appropriate methods available to challenge the action of the Telecommunications Service Provider and the address and telephone number of the Commission and the Office of the People's Counsel.

328.33 A Telecommunications Service Provider may not refuse service to a present or prospective Customer based upon the following grounds:

- (a) Failure of a prior customer to pay for service at the premises to be serviced;
- (b) Failure to pay for a different class of service or to a different entity; or
- (c) Failure to pay directory advertising charges;

However, a Telecommunications Service Provider may refuse to provide services to a present or prospective Customer who has failed to pay an outstanding balance due the company for residential services incurred by the applicant or present Customer unless the applicant or present Customer consents to sign an agreement to pay the outstanding bill for such services or charges.

328.34 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall require any Applicant or existing residential Customer to post a Deposit, guarantee or be subjected to a credit limit or a direct debit payment option as a condition of receiving Telecommunications services unless the existing Customer or Applicant:

- (a) Has an Account that has been delinquent in excess of sixty (60) days within the previous twelve (12) months;
- (b) Has had Telecommunications services terminated for non-payment during the preceding six (6) months or has an outstanding balance on a previous District of Columbia residential Account;
- (c) Does not give a Telecommunications Service Provider with which he or she is applying for service permission to determine the existence of delinquent Charges; or
- (d) Fails to provide reasonable proof of identity.

328.35 If a Telecommunications Service Provider requires a deposit from an existing residential customer or an Applicant for telephone service, it shall permit such customer to pay the Deposit in installments over a period not to exceed six (6) months.

328.36 In any case where Customer Deposits are authorized by this section, the Deposit amount shall not exceed two times the average monthly bill for Telecommunications services for a calendar year in order to secure payment for Telecommunications services actually rendered or for the rental of equipment, instruments and facilities actually supplied.

- 328.37 Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall be liable for interest on Deposits held from the date the Deposit is made until the date the Deposit has been refunded or until an effort has been made to refund the Deposit. Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall pay simple interest on Deposits with the rate being established not later than January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, equal to the average annual yields of one year Treasury bills for September, October, and November of the preceding year.
- 328.38 Each Telecommunications Service Provider holding Customer Deposits shall send a statement to each Customer when the Deposit is applied to an unpaid Bill or Bills which shows the following:
- (a) The amount of the Deposit, together with the interest accrued thereon and the period covered thereby, and
  - (b) The balance of the Bill or Bills remaining to the credit of the Customer.
- 328.39 Upon Disconnection of service, the deposit and any accrued interest shall be credited to any outstanding final Bill and any remaining balance shall be returned to the customer.
- 328.40 A Deposit and accrued interest shall be refunded promptly or applied as a credit to the Customer's account by the Telecommunications Service Provider upon satisfactory payment by the Customer of all proper Charges for Telecommunications service for twelve (12) consecutive months. The Telecommunications Service Provider may withhold return of Deposit funds pending resolution of any dispute.
- 328.41 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall maintain a record of all Deposits, showing the Customer's name and address or other identifying data, the amount of the Deposit, the date it was paid, and the interest earned and paid thereon.
- 328.42 Each customer posting a Deposit shall promptly receive a confirmation containing, at a minimum the following information:
- (a) The Customer's name;
  - (b) The amount of payment; and
  - (c) Statement of the terms and conditions applicable to Deposits.
- 328.43 A Telecommunications Service Provider may suspend or disconnect Telecommunications service, if the Customer:
- (a) Fails to pay the Telecommunications service provider charges due at any time during the preceding six (6) months, provided, however, that

suspension or Disconnection of service for Bills due for service rendered during periods in excess of the six (6) month period is permitted in cases involving billing disputes during the six (6) month period;

- (b) Fails to pay amounts due under a DPA;
- (c) Fails to pay or agree in writing to pay equipment installation charges relating to the initiation service;
- (d) Fails to pay a lawfully required Deposit or provide a guarantee;
- (e) Is in bankruptcy, receivership, has abandon service, or abnormal high usage not covered adequately by a security deposit less than five (5) days notice may be given if necessary to protect the Telecommunications Service Provider's revenues;
- (f) Fails to keep a prior promise to pay bankruptcy, receivership, abandoned service, or abnormal high usage is involved, a Telecommunications service provider may not deny services on the day preceding any day on which it is not prepared to accept payment of the amount due; or
- (g) Fails to comply with municipal regulations or other laws pertaining to Telecommunications service.

328.44

A notice of suspension or Disconnection may either be sent along with the Bill or such notice must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in such bold print as to be conspicuous to a reasonable Person. A notice of suspension or Disconnection shall clearly state or include:

- (a) The earliest date on which suspension or disconnection may occur;
- (b) The reasons for suspension or disconnection and the manner in which suspension or disconnection may be avoided including the total amount required to be paid to avoid suspension or disconnection;
- (c) The address and telephone number of the office of the Telecommunications Service Provider that the Customer may contact in reference to his or her account;
- (d) The availability of the procedures for handling Complaints;
- (e) The availability and a general description of a DPA, which shall be capitalized and in bold print; and
- (f) Additional information consistent with this Chapter.

- 328.45 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not Disconnect Residential Service unless a Disconnection or suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least fifteen (15) Days prior to the date of proposed Disconnection. The Telecommunications Service Provider shall not suspend Residential Service unless a suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least ten (10) Days prior to the date of proposed suspension. Any notice required to be sent to a Customer prior to Disconnection or suspension of service may be sent along with the Bill for service; however, the notice of Disconnection or suspension of service must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in bold print. When the Customer has requested, a duplicate copy of the notice shall be sent by either first class mail or Internet or other technological means to a designated third party. The third party assumes no obligation for the Customer's Account.
- 328.46 A Telecommunications Service Provider may not issue or send a notice of suspension or Disconnection unless at least twenty-five (25) Days have elapsed from the Bill date. When exceptional circumstances exist, a notice may be issued in less than twenty-five (25) Days, but only in accordance with procedures approved by the Commission.
- 328.47 The Telecommunications Service Provider shall make, at minimum, two (2) attempts to contact the Customer by telephone, in writing, in Person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection. At least two (2) Days before the date set for Disconnection of service, a Telecommunications Service Provider shall make reasonable efforts to contact the Customer, by telephone, in person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection.
- 328.48 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not disconnect service for the period after 5:00 p.m. Thursday and before 8:00 a.m. Monday, provided such Day or the following Day is not a public holiday or a Day on which the main business office of the Telecommunications Service Provider is closed for business.
- 328.49 Subsection 328.48 shall not apply to service Disconnection to abandoned buildings, where the Customer has requested Disconnection in circumstances of unsafe conditions, or to Disconnection of Telecommunications services where there is evidence of toll abuse or fraud.
- 328.50 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall suspend or disconnect service on the grounds that a customer's facilities have been abandoned or are being used by unauthorized persons unless such Telecommunications Service Provider shall first determine by such means as are reasonably calculated to determine occupancy, that such facilities have in fact been abandoned or are being used without the authority of the customer of record. The Telecommunications Service Provider

shall send notice to the customer stating the reasons for the suspension or Disconnection, except that the five (5) days notification period shall be waived when mailings are returned by the post office or a new Customer advises that he or she moved into the location.

328.51 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall suspend or disconnect service for non-payment of bills rendered unless:

- (a) It has verified that payment has not been received at any office of the Telecommunications Service Provider or at any office of an authorized collection agent through the end of the notice period required by this chapter; and
- (b) It shall have verified on the day suspension or Disconnection occurs that payment has not been posted to the customer's account as of the opening of business on that day.

328.52 Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall ensure that any payments made in response to a notice of suspension or Disconnection, when the customer brings to the attention of the Telecommunications Service Provider or its collection agents that such a notice has been issued, are:

- (a) Posted to the Customer's account on the day payment is received; or
- (b) Processed in a manner such that suspension or Disconnection will not occur.

328.53 Service shall not be used for any purposes in violation of law or for any use as to which the Customer has not obtained all required governmental approvals, authorizations, licenses, consents, and permits.

328.54 Service shall not be used in any manner that interferes with other Persons in the use of their service, prevents other Persons from using their service, or otherwise impairs the quality of service to other Customers. The Telecommunications Service Provider may require a Customer to immediately shut down its transmission of signals if said transmission is causing interference to others or impairing the service of others.

328.55 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall reconnect service within twenty-four (24) hours of cure of the cause for suspension or Disconnection upon:

- (a) Receipt by the Telecommunications Service Provider of full amount of arrears for which service was suspended or Disconnected or upon the elimination of conditions that warranted suspension or termination of service; or

(b) Agreement by the Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer on a Deferred Payment Agreement and the remittance of a down payment, if required under the plan.

328.56 Whenever circumstances beyond the Telecommunications Service Provider's control prevent reconnection of service within twenty-four (24) hours of any of the events specified in § 328.55, service shall be reconnected by the Telecommunications Service Provider or Utility with ownership or control of the facilities causing the service interruption within four (4) hours after those circumstances cease to exist.

328.57 In the event of a dispute between a Customer and a Telecommunications Service Provider regarding any matter contained in § 328 of these regulations, such dispute shall be resolved pursuant to the provisions of §§ 323, 324, 325 or 326 of these regulations.

Source: Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Notice of Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008).

**398**

**WAIVER**

398.1 The Commission may upon request, or on its own initiative after notice to the parties of its intention do so, waive any provision of this chapter for good cause.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 11091 (September 18, 2020).

**DEFINITIONS**

399.1 When used in this chapter, the following terms and phrases shall have the meaning ascribed:

**Account:** A record capturing information related to the service(s) provided to a Customer or at a premise by a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider or third-party biller on behalf of a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider.

**Aggregator:** A person who acts on behalf of customers to purchase gas or electricity. To “act on behalf of customers” means that a person acts with the express authorization of customers to purchase gas or electricity on those customers’ behalf and receives direct or indirect compensation or benefit in any form from any entity.

**Applicant:** Person who requests natural gas, electric or Telecommunications services at premises to be used as his or her residence or the residence of a third party on whose behalf the Person is requesting service.

**Bill:** A statement from the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider, stating the Charges for the services rendered to the Customer or premises.

**Billing Cycle:** The service period of twenty-six (26) to thirty-five (35) Days.

**Billing Error:** An under charge or over charge that is caused by, but not limited to, any of the following: (1) an incorrect actual meter reading by an Electric Utility or Natural Gas Utility; (2) an incorrect remote meter read; (3) an incorrect meter constant or pressure factor; (4) an incorrect calculation of the applicable rate; (5) a meter switched by an Electric Utility or Natural Gas Utility; (6) an incorrect application of a rate schedule; or (7) another similar act or omission by the utility, or Energy Supplier, in determining the amount of a customer’s bill. An undercharge or overcharge that is caused by a non-registering meter, a meter error, or the use of an estimated meter reading is not a billing error.

**Broker:** A person who acts as an agent or intermediary in the sale and purchase of natural gas or electricity but who does not take title to natural gas or electricity.

**Bundled Service:** Package of multiple services offered at a single price.

**Business Day:** A Day in which normal business is transacted, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal and District of Columbia holidays.

**Charge:** The price of a service or commodity to a Customer or premise.

**Commission:** The Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Complaint:** Any contact by a Customer or his or her Designated Representative with the Commission in which the Customer or Designated Representative registers dissatisfaction with the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider's service.

**Complainant:** A Customer or Customer's Designated Representative who files a Complaint.

**Completed Written Contract:** An agreement between a Customer and an Energy Supplier that specifies the terms, conditions and charges for the provision of electric or natural gas services to the Customer and the agreement is signed or acknowledged through Third Party Verification, an electronic signature, or an electronic recording.

**Consolidator:** any owner of or property manager for multi-family residential, commercial office, industrial, and retail facilities who combines more than one property for the primary purpose of contracting with an Aggregator or energy supplier for gas or electric energy services for those properties and who: (A) does not take title to natural gas or electric energy; (B) does not sell natural gas or electric energy to buildings not owned or managed by such owner or property manager; (C) does not offer aggregation of natural gas or electric energy services to other, unrelated end-users; and (D) arranges for the purchase of natural gas or electric energy services only from duly licensed energy suppliers or Aggregators.

**Consolidated Bill:** an arrangement whereby a Customer receives a single Bill from a Utility.

**Confirmation:** (A) Confirmation of a telephone application for Enrollment of a residential Customer refers to action taken by a competitive Energy Supplier wherein an Independent Third Party Verifier must confirm the residential Customer's decision to switch from an Energy Supplier. (B) Confirmation of an electronic application for Enrollment occurs when the Energy Supplier sends an electronic response to the Customer confirming that the application for Enrollment was intended and received. (C) There is no confirmation process applicable to written applications for Enrollment.

**Contract:** An agreement between a Customer and an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider that specifies the terms, conditions, and Charges for the provision of electric, natural gas or Telecommunications services to the Customer.

**Cramming (for Telecommunications Service Providers):** The practice of causing unauthorized, misleading or deceptive Charges to be placed to a Customer's existing Telecommunications service Account option(s).

**Cramming (for Energy Suppliers):** The practice of adding services or Charges to a Customer's existing retail energy service options absent the express consent of the Customer.

**Customer:** An accountholder or purchaser of electric, natural gas or Telecommunications services for residential use in the District of Columbia, excluding master-metered apartments with four or more units. An Account holder is a person in whose name an account with a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider has been established.

**Day:** A calendar day unless otherwise specified.

**Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA):** An agreement whereby a Customer pays a past due balance on an installment basis.

**Deposit:** Any payment made by a Customer to a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider in order to secure the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider against potential Customer nonpayment or default.

**Designated Representative:** A Person for whom the Customer of record has submitted a notarized letter with the Office of Consumer Services authorizing the representative to act on his or her behalf.

**Disconnection:** An action by a Utility or Telecommunications Service Provider to prevent the delivery of energy or Telecommunications services. For Telecommunications services, this shall also include the suspension of services.

**Distribution Service Charge:** A Charge levied by the Electric or Natural Gas Utility to deliver energy supply to the Customer.

**Drop:** The removal of a Customer from a supplier's service.

**EDI Transaction:** Electronic Data Interchange.

**Electric Utility:** The company that provides electric distribution service and is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Energy Supplier:** An Electricity Supplier or Natural Gas Supplier as defined below:

Electricity Supplier: A person, including an Aggregator, Broker, or Marketer, who generates electricity; sells electricity; or purchases, brokers, arranges or markets electricity for sale to Customers. The term excludes the following:

- (a) Building owners, lessees, or managers who manage the internal distribution system serving such building and who supply electricity solely to the occupants of the building for use by the occupants;
- (b) Any Person who purchases electricity for its own use or for the use of its subsidiaries or affiliates;
- (c) Any apartment building or office building manager who aggregates electric service requirements for his or her building or buildings, and who does not: (1) Take title to electricity; (2) Market electric services to the individually-metered tenants of his or her building; or (3) Engage in the resale of electric services to others;
- (d) Property owners who supply small amounts of power, at cost, as an accommodation to lessors or licensees of the property;
- (e) Consolidators;
- (f) A Community Renewable Energy Facilities (CREFs) as defined in 15 DCMR § 4199.1 and as described in 15 DCMR §§ 4109.1-4109.3 pursuant to the Community Renewable Energy Amendment Act of 2013 (D.C. Law 20-47; D.C. Official Code §§ 34-1518 *et seq.*);
- (g) An Electric Company; and
- (h) Any Person or entity that owns a behind-the-meter generator and sells or supplies the electricity from that generator to a single retail customer or customers behind the same meter located on the same premise.

Natural Gas Supplier: A licensed Person, broker, or marketer, who generates natural gas; sells natural gas; or purchases, brokers, arranges or markets natural gas for sale to customers.

**Enrollment:** The process in which the Natural Gas or Electric Company receives and processes the notification from the energy supplier that a customer has entered into a contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity.

**Estimated Bill:** A Bill for natural gas or electric service which is not based on an actual meter reading by the Utility or Customer.

**Evergreen Contract:** A Contract that is capable of automatic renewal without any action by the Customer.

**Formal Complaint:** A written Complaint filed with the Commission.

**Generation Service Charge:** A Charge levied by the Energy Supplier or Utility for the provision of electricity supply to the Customer.

**Independent Third-Party Verifier:** A Person retained by individual Energy Suppliers to confirm the Customer's decision to enter into a Contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity.

**Informal Complaint:** A Complaint filed by a Customer with the Commission's Office of Consumer Services requesting mediation of a dispute after the Customer has failed to resolve the dispute directly with the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider.

**Marketer:** A person who purchases and takes title to natural gas or electricity as an intermediary for sale to Customers.

**Meter:** Instrument that measures or records the amount of energy service delivered to the customer.

**Natural Gas Equipment:** The term includes gas Meters, Natural Gas Service Regulators, Shut-Off Valves, and any other gas equipment associated with the delivery of gas to the Customer.

**Natural Gas Main Line:** A distribution line that serves as a common source of supply for more than one service line.

**Natural Gas Sales Service:** Services governed under WG's Rate Schedule No. 1., with Sales Service, whereby the Customer receives natural gas supply from the Washington Gas Light Company. Sales Service is also available as a default to Customers who Contract for natural gas with an Energy Supplier but who fail to receive delivery of natural gas under such Contracts and to Customers who do not choose an Energy Supplier.

**Natural Gas Service Line:** A distribution line that transports gas from a common source of supply to an individual Customer, to two adjacent or adjoining residential or small commercial Customers, or to multiple residential or small commercial Customers served through a gas Meter header or manifold. A service line ends at the outlet of the Customer gas Meter or at the connection to a Customer's piping, whichever is further downstream, or at the connection to Customer piping if there is no gas Meter.

**Natural Gas Service Regulator:** The device on a service line that controls the pressure of natural gas delivered from a higher pressure to the pressure provided to the Customer. A service regulator may serve one Customer or multiple Customers through a gas Meter header or manifold.

**Natural Gas Utility:** The company that provides Sales Service and delivery of distribution service and is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Office of Consumer Services:** An office of the Commission designated to perform responsibilities in accordance with this chapter.

**Office of Enforcement and Compliance (“OCE”):** Is an office of the Commission designated to perform responsibilities in accordance with this chapter.

**OPC:** The Office of the People’s Counsel of the District of Columbia.

**Person:** Every individual, corporation, company, association, joint-stock company, firm, partnership, or other entity.

**Purchased Gas Charge (PGC):** The provision in a Natural Gas Utility’s rate schedule which permits the adjustment of the amount of the Bill as the cost of gas varies from a specified base amount per unit.

**Rescission Notice:** Written correspondence issued to the Customer via U.S. Mail notifying the Customer of the right to cancel.

**Rescission Period:** The time period within which a Customer may choose to cancel a Contract for natural gas or electric service with an energy supplier.

**Residential Service:** Natural gas or electric service to a separately metered household, and including natural gas service to not more than three dwelling units served by a single Meter in a multiple-family dwelling, or portion thereof; telephone service to an individual, family or group for non-business purposes.

**Sanctions:** The following Sanctions may be imposed by the Commission:

- (a) **Civil Penalties:** The Commission may impose a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 for each violation. Each Day a violation continues shall be considered a separate violation for purposes of this penalty. The commission shall determine the amount of a civil penalty after considering the following: the number of previous violations of any provisions of Commission law or regulations; the gravity and duration of the current violations; and the good faith efforts of the Licensee or Person charged in attempting to achieve compliance after the Commission provides notice of the violation.

- (b) Customer Refund or Credit: The Commission may order a Licensee to issue a refund or credit to a Customer.
- (c) Cease and Desist Order: The Commission may order the Licensee to cease adding or soliciting additional Customers; cease serving Customers in the District of Columbia; and cease any action found to be in violation of Commission orders, rules or regulations.
- (d) Cancellation of a Contract or part of a Contract between a Customer and a Licensee.
- (e) Suspension of License.
- (f) Revocation of License.

**Service Provider:** An energy supplier or Telecommunications service provider as defined in this section.

**Shut-Off Valve:** A small local valve used to control the flow of natural gas and is installed upstream of the gas Meter.

**Slamming (for Telecommunications Service Providers):** Occurs when a company changes a Customer's Telecommunication's carrier selection without that Customer's knowledge or explicit authorization.

**Slamming (for Energy Suppliers):** The practice of switching, or causing to be switched, a Customer's natural gas or electric supplier Account without the express authorization of the Customer.

**Solicitation:** A communication in any medium that urges a customer to Contract for receipt of specific natural gas, electricity, or Telecommunications services from an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider. Types of Solicitation may include, but are not limited to, telephone Solicitation, radio advertisements, print advertisements, home Solicitations, electronic advertisements (i.e. Internet), newspaper advertisements, and written Solicitations.

**Standard Offer Service:** Service provided by the incumbent electric Utility to 1) Customers who do not choose an electricity supplier; 2) Customers who cannot arrange to purchase electricity from an electricity supplier; and 3) Customers who contract for electricity with an electricity supplier, but who fail to receive delivery of electricity under such Contracts.

**Tariff:** A schedule of rates, terms and conditions governing the provision of Telecommunications or energy service on file with the Public Service Commission.

**Telecommunications Service Provider:** For purposes of this chapter only, any provider of Telecommunications service that was not an incumbent local exchange carrier in the District of Columbia on January 31, 1996.

**Termination of Contract:** Cessation of a Contract for supply with an Energy Supplier or services of a Telecommunications Service Provider between the Service Provider and Customer.”

**Third Party Verification (TPV):** The process of getting consent from a Customer to the below-listed material contract terms that is recorded by an independent person not party to the agreement or may be performed by an automated, computerized system. To be valid, the TPV must occur without the presence of the sales agent, and at the outset must describe how the Customer can cancel the TPV at any time prior to completion. The consent for the Customer must include an acknowledgement: (a) that he or she is voluntarily choosing to enroll with a supplier; (b) of the type of product offered such as variable, fixed, or a combination of both; (c) of the price and duration of the contract; (d) of the amount of an early termination fee if applicable; (e) that the Customer is authorized to make the switch; (f) of the contract renewal procedures; (g) that the Customer may access future pricing information; and (h) that the Customer has received the supplier’s Customer support contact information.

**Utility:** Every street railroad, street railroad corporation, common carrier, gas plant, gas corporation, electric company, telephone corporation, telephone line, telegraph corporation, telegraph line, and pipeline company.

**Utility Consumer Bill of Rights:** Refers to the Commission’s Consumer Bill of Rights, adopted as regulations by the PSC in the 15 DCMR Chapter 3.

SOURCE: Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 10014 (September 26, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 55 DCR 12494 (December 12, 2008); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 65 DCR 13506 (December 14, 2018); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 4551 (April 24, 2020); as amended by Final Rulemaking published at 67 DCR 6833 (June 5, 2020).