

In the Matter of:

**SPIRE MISSOURI INC.'s d/b/a SPIRE REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY, etc.**

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**GR-2021-0108, VOL. V**

*June 22, 2021*

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing via WebEx

June 22, 2021

Volume 5

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In The Matter Of Spire Missouri )  
Inc.'s Request for Authority to )Case No. GR-2021-0108  
Implement a General Rate )  
Increase for Natural Gas Service)  
Provided in the Company's )  
Missouri Service Areas. )

CHARLES HATCHER, Presiding  
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE  
RYAN A. SILVEY, Chairman,  
SCOTT T. RUPP,  
MAIDA J. COLEMAN,  
JASON R. HOLSMAN,  
GLEN KOLKMEYER,  
COMMISSIONERS

REPORTED BY:  
Tracy Taylor, CCR No. 939  
TIGER COURT REPORTING, LLC

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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FOR: Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission

1 JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go on the record.  
2 First, I would like to ask everyone, please mute  
3 themselves unless they are speaking. That will cut  
4 down on the noise level and also prevent audio  
5 feedback.

6 Today is June .22nd, 2021. The Missouri  
7 Public Service Commission has set this time for a  
8 local public hearing in Case Number GR-2021-0108 is  
9 captioned as In the Matter of Spire Missouri Inc.,  
10 Doing Business as Spire's, Request for Authority to  
11 Implement a General Rate Increase for Natural Gas  
12 Service Provided in the Company's Missouri Service  
13 Areas.

14 The Commission has scheduled this local  
15 public hearing to give members of the public a chance  
16 to comment about Spire's application. The Missouri  
17 Public Service Commission regulates the rates charged  
18 by public utility companies in Missouri to ensure that  
19 those rates are just and reasonable.

20 (Off the record to handle technical  
21 issues.)

22 JUDGE HATCHER: The Commission also  
23 regulates the quality of service and safety of the  
24 operations of public utilities.

25 The Commission is made up of five

1 Commissioners. The Commissioners are appointed by the  
2 Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The  
3 Commissioners employ a staff of engineers,  
4 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts and other  
5 specialists in the field of utility regulation.

6 My name is Charles Hatcher. I'm the  
7 Regulatory Law Judge and will preside over this  
8 hearing. With me today are all five Commissioners.  
9 We have with us Chairman Silvey and Commissioners  
10 Rupp, Coleman, Holsman and Kolkmeyer.

11 This is an official hearing of the  
12 Missouri Public Service Commission and the statements  
13 and testimony of witnesses will be recorded by the  
14 court reporter and must be given under oath. Right  
15 now I'd like to pause and ask if any of our  
16 Commissioners would like to say any opening remarks?

17 CHAIRMAN SILVEY: Judge, this is  
18 Commissioner Silvey. I would just thank all of the  
19 members of the public for participating today. This  
20 is an important opportunity for us to hear from you in  
21 this process so thank you for your participation.  
22 Thank you, Judge.

23 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Chairman.  
24 All right. Let's go ahead and move on.  
25 We'll start the hearing by asking counsel to enter

1 their appearance for the record. Let's start with  
2 Spire.

3 MR. APLINGTON: Good evening, Judge  
4 Hatcher and Commissioners. This is Matt Aplington,  
5 representing Spire Missouri, Inc., 700 Market Street,  
6 St. Louis, Missouri 63101.

7 JUDGE HATCHER: And for the Commission  
8 Staff?

9 MR. BERLIN: Thank you, Judge. Let  
10 record show Bob Berlin appearing on behalf of the  
11 Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission  
12 located at 200 Madison Street, Jefferson City,  
13 Missouri 65102.

14 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And for the  
15 Office of the Public Counsel?

16 MR. CLIZER: Good evening, Your Honor.  
17 John Clizer appearing on behalf of the Missouri Office  
18 of the Public Counsel, Governor's Office Building,  
19 Suite 650, 200 Madison Street, PO Box 2230, Jefferson  
20 City, Missouri 65102.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And to save a  
22 little time, I'm going to ask if there are any  
23 representatives of the Intervenors? The Intervenors,  
24 I will just list them quickly, Midwest Energy  
25 Consumers Group, Consumers Council of Missouri,

1 Missouri Industrial Energy Consumers, National Housing  
2 Trust, Renew Missouri, Legal Services of Eastern  
3 Missouri, Missouri School Boards Association, and  
4 Vicinity Energy Kansas City. Are there any  
5 representatives of one of those parties? I am not  
6 hearing any. We'll go ahead and move on.

7           The process that we're going to use  
8 tonight will be to call the names listed on the  
9 sign-up sheet. And that is in the order that they  
10 were signed up. When I call your name, I'll ask that  
11 you go ahead and please unmute and then speak up so  
12 you can move to the front screen.

13           I will place you under oath and then ask  
14 that you state and spell your name for the court  
15 reporter. And then I'll ask that you offer your  
16 comments to the Commissioners. Given the number of  
17 people that are here today, I do see a 63 on our -- or  
18 62 now on our call. Let's all try and limit our  
19 remarks to about five minutes so that everyone has a  
20 chance to testify.

21           And I do want to remind everyone the  
22 Commission has not made any decisions in this case  
23 and, therefore, they cannot answer any questions today  
24 because they have to remain impartial until all of the  
25 evidence is presented.

1           If you do have any questions after the  
2 hearing, you can use the same e-mail address that you  
3 used to sign up for the hearing, which is a  
4 PSCinfo@PSC.MO.gov or for the Office of the Public  
5 Counsel, MOPCO@OPC.MO.gov. And I'll repeat those  
6 again at the end of the hearing.

7           The first name I have on my list is  
8 Roxanne Putney. The last name is P, as in Paul,  
9 u-t-n-e-y. Once again, is there a Roxanne Putney?  
10 Okay. I'll call the names again at the end of the  
11 hearing. And also for everyone on -- on our WebEx  
12 hearing, I will ask for anyone that did not  
13 pre-register, I'll open the hearing up to any comments  
14 after I call those who signed up.

15           The second name I have is Joyce --

16           MR. CLIZER: Judge Hatcher.

17           JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

18           MR. CLIZER: Sorry, this is John Clizer  
19 with the OPC. I just wanted to remind anybody who has  
20 called in that they might be on mute and that they  
21 need to enter \*6 on their phone to unmute themselves.  
22 So if it sounds like, for whatever reason, we cannot  
23 hear you, you might need to hit \*6. I apologize,  
24 Judge. Thank you.

25           JUDGE HATCHER: No apologies, Mr. Clizer.



1 That is twice you have reminded me of the \*6 and I  
2 appreciate the reminder every time.

3           So once more, Joyce Kueser, K-u-e-s-e-r,  
4 or Kueser. And we'll make sure and go slow so  
5 everyone has a chance to unmute. And again, I will  
6 call for any comments for those who did not sign up  
7 right after I finish our list.

8           Our third name is Sharmain Auble. The  
9 last name is A-u-b-l-e.

10           Okay. And the next name I have is  
11 Roxanne Delcau, D-e-l-c-a-u. Roxanne Delcau. And  
12 again, if you're on a telephone and need to unmute,  
13 try \*6.

14           And the last name I have on my sign-up  
15 sheet is Shirley Ferguson.

16           Okay. And before I open it up to any  
17 witnesses here who would like to testify to the  
18 Commissioners who did not pre-sign up, before I do  
19 that, I just want to also let you know if anyone is  
20 having any technical difficulties and they're unable  
21 to unmute, you can submit written comments and I will  
22 give those instructions at the end of the hearing. So  
23 at this time is there any --

24           MS. AUBLE: Yes.

25           JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, go ahead.

1 MS. AUBLE: Yes, this is Sharmain Auble.

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

3 MS. AUBLE: You had called my name.

4 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, ma'am, thank you  
5 very much. Ms. Auble, I'm going to go ahead and swear  
6 you in now.

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, ma'am. If  
9 you'd like to go ahead and give your comments to the  
10 Commissioners.

11 MS. AUBLE: Yes. I just think it's a  
12 very bad time to be raising -- raising our utilities  
13 when we will -- we just had a -- I just had a --  
14 St. Louis County just did like a 15 percent increase  
15 on our taxes on our houses.

16 And -- you know, and I am a widow. Okay?  
17 My husband has been deceased for four years now. And  
18 I live on Social Security disability. And I'm -- the  
19 other thing I get is a pension, which pays my mortgage  
20 and the health insurance -- my secondary health  
21 insurance. I get Medicare as primary and the  
22 secondary is through my husband, SAG-AFTRA, Screen  
23 Actors Guild.

24 And it doubled. Instead of, you know, me  
25 paying 125, which I paid last year a month, I'm paying

1 200 a month this year. The reason for that is there  
2 were no actors or actresses working, you know, during  
3 the pandemic. And the other reason was there were so  
4 many Covid cases that the health insurance had to deal  
5 with, that they had to raise these rates, you know.

6           So that's -- that's my concern and trying  
7 to, you know -- I do know that like I said, I told --  
8 told them earlier I know they have -- do have revenue  
9 coming in because I think it was like a billion dollar  
10 project where my sister lives in Jefferson County in  
11 Paradise Valley.

12           Because they had to actually put stop  
13 lights throughout the neighborhood for you to get in  
14 and out because of there -- there was so many Spire  
15 trucks coming in where these people had only had  
16 electric and they decided they were going to go with  
17 gas also. And these are like between half a million  
18 and million dollar homes, you know, that I'm talking  
19 about, I'm referring to, you know.

20           So that was a very co-- I know they do  
21 have revenue coming in and I don't know why the  
22 smaller person, you know, such as myself has to bear  
23 these type of, you know, new -- you know, new  
24 payments -- you know what I mean -- in the future, you  
25 know? At a time right now when we just had a

1 pandemic.

2           Because the pandemic did affect me, even  
3 though I'm on Social Security Disability just because  
4 of that, you know. I was affected through the health  
5 insurance of my husband's and the taxes going up.

6           JUDGE HATCHER: Right. Thank you very  
7 much for your testimony. And please accept my  
8 condolences on the passing of your husband.

9           MS. AUBLE: Thank you.

10           JUDGE HATCHER: Ms. Auble, did you have  
11 anything else that you'd like to tell the  
12 Commissioners?

13           MS. AUBLE: No, that's it. Just like I  
14 said, I'm on a budget amount. I'm getting by on my  
15 Social Security Disability is what I get by on and  
16 that's it, you know. So I have to budget everything  
17 as far as my all of my utilities and that go, you  
18 know.

19           JUDGE HATCHER: Right. Can you tell me  
20 what area of -- what area you receive gas service in?

21           MS. AUBLE: Yes, St. Louis County. I'm  
22 on Incorporated 63146. I'm in between -- I'm in  
23 between Maryland Heights and Creve Coeur.

24           JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. All right. Are  
25 there any Commissioner questions for Ms. Auble?

1 All right. Thank you, Ms. Auble. You  
2 are excused from our virtual witness stand. You can  
3 please stay on the line for the rest of the hearing.

4 Are there any other witnesses who would  
5 like to offer their comments to the Commissioners?

6 MS. FERGUSON: Shirley Ferguson.

7 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, Ms. Ferguson.

8 MS. FERGUSON: Hello.

9 JUDGE HATCHER: Let me go ahead -- yes,  
10 ma'am. Let me swear you in.

11 (Witness sworn.)

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, ma'am. And  
13 could you please give your comments to the  
14 Commissioners.

15 MS. FERGUSON: Yes, thank you. I would  
16 like to address the potential rate increase. And I  
17 think at this particular time it is not a good idea,  
18 specifically for the senior citizens and the elderly.  
19 Because times for us are stressful enough as it is.

20 And with adjusting to the Covid -- the  
21 new normal of the Covid, everything is going up at  
22 this particular time; housing, food, et cetera. So it  
23 is of my opinion that the program at this particular  
24 time in trying to give the rate increase would just  
25 really do a lot of additional stress for specifically

1 our senior citizens such as myself.

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. I understand.

3 Ms. Ferguson --

4 MS. FERGUSON: And I do --

5 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, go ahead.

6 MS. FERGUSON: Yes. Please go ahead.

7 JUDGE HATCHER: Well, I was just going to  
8 ask if you had anything further that you'd like to  
9 offer?

10 MS. FERGUSON: Well, I do -- well, our  
11 situation that I was just recently in this week is  
12 that I was up for a disconnect of my services on  
13 Spire. And I had to call and make additional payment  
14 and stretch out the other payments that were left over  
15 a three-month period.

16 I have recently gotten out of the  
17 hospital -- for the past three years '19 -- 2019, 2020  
18 and as recently as July 2021 I have been hospitalized.  
19 I have humongous medical bills and bills for monthly  
20 medication. I had called Spire to try to see what  
21 they had to offer. They made me aware of some  
22 programs that you had, which was mentioned in the  
23 previous comments, but at the time it wasn't going to  
24 do me any good.

25 Yes, I applied for them. But it was a

1 ten-day turnaround before I could hear anything back  
2 and I need immediate assistance. So it's put me in a  
3 position where I had to come up with 188 dollars to  
4 keep my service on and try to pay my medical expense,  
5 particularly for medication for this month. And it  
6 really puts me between a rock, if you will, and a hard  
7 place.

8                   Now, I had been told some time ago about  
9 a medical program that you guys had for people who are  
10 experiencing medical issues in terms of payment. I  
11 have not been able to find out any more about it. I  
12 even asked my physician if he was aware of it or his  
13 staff and they were not aware of that program.

14                   And my question to you is, why isn't the  
15 information about that particular program out in the  
16 community more often so those of us who are having  
17 medical emergencies can try to take advantage of  
18 whatever consideration that will be given to us in  
19 situations like this? That's my question.

20                   JUDGE HATCHER: I appreciate your -- your  
21 question, Ms. Ferguson. Unfortunately, that -- the  
22 time for the question and answer period was earlier.  
23 And -- and like I had said, the Commissioners aren't  
24 really allowed to answer questions. They really need  
25 to stay impartial throughout the case.

1                   So what I can do though is you had  
2 registered for the hearing and signed up. With your  
3 permission, I'd like to go ahead and send your  
4 information onto the parties and I would expect that  
5 Spire might be able to reach out to you and have a  
6 further conversation to answer your questions and to  
7 look more into your personal situation. Would that be  
8 acceptable, Ms. Ferguson?

9                   MS. FERGUSON: That is acceptable. And  
10 may I add that I do understand what you just said to  
11 me. And the bottom line to my testimony is that this  
12 is just not a good time for seniors to have to take on  
13 that special rate.

14                   JUDGE HATCHER: Right. Thank you very  
15 much for your testimony.

16                   MR. APLINGTON: Judge Hatcher, this is  
17 Matt from Spire. Could Ms. Ferguson please confirm  
18 for us? Ms. Ferguson, is your zip code 63033?

19                   MS. FERGUSON: That is correct.

20                   MR. APLINGTON: Very good. We have your  
21 account and we will reach out to you.

22                   MS. FERGUSON: I thank you so much.

23                   MR. CLIZER: This is John Clizer of OPC.  
24 May I pose a question to the witness?

25                   MS. FERGUSON: I'm here.



1 JUDGE HATCHER: Mr. Clizer, we haven't  
2 been doing that. Are you also wanting to contact  
3 Ms. Ferguson and maybe take this off-line?

4 MR. CLIZER: No, it's a very short  
5 question.

6 JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. I'll allow it.

7 MR. CLIZER: I apologize for the  
8 inconvenience.

9 Ms. Ferguson, the OPC is very interested  
10 in figuring out ways it can reach out to customers to  
11 get them more information. If you don't mind me  
12 asking, do you have access to internet or do you  
13 regularly check or have you been to Spire's website?

14 MS. FERGUSON: Yes, I do.

15 MR. CLIZER: Thank you. That was my only  
16 question. Thank you, Your Honor.

17 MS. FERGUSON: Thank you.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: Are there any  
19 Commissioners questions for Ms. Ferguson? Okay.  
20 We'll move on.

21 Ms. Ferguson, thank you very much. I  
22 appreciate your being here and your testimony. You  
23 are excused from our virtual witness stand. Please  
24 don't hang up. You can stick around for the rest of  
25 the hearing.

1 Are there any other witnesses --

2 MS. FERGUSON: Thank you.

3 JUDGE HATCHER: Oh, I'm sorry. Thank  
4 you, ma'am.

5 Are there any other witnesses -- I  
6 interrupted you twice. Are there any other witnesses  
7 who would like to testify this evening? And reminder  
8 once again for telephone call-in users, you press star  
9 and then the six, \*6 to unmute.

10 MS. FRIEDERICH: Hello, Your Honor.

11 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. Can you give me  
12 your name, please?

13 MS. FRIEDERICH: Yes. Uh-huh. My name  
14 is Kathy, with a K, Friederich, F-r-i-e-d-e-r-i-c-h.  
15 And I'm in unincorporated St. Louis County.

16 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Let me swear  
17 you in before you give your comments, Ms. Friederich.

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, ma'am. Please  
20 go ahead and give your comments to the Commissioners.

21 MS. FRIEDERICH: Okay. Thank you. I  
22 don't think this is a good time for an increase. The  
23 delivery cost on my bills are much higher than the gas  
24 itself. And also I am wondering if Laclede Gas or  
25 Spire is buying up other companies at this time and

1 charging the customer for that? That would not be  
2 good. Okay?

3 Also if there are any additional legal  
4 fees that they charge to us or overcharging customers  
5 on sales tax or also possibly supporting other aspects  
6 of their business that are tied to their holding  
7 companies or out-of-state operations.

8 And that's basically why I do not think  
9 it's a good idea. I would also encourage possibly an  
10 audit as to the amount of money that they do have,  
11 because I think it's necessary. Thank you.

12 JUDGE HATCHER: All right, thank you  
13 Ms. Friederich. Do we have any questions for  
14 Ms. Friederich from the Commissioners? All right.  
15 Ms. Friederich, thank you. You are excused from our  
16 virtual witness stand --

17 MS. FRIEDERICH: Thank you

18 JUDGE HATCHER: -- please. You're  
19 welcome to stick around for the rest of the hearing.

20 MS. FRIEDERICH: Okay.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Are there any other  
22 witnesses who would like to testify to the Missouri  
23 Public Service Commission tonight?

24 MS. KORB (phonetic): Hello?

25 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. And who is this?

1 MS. KORB: Yes. My name is Anne Korb.  
2 My zip code is 63017, St. Louis County. I would like  
3 to be sure that certain things are considered in the  
4 case.

5 JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. Ms. Korb, let  
6 me --

7 MS. KORB: I'm sorry. Yes.

8 JUDGE HATCHER: Sorry.

9 (Witness sworn.)

10 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, ma'am. Please  
11 go ahead with your comments.

12 MS. KORB: I have several qu-- I know I  
13 can't ask questions here, but points I would like to  
14 make. I reiterate the concern about legal fees,  
15 particularly those that have nothing to do with the  
16 operation of delivering gas to the customers. That  
17 they -- that the courts seriously consider not  
18 allowing those to be charged to the ratepayers.

19 There's another issue that I -- that I  
20 haven't heard discussed so I don't know if it's under  
21 consideration, but since public utilities have been  
22 faced with ransom requests because of their -- their  
23 services being interrupted and discontinued through,  
24 you know, through -- anyway for -- because of  
25 ransom -- other systems being locked up and ransom

1 having to be paid, if it can be -- if the executives  
2 of the company are not providing adequate security and  
3 back-up, I would question whether those types of fees  
4 should ever be charged back to ratepayers as opposed  
5 to -- and shouldn't really be charged to shareholders.

6           So legal fees and charges that really  
7 have to do with not following through with fiduciary  
8 responsibility, if those things can be -- can be  
9 passed on to shareholder part of the business and not  
10 to the ratepayers. I think that needs to be seriously  
11 considered as -- as we look at these rate charges.

12           My other question would be -- or  
13 statement is my -- I don't really have a problem with  
14 the amount that I'm paying for my gas, but I don't --  
15 I do question this. More than 75 percent of my bill  
16 is delivery. And I'm paying sales tax, it appears, on  
17 the entire bill. My question is are we really  
18 supposed to be paying a sales tax on delivery or  
19 should that not be a use tax? And I cannot tell from  
20 my bill exactly how the taxes are being charged.  
21 That's it.

22           JUDGE HATCHER: All right. I appreciate  
23 your comments, Ms. Korb. Let's go ahead and we'll see  
24 if any Commissioners have any questions for Ms. Korb.  
25 Okay. Thank you, ma'am, for your testimony and for

1 being here this evening. You are dismissed from our  
2 virtual witness stand, but as I said before, please  
3 feel free to stick around for the rest of the hearing.

4 Are there any other witnesses who would  
5 like to testify this evening? And again, if you're on  
6 a telephone, it is star un-- and six to unmute.

7 Okay. Then that will bring our hearing  
8 for tonight to a close. I'll ask our Commissioners if  
9 any of them would like to offer closing remarks? All  
10 right. I would like to thank all of our participants  
11 today for their testimony and for all of the people  
12 who were on the call just to listen in. We did have a  
13 large number of people attending this evening.

14 And again, if you do have additional  
15 comments or someone who cannot be present, would like  
16 to comment or if you had any technology challenges  
17 this evening, you may make written comments by  
18 contacting the same e-mail address that you used to  
19 sign up for this hearing. I believe that was  
20 PSCinfo@PSC.MO.gov. And you can contact the Office of  
21 Public Counsel at MOPCO@OPC.MO.gov. Or you can go to  
22 the Public Service Commission's web page, and that is  
23 simply PSC.MO.gov. Make sure and use the case number  
24 for any comments, and that is GR-2021-0108.

25 Thank you all. We are adjourned. Let's

1 go off the record.

2 (Whereupon, the local public hearing was  
3 adjourned.)

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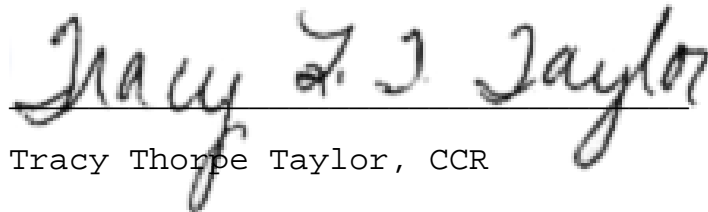
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Tracy Thorpe Taylor, CCR No. 939, within the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the testimony appearing in the foregoing matter was duly sworn by me; that the testimony of said witnesses was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this matter was taken, and further, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

  
Tracy Thorpe Taylor, CCR



<b>1</b>	<b>access</b> 16:12	<b>Areas</b> 3:13	<b>C</b>
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