

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

In the Matter of the Application of The Empire)
District Gas Company d/b/a Liberty for an Order)
Granting a Variance from 20 CSR 4240-) Case No. GE-2023-0196
10.030(19) to Revise its Meter Testing Plan)

RESPONSE TO STAFF RECOMMENDATION

COMES NOW The Empire District Gas Company d/b/a Liberty (“EDG” or the “Company”), by and through its undersigned counsel, and for its Response to the Staff Recommendation, respectfully states as follows to the Missouri Public Service Commission (“Commission”):

1. On April 26, 2023, the Commission Staff (“Staff”) filed its Staff Recommendation regarding EDG’s Application to Revise its Meter Testing Plan. This document sets out the results of Staff’s analyses and recommendations concerning EDG’s Application.

2. Staff recommends approval of the Application with certain conditions imposed. Staff’s proposed conditions and EDG’s response to each are below.

Staff Condition 1: EDG conduct a 5-year pilot program to gather data concerning the effectiveness of meter sampling for meters of capacity greater than 450 and less than or equal to 2,200 cubic feet.

EDG’s Response: EDG has no objection to this condition. EDG proposes to provide feedback on this pilot program in conjunction with the reporting proposed in Staff Condition 6.

Staff Condition 2: For gas meters in the sample meter testing plan, if a meter location has had neither a turn-on or a meter test performed in the previous 30 years, EDG will send the customer an offer of a courtesy safety inspection as described in Condition 3. To the extent that it is practical to do so, EDG will send these offers early in the non-heating season, so that any resulting courtesy safety inspections can be scheduled during the non-heating season.

EDG's Response: This condition should not be imposed. Currently, EDG performs a safety inspection and leak test during meter replacements in these situations. As such, there would be no purpose served by having EDG *offer* to perform these tasks.

Staff Condition 3: If the customer accepts the offer made under Condition 2, EDG will perform a leakage test of each segment of fuel line under 20 CSR 4240-40.030(12)(S)1.A, and perform a visual inspection and a gas leak check of the accessible fuel line using gas detection equipment under 20 CSR 4240-40.030(12)(S)1.B.

EDG's Response: This condition should not be imposed. With all 30+ meter replacements, EDG currently performs a safety inspection and leakage test in conformity with the referenced rules, without the need for any offer letter to and acceptance from the customer.

Staff Condition 4: EDG will notify the Commission once the processes for customer offers and courtesy safety inspections outlined in Conditions 2 and 3 are developed.

EDG's Response: This condition should not be imposed, as it is unnecessary (see above).

Staff Condition 5: The Commission order EDG to complete a two-year catchup program encompassing all untested meters.

EDG's Response: EDG understands the reasoning behind this Staff recommendation. EDG agrees with the creation of a catchup program and the periodic reporting suggested in Staff Condition 6, but EDG will not be able to comply with the suggested two-year timeframe. With current staffing and supply chain constraints, EDG estimates that ten years would be needed to fully catch up in conjunction with remaining current on its new meter testing plan. EDG, however, proposes to hire or contract additional workers to perform meter testing. Contractors are not able to perform certain aspects of the testing and, as a result, are limited in their ability to reduce the timeline further. EDG estimates that with the additional resources it will deploy it could fully catch up within five years.

EDG will report, as described in Condition 6, any supply chain or other constraints out of the Company's control that could potentially delay the timeline.

Staff Condition 6: EDG files a yearly catch-up program report with the Commission to show their progress in completing scheduled meter inspection.

- a. Number of remaining meters required to be tested to complete catch-up program;
- b. Summary of test results by Group as defined by in the Application appendix C; and
- c. Description of any impacts to annual meter testing target, including but not limited to supply-chain issues, internal constraints, and third-party testing.

EDG's Response: EDG has no objection to this condition. EDG proposes to submit annual reports in this docket by March 1 of each year, providing information on the prior calendar year.

WHEREFORE, The Empire District Gas Company respectfully requests that the Commission consider this response to the Staff Recommendation, waive the 60-day pre-filing notice requirement, and grant EDG's requested variance from 20 CSR 4240-10.030(19) with Staff's recommended conditions 1, 5 (as modified above), and 6.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Diana C. Carter

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that the above document was filed in EFIS on this 5th day of May, 2023, and sent by electronic transmission to the Staff of the Commission and the Office of the Public Counsel.

/s/ Diana C. Carter