

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 23-098

ELECTRIC AND GAS UTILITIES

**2024 Adjustments to the Energy Efficiency Portion of System Benefits Charges
and Local Distribution Adjustment Charges**

**Order *Nisi* Approving Requests to Modify Energy Efficiency Portion of System
Benefits Charges and Local Distribution Adjustment Charges**

O R D E R N O. 26,911

December 11, 2023

In this order *nisi*, the Commission approves tariff change filings reflecting a 4.896 percent increase to the energy efficiency charge (EEC) charged to New Hampshire ratepayers and collected by the electric and natural gas utilities. The average residential electric ratepayer, using 625 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month, will experience an annual increase of approximately \$2.02 in 2024 over the current annual EEC bill of roughly \$41.26. The average residential natural gas ratepayer of Northern Utilities, Inc. and Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty, using 795 therms annually over the summer and winter seasons, will experience an annual bill increase of approximately \$2.02 and \$2.60 in 2024 relative to existing total annual EEC bills of roughly \$41.31 and \$53.03, respectively. The General Court mandated this increase to the EEC. RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2), as amended. Under the law, the increase is calculated by the New Hampshire Department of Energy (DOE).

I. PROPOSED TARIFF CHANGES AND RATE IMPACTS

Pursuant to RSA 374-F, VI-a(d)(2), on December 1, 2023, Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty; the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative,

Inc.¹; Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy; Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.; Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty; and Northern Utilities, Inc. (together, the joint utilities) filed tariff changes related to the EEC, for effect on January 1, 2024.

For electric residential ratepayers, the new EEC rate is 0.577 cents per kWh. For gas residential ratepayers, this would amount to a new EEC rate of 7 cents and 5.45 cents per therm, respectively, for Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty and Northern Utilities, Inc.

The electric distribution utilities' tariff changes reflect uniform increases to their respective EECs²:

| Electric Distribution Utility | Inflation (CPI-W) | Current EEC Rate (cents/kWh) | Proposed EEC Rate (cents/kWh) |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty | 4.896 | 0.550 | 0.577 |
| New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc. | 4.896 | 0.550 | 0.577 |
| Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy | 4.896 | 0.550 | 0.577 |
| Unitil Energy Systems, Inc. | 4.896 | 0.550 | 0.577 |

The natural gas distribution utilities' tariff changes reflect company-specific increases to their respective EECs³:

| Natural Gas Distribution Utility | Customer Class | Inflation (CPI-W) | Current EEC Rate (cents/therm) | Proposed EEC Rate (cents/therm) |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty | Residential | 4.896 | 6.67 | 7.00 |
| | C&I | | 4.44 | 4.66 |
| Northern Utilities, Inc. | Residential | 4.896 | 5.20 | 5.45 |
| | C&I | | 2.57 | 2.70 |

¹ The NHEC is not a rate regulated utility, nevertheless it is subject to the commission's jurisdiction with regard to provisions of RSA ch. 374-F relating to energy efficiency. See RSA 374-F:4, XII.

² Some discrepancy in the inflation-adjusted proposed rates is seen due to fourth decimal place rounding of numbers in the proposed tariffs.

³ Some discrepancy in the inflation-adjusted proposed rates may be seen due to rounding of numbers in the proposed tariffs.

Each utility's respective tariff change request is posted to the Commission's website at: <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2023/23-098.html>.

II. COMMISSION ANALYSIS

RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2), as amended, directed the EEC portion of SBC (electric) and LDAC (gas) rates to adjust annually beginning January 1, 2023 using the CPI-W, which for the current period amounts to an inflation of 4.896 percent. The annual adjustment factor to the EEC must be calculated by the DOE based on the most recently available 3-year average of the consumer price index (CPI-W) as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor. RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2).

N.H. Code Admin. R. PART Puc 1605 applies to tariff changes outside of full rate cases. The Commission construes the joint utilities' filings as Puc PART 1605 filings and does not invoke Puc PART 1604. The Commission's role in approving these tariff changes is therefore limited to ensuring the proposed tariff changes are consistent with RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2) and Puc 1605.03's publication requirements.

The joint utilities have proposed a uniform increase to their respective EECs of 4.896 percent. We therefore condition this order *nisi* on the DOE filing a technical statement verifying that it calculated the inflation adjustment factor of 4.896 percent, and that the inflation adjustment factor it calculated was accurately applied by the joint utilities in their the electric and gas tariff filings, respectively.

We note that Puc 1605.03's publication requirements include publication of the Commission's order of notice in a newspaper of general circulation at least 14 days before the effective date of a new rate. See Puc 1605.03 and 1604.03. The applicable statutory deadlines make these provisions onerous, inapplicable, or both; therefore, the Commission acts of its own motion to waive Puc 1605.03 because we find that waiver serves the public interest and will not disrupt the orderly and efficient

resolution of these matters. See Puc 201.05. In lieu of newspaper publication, the Commission directs the customer notice requirements be met by the publication of tariff pages and this order *nisi* by the joint utilities on their respective websites.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that subject to the effective date below, the joint utilities' tariff filings, increasing the energy efficiency charge collected as a component of the System Benefits Charges and Local Distribution Adjustment Charges pursuant to RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2), for effect January 1, 2024 are **APPROVED**; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the joint utilities post their respective new tariff provisions and a copy of this order *nisi* on their respective websites no later than December 13, 2023, such posting to be documented by affidavit filed with the Commission on or before December 20, 2023; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that a copy of this order *nisi* be posted on the Commission's website within two business days; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the New Hampshire Department of Energy verify, by filing a technical statement with the Commission on or before December 20, 2023, that it calculated an inflation adjustment pursuant to RSA 374-F:3, VI-a(d)(2) and its calculated adjustment was accurately applied by the joint utilities; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this order may submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing which states the reason and basis for a hearing no later than December 26, 2023 for the Commission's consideration; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any party interested in responding to comments or requests for hearing shall do so no later than December 28, 2023; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this order shall be effective January 1, 2024, unless any publication or filing obligation set forth above is not complied with or the

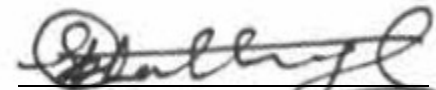
Commission provides otherwise in a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the joint utilities file compliance tariff pages with the Commission on or before January 16, 2024, in accordance with N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 1603.02(b); the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc. is not required to file such compliance tariff pages.


By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this eleventh day of December, 2023.



Daniel C. Goldner
Chairman



Pradip K. Chattopadhyay
Commissioner



Carleton B. Simpson
Commissioner

Service List - Docket Related

Docket# : 23-098

Printed: 12/11/2023

Email Addresses

ClerksOffice@puc.nh.gov
campbellm@unitil.com
jessica.chiavara@eversource.com
clarkj@NHEC.com
Energy-Litigation@energy.nh.gov
ocalitigation@oca.nh.gov
michael.sheehan@libertyutilities.com