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## State of Utah

### Department of Commerce Division of Public Utilities

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## Action Request Response

**To:** Public Service Commission of Utah

**From:** Utah Division of Public Utilities

Chris Parker, Director

Artie Powell, Manager

Brenda Salter, Utility Technical Consultant Supervisor

Mark Long, Utility Analyst

JJ Alder, Utility Analyst

**Date:** April 23, 2020

**Re:** **Docket No. 20-999-12**, Investigate the Disconnection Policies of Water Utility Services over which the Public Service Commission has regulatory jurisdiction over whether these policies have or have not been modified during the coronavirus outbreak and report the findings.

### Recommendation (No Action Required)

The Utah Division of Public Utilities (Division or DPU) recommends no action from the Utah Public Service Commission (Commission or PSC) for temporary changes that water utility services have made with regards to disconnection policies.

### Issue

On March 27, 2020, the Commission issued an Action Request for the Division to conduct an investigation of the disconnection policies of all utilities that the PSC has regulatory jurisdiction over. The PSC wants to know whether the disconnection policies have or have not been

modified during the coronavirus outbreak. This Memorandum addresses the findings for the Water Utility Services portion of this Action Request.

## **Background**

Water and sewer companies regulated by the PSC are privately owned, usually by the original developer. As such, PSC regulated water and sewer utilities have no federal, state or local provisions or subsidies to assist water customers in need, i.e., lifeline program. Any financial relief or assistance comes directly from the developer. There are 23 regulated water utilities and one regulated sewer utility. Through a series of email notifications and follow-up phone calls, the DPU contacted all 23 water utilities and the one sewer utility. As of this writing, the DPU has received responses from 22 of the 23 water utilities and a response from the one sewer utility.

## **Discussion**

Please find below the questions asked of the water and sewer utilities and a brief synopsis of their responses.

### **Question 1. Have your disconnection policies or practices been modified during the COVID-19 outbreak?**

**Response 1.** Most of the responses indicated that their policies or practices had not been modified.

### **Question 2. What is the scope and duration of any modification or suspension, if any?**

**Response 2.** Most responses indicated that since their policies have not been modified this question did not apply.

### **Question 3. Has the company waived late fees and reconnection fees?**

**Response 3.** Most companies indicated that they have no requests to waive late or disconnection fees, but they also indicated that late fees and reconnection fees will be waived, at customer request, for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak.

**Question 4. Have disconnected customers been reconnected?**

**Response 4.** All companies indicated that there are no disconnected customers currently or in the recent past.

**Question 5. Have other payment/billing options been established? (i.e., budget billing, repayment)**

**Response 5.** The companies indicated that customers have not requested special payment options, but they have policies in place to account for such requests. Additionally, companies indicated that they are willing to work out arrangements with any customer, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak.

**Conclusion**

The Division concludes that water company policies have not been modified during this pandemic, but each company is willing to work with customers experiencing difficulties during the COVID-19 outbreak. Many of the developers have stepped up and stated they would personally subsidize customers in need during this pandemic. The Division recommends that the Commission take no action at this time.

Cc: Michele Beck, Office of Consumer Services