

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION
OF DOMINION ENERGY UTAH TO
EXTEND GAS SERVICE TO GREEN
RIVER, UTAH

Docket No. 21-057-12

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JEFF N. BYBEE

FOR DOMINION ENERGY UTAH

August 5, 2021

DEU Exhibit 3.0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION..... 1

II. CONVERSION FROM OTHER FUEL SOURCES TO NATURAL GAS 2

III. DISPOSAL OF PROPANE INFRASTRUCTURE 5

IV. SAFETY BENEFITS OF BEING A DOMINION ENERGY CUSTOMER..... 5

I. INTRODUCTION

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3 **Q. Please state your name and business address.**

4 A. My name is Jeff N. Bybee, and my business address is 531 Wasatch Road, Evanston,
5 WY 82930.

6 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

7 A. I am employed by Dominion Energy Utah (“Dominion Energy,” “DEU” or
8 “Company”) as a Manager of Region Operations. I am responsible for overseeing the
9 Company’s distribution operations in Wyoming, as well as in Wasatch, Summit, and
10 Rich Counties in Utah.

11 **Q. Have you testified in any previous proceedings?**

12 A. Yes. I previously offered testimony in Docket No. 21-057-06.

13 **Q. What general areas does your testimony address?**

14 A. I discuss several matters, including (1) the costs associated with converting homes to
15 utilize natural gas instead of other fuels, (2) the requirements for disposal of propane
16 tanks, and (3) the advantages of natural gas over other fuel sources.

17 **Q. Please describe your experience with the Company.**

18 A. I have been with Dominion Energy, and prior to that Questar Gas Company, for a total
19 of 37 years. I have 20 years of experience in operations for the Company. I have been
20 an operations foreman and supervisor, and I am now Manager of Region Operations.
21 During that time, I also spent 11 years as a service technician and 5 years working in
22 natural gas facilities construction.

23 I was one of the first employees to pilot the “operations model” in the Company.
24 Historically, employees either worked in construction services (construction of
25 company facilities) or they were service technicians providing service to customers in
26 their homes. The operations model combines these functions into what we now call
27 operations. As a result of this experience, I am knowledgeable both about construction
28 of natural gas facilities, as well as the conversion to and installation, servicing, and
29 maintenance of natural gas appliances.

30 **Q. Have you been involved in other instances where the Company expanded natural**
31 **gas service to a previously-unserved area?**

32 A. Yes. I was involved when the Company expanded natural gas service to Southern Utah
33 in the late 1980s. In that expansion, the Company's personnel participated in
34 converting homes for the transition from propane to natural gas. During that transition,
35 I participated in installing piping into homes, setting meters, and converting all kinds
36 of appliances—from residential appliances such as furnaces, water heaters and stoves,
37 to commercial appliances and equipment—to burn natural gas. I was also involved
38 when the Company expanded service into the Ogden Valley in the early 2000s. At that
39 time, I assisted in training other employees on proper procedures for converting
40 customers' homes and appliances from propane to natural gas. Since that time, I have
41 participated in other similar trainings throughout the Company.

42 **II. CONVERSION FROM OTHER FUEL SOURCES TO NATURAL GAS**

43 **Q. Please describe the process of preparing a customer's home or business to burn**
44 **natural gas instead of other fuel sources.**

45 A. The process of converting appliances and equipment to natural gas can vary depending
46 on each customer's preferences and needs. Some customers may need to convert
47 furnaces, stoves, and water heaters to be able to utilize natural gas instead of propane
48 or fuel oil. In most cases, this conversion is relatively simple. For example, converting
49 a furnace that burns propane to a natural gas furnace generally involves changing
50 orifices on each burner, installing a spring in a control valve, and setting the proper
51 outlet pressure on the burner of the appliance. There are currently conversion kits on
52 the market that a licensed contractor could provide and install. For older appliances
53 those kits could cost as little as \$15. For newer furnaces, the cost of the kits is about
54 \$300. In some cases, homes with propane-fueled appliances will have copper fuel lines
55 that will need to be replaced, because copper lines are not suitable for natural gas.
56 Natural gas fireplaces can also easily be installed to convert a wood-burning heat source
57 to a natural gas appliance.

58 For homeowners currently using coal, heating oil, or electricity to heat their homes,
59 those homes will need to be retrofitted with appropriately-sized gas fuel lines and new
60 appliances, and may need to have some ductwork installed.

61 **Q. Will the Company perform the work necessary to convert a customer's home for**
62 **natural gas consumption?**

63 A. No, the Company will not be involved in the installation of fuel lines or conversion of
64 existing appliances. Each customer would be responsible to hire a qualified contractor
65 to perform the work.

66 **Q. Can you describe the range of costs a customer might incur in making the**
67 **required changes.**

68 A. As I mentioned earlier, kits to adjust a propane-burning appliance to natural gas cost
69 between approximately \$15 to \$300 depending on the type and age of the appliance at
70 issue. The Company recommends that customers hire a qualified installer to perform
71 the work to make the conversion to natural gas. The cost to retain a contractor varies,
72 but I would suggest the customer get several estimates before committing to a particular
73 contractor. If a customer needs to replace their appliance, the cost will vary depending
74 on the appliance the customer selects. The average cost in Provo, Utah in 2020 for a
75 water heater was between \$1,000 to \$1,500, and the cost for a furnace was between
76 \$1,500 and \$2,100. Customers who need fuel lines, duct work, and venting will incur
77 additional costs that will be dependent upon the extent of work needed.

78 **Q. In your experience, are these costs significant enough to deter customers from**
79 **signing up for natural gas service?**

80 A. Generally, no. In the Southern Utah and Ogden Valley expansions, we did not maintain
81 statistics associated with the exact number of residents who signed up for natural gas
82 service. However, in my experience, in those areas most residents chose to obtain
83 natural gas service over other available fuels even when the customers were required
84 to pay an extension area charge (EAC) or a GSS rate for service lines and mains in
85 addition to the conversion costs. This was true not only in larger cities like St. George
86 and Cedar City, but also in smaller communities like Fillmore, Delta, Beaver, and

87 Richfield. In both expansions, most residents signed up for natural gas service within
88 the first year.

89 **Q. Did those customers replace all their appliances at once?**

90 A. Not necessarily. Again, the Company did not maintain specific statistics, but my
91 experience was that many customers needed only to have the conversion kit installed
92 in their appliances. Those customers did not need to replace appliances in most cases.
93 Others had to transition from electric water heaters and propane furnaces. Some
94 customers opted to transition immediately, while others chose to adjust or replace the
95 furnace and wait to replace the water heater when it eventually failed. Still others
96 installed free standing, direct vent natural gas fireplaces to offset heating costs while
97 they budgeted for more long-term conversion or replacement costs.

98 **Q. If a customer heats with wood, does that mean their home does not have duct**
99 **work?**

100 A. Not necessarily. Some people have a propane or coal furnace and supplement that heat
101 with a wood burning stove to save money. For these customers, some duct work will
102 already exist.

103 **Q. Are there safety concerns with converting customers' homes and appliances to be**
104 **able to burn natural gas instead of propane?**

105 A. Many appliances have been manufactured, designed, tested and listed to burn both fuels
106 safely. Generally, the conversion for these appliances is safe and easily done provided
107 that customers have any modifications done by licensed, qualified contractors. If they
108 are listed as propane only, they should not be converted to natural gas for safety
109 reasons. As an additional protection, the Company will not set a meter at a customer
110 location until it has been inspected by the local municipality. This is consistent with
111 the Company's current practice.

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III. DISPOSAL OF PROPANE INFRASTRUCTURE

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Q. When a customer converts their home or business and appliances to burn natural gas instead of propane, what do they do with the propane tank and propane facilities?

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A. The propane tank must be disconnected, and the tank and the lines removed. Many customers lease the tanks from the propane provider, in which case the propane provider is obligated to retrieve the tanks when they are no longer used. For those customers who own their tanks, they must properly dispose of those tanks. In many cases, the customer can re-sell the tank or give it to a propane supplier for use elsewhere. The Company will coordinate installation of natural gas with the timing of the customer's removal of the propane facilities to ensure that the customer is not without a fuel source.

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IV. SAFETY BENEFITS OF BEING A DOMINION ENERGY CUSTOMER

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Q. What are the benefits for customers to convert from other sources of fuel to natural gas.

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A. In addition to the cost-savings discussed by Austin Summers and Mayor Bacon in their pre-filed direct testimonies and the efficiency of natural gas, new natural gas customers will benefit from a safer and more reliable system of the kind that all Dominion Energy customers enjoy.

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Q. Are there agencies that ensure that natural gas service is safe and reliable?

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A. Yes. Dominion Energy is regulated by the Utah Public Service Commission as well as the Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Each of these agencies oversees Dominion Energy's facilities and operations to ensure that they are conducted safely, and with the interests of customers in mind.

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Q. Does Dominion Energy provide emergency services to its customers?

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A. Yes. Dominion Energy provides safety and emergency services. If a customer smells gas, Dominion Energy will respond and ensure that the Dominion Energy-owned facilities are safe and secure and will inspect a customer's premises to ensure that

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141 appliances and fuel lines are also functioning properly. Dominion Energy technicians
142 also respond to CO alarms customers may have installed in their homes.

143 **Q. Is natural gas a reliable fuel source?**

144 A. Yes. Natural gas service is typically available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Natural
145 gas customers do not need to worry about running out of fuel in the middle of winter.
146 They do not need to monitor the content of tanks, or worry that a tank will not be refilled
147 in time to avoid an interruption of service. Wood-burning customers must procure
148 firewood and monitor use to ensure they do not run out. Natural gas customers do not
149 have this worry, nor is there a need for an additional safety device like a low pressure
150 cutoff switch due to the consistent delivery pressure of natural gas. They can rest
151 assured that, absent something unforeseen, Dominion Energy would provide reliable
152 service every day.

153 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

154 A. Yes.

State of Utah)
) ss.
County of Salt Lake)

I, Jeff N. Bybee, being first duly sworn on oath, state that the answers in the foregoing written testimony are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. The exhibits attached to the testimony were prepared by me or under my direction and supervision, and they are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. Any exhibits not prepared by me or under my direction and supervision are true and correct copies of the documents they purport to be.



Jeff N. Bybee

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO this 5th day of August, 2021.



Notary Public

