

- BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH -

In the Matter of the Formal Complaint of)
Jeffery Zinger and Brittany Birky against) DOCKET NO. 09-057-18
Questar Gas Company) ORDER OF DISMISSAL

ISSUED: February 9, 2010

By The Commission:

This matter is before the Commission on Jeffery Zinger and Brittany Birky's (collectively Complainants) formal complaint against Questar Gas (Company) for alleged overcharges in their July and August 2009 bills. The complainants live at 1600 North 1575 West, H107, Layton, Utah. The complainants state that the bills for the usage from June 8, 2009 through August 13, 2009 were higher than the actual usage they could have used.

Complainants commenced service on or about June 8, 2009. The history of the complainants bills are as follows: first bill was \$30.13; second bill (July 2009) was \$184.30; third bill (August 2009) was \$52.18; fourth bill (September 2009) was \$18.38; fifth bill (October 2009) was \$28.62. After complaining to the Company, the Company replaced the meter on or about August 19, 2009—about one month after the old meter was read for the July bill.

The Company answered the Complaint and moved to dismiss it. The Company argues there is no allegation or evidence the Company violated its tariff, Commission Rule, and statute. The Company described in detail its attempts to determine if the higher meter readings in July and August were a result of a faulty transponder or meter. *See Company Answer and Motion*, ¶¶ 6-23.

On July 8, 2009, the meter reader read the complainants' meter index and noted the reading was unusually high. An order was generated to inspect the transponder. The old

transponder was replaced with a new one. The Company inspected the old transponder and determined that it was functioning properly, even prior to its replacement.

In July 2009, the Company flagged the complainants' account because it was unusually high. Another meter reader was sent to the complainants' residence to verify the meter read. The meter's index and transponder showed identical values. Because no error was discovered, the Company billed the complainants for the \$184.30.

The complainants protested to the Company about the high bill and requested a check of possible causes for the high bill. A Company representative visited the complainants' residence on July 30, 2009. He noted no problems with the meter, the new index, the transponder, or the natural gas appliances.

The next bill (August 2009) was \$52.18 and the complainants called about the higher than usual bill again. A Company representative informed them that the billing was accurate and explained different causes for higher-than-usual-bills, including hot water leaks, which were a result of items for which the customer was responsible. The complainants requested the meter be replaced again and that they be informed of the results. This, however, was about two weeks after the usage in the residence had already been significantly reduced.

The Company replaced the meter again and tested it. In October 2009, the meter was tested and found to be measuring within the acceptable range of 3% fast or slow. *See Utah Admin. Code R746-320-3.H1, H2.* The Company informed the complainants that the meter which produced the August 2009 bill was also functioning properly. The complainants attempted to obtain relief by calling various Company personnel, but unable to find a satisfactory resolution, they filed an informal complaint and now this formal complaint.

ORDER

The Commission does not find that the complainants have shown the Company violated any Company tariff, Commission Rule, or statute. The jump in amounts billed from the June 2009 bill to the July and August 2009 bills are curious. However, higher amounts billed do not of themselves show the Company overcharged the complainants or that Company equipment was at fault for any mistaken billing.

In fact, as the Company points out, it began investigating the cause of the higher than usual bills before the complainants reported a problem. Additionally, it read the meter's index and the transponder twice, in addition to regular reading before the complainants protested. The Company inspections showed the meter and transponder were functioning properly. Also, natural gas usage at the residence decreased significantly before the meter was replaced and before the complainants protested. Even though the usage occurred in the summer months, the usage can occur if a natural gas appliance is not functioning properly. If that is the case, then the complainant would be responsible for maintenance of those appliances. *See Tariff § 7.04.*

Finding no violations, the Commission dismisses the formal complaint with prejudice.

DATED at Salt Lake City, Utah, this 9th day of February, 2010.

/s/ Ruben H. Arredondo
Administrative Law Judge

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Approved and confirmed this 9th day of February, 2010 as the Order of Dismissal
of the Public Service Commission of Utah.

/s/ Ted Boyer, Chairman

/s/ Ric Campbell, Commissioner

/s/ Ron Allen, Commissioner

Attest:

/s/ Julie Orchard
Commission Secretary
G#65206