

# THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE PROPER  
PROCEDURES AND PROCESS FOR THE  
COMMISSION'S OPERATIONS AND  
PROCEEDINGS DURING THE DECLARED  
STATE OF EMERGENCY AND RELATED  
MATTERS.

CASE NO. 20-591-AU-UNC

## ENTRY

Entered in the Journal on March 13, 2020

### I. SUMMARY

{¶ 1} Due to the declaration of a state of emergency, the Commission directs all public utilities under its jurisdiction to review their service reconnection policies, practices, and tariff provisions and to promptly seek any necessary approval to suspend otherwise applicable requirements that may impose a service restoration hardship on residential and non-residential customers or create unnecessary COVID-19 risks associated with social contact.

### II. DISCUSSION

{¶ 2} Pursuant to R.C. 4905.02 and 4905.03, telephone companies, electric light companies (except regional transmission organizations), heating or cooling companies, natural gas companies, pipeline companies, and water-works and sewage disposal system companies (collectively, utility companies) are public utilities and, as such, are subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission.

{¶ 3} R.C. 4909.16 provides, in part, that, in the event of an emergency, when the Commission finds it necessary to prevent injury to the business or interests of the public or of any public utility, it may temporarily alter, amend, or suspend any existing rates or schedules.

{¶ 4} On March 9, 2020, the governor signed Executive Order 2020-01D (Executive Order), declaring a state of emergency in Ohio to protect the well-being of Ohioans from the dangerous effects of COVID-19. As described in the Executive Order, state agencies are

required to implement procedures consistent with recommendations from the Department of Health to prevent or alleviate the public health threat associated with COVID-19. Additionally, all citizens are urged to heed the advice of the Department of Health regarding this public health emergency in order to protect their health and safety. The Executive Order was effective immediately and will remain in effect until the COVID-19 emergency no longer exists. The Department of Health is making COVID-19 information, including information on preventative measures, available via the internet at [coronavirus.ohio.gov/](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/).

{¶ 5} On March 12, 2020, the Commission opened this proceeding and directed all utility companies under our jurisdiction to review their service disconnection policies, practices, and tariff provisions and to promptly seek any necessary approval to suspend otherwise applicable requirements that may impose a service continuity hardship on residential and non-residential customers or create unnecessary COVID-19 risks associated with social contact.

{¶ 6} At this time, consistent with the Executive Order and the Commission's emergency authority under R.C. 4909.16, the Commission expands its directive to utility companies to address service reconnection. Accordingly:

- (a) All utility companies should review their service reconnection policies, practices, and tariff provisions and identify areas where it may be prudent to suspend, for the duration of the emergency, otherwise applicable requirements that may impose a service restoration hardship on customers or create unnecessary risks of social contact. However, the Commission notes that existing reconnection policies should continue as necessary to prevent or resolve a presently or imminently hazardous situation.
- (b) All utility companies should promptly seek any necessary approval, for the duration of the emergency, to suspend otherwise applicable reconnection requirements that may impose a service restoration hardship on residential and non-residential customers or create unnecessary COVID-19 risks

associated with social contact. All such filings by the utility companies shall be deemed approved on an emergency basis for a period of at least 30 days effective as of the filing date or until such date as the Commission may otherwise specify, which shall not be less than 30 days.

- (c) All utility companies should continue to coordinate and communicate with local community action agencies and other community-based organizations to ensure that utility service to customers is maintained during the state of emergency.

{¶ 7} Although the Commission recognizes that its jurisdiction generally does not extend to those utilities owned or operated by municipalities or cooperatives, the Commission urges such entities to undertake a similar review of their reconnection practices and policies and to coordinate with local community action agencies to ensure continuity of service during the declared emergency.

{¶ 8} Additionally, the Commission finds that the winter reconnection order issued on September 11, 2019, in Case No. 19-1472-GE-UNC should be extended through May 1, 2020, in order to allow utilities sufficient time to conduct the review of their reconnection policies.

### III. ORDER

{¶ 9} It is, therefore,

{¶ 10} ORDERED, That the procedural directives set forth in Paragraph 6 be adopted with respect to the utility companies' continuity of service. It is, further,

{¶ 11} ORDERED, That the Commission's winter reconnection order in Case No. 19-1472-GE-UNC be extended through May 1, 2020. It is, further,

{¶ 12} ORDERED, That notice of this Entry be served via the Electric-Energy, Gas-Pipeline, Railroad, Telephone, Transportation, and Water industry service lists.

COMMISSIONERS:

*Approving:*

Sam Randazzo, Chairman

M. Beth Trombold

Daniel R. Conway

GAP/mef

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

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**Case No(s). 20-0591-AU-UNC**

Summary: Entry directing all public utilities to review their service reconnection policies, practices, and tariff provisions and to promptly seek any necessary approvals electronically filed by Ms. Mary E Fischer on behalf of Public Utilities Commission of Ohio