



PEOPLES™

MAKING YOUR LIFE BETTER.

Jennifer L. Petrisek

Senior Counsel

375 North Shore Drive

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

(412) 208-6834

Jennifer.petrisek@peoples-gas.com

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

June 8, 2020

Rosemary Chiavetta

Executive Secretary

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

P.O. Box 3265

Harrisburg, PA 17105

Re: Docket No.: M-2020-3020055 - COVID-19 Customer Service, Billing, and Public Outreach Provisions Request for Utility Information

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC and Peoples Gas Company LLC (collectively “Peoples” or the “Company”) respectfully files the following written comments in response to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission’s (“Commission”) COVID-19 Customer Service, Billing and Public Outreach Provisions Request for Utility Information in the above-noted docket.

Please contact Rita Black (412-208-6530) or the undersigned should you have any questions or require further information regarding this filing.

Very truly yours,

Jennifer L. Petrisek

Senior Counsel

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

COVID-19 Customer Service, Billing, and
Public Outreach Provisions Request for
Utility Information

Docket No. M-2020-3020055

COMMENTS OF THE PEOPLES COMPANIES

Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC and Peoples Gas Company LLC (“Peoples” or the “Company”) respectfully files the following written comments to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission’s (“Commission”) COVID-19 Customer Service, Billing and Public Outreach Provisions Request for Utility Information.

Describe and report efforts to support customers through initiatives in customer service and billing policies and procedures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing recovery period. Explain how these initiatives differ from normal operations:

Response: Peoples has undertaken several steps to support our customers during these difficult times. We are working with customers on a case by case basis, providing assistance such as waiver of late payment fees, payment arrangements, budget billing and extensions. We have been flexible with reconnection amounts, accepting a lesser payment than would normally be requested, to ensure customers were not without service. Peoples has made it easier for customers to enroll and remain in our Customer Assistance Program (CAP).

Termination of Utility Service:

- After the Commission’s Emergency Order on Terminations at Docket No. M-2020-3019244 ends, how soon does the utility plan to begin termination of service for nonpayment?
 - How does the utility plan to implement terminations and will it start the process with new termination notices?

Response: Once Peoples receives notification of the expiration of the current moratorium, Peoples will initiate the process to generate new termination notices to affected customers. Notices will be mailed by billing cycle.

- Broken out by customer class, how many customer accounts may be subject to termination if the Commission’s Emergency Order prohibiting terminations is rescinded and how does this number compare to the same time period in 2019?
 - Provide these figures for all utility confirmed low-income customers, including Lifeline and Customer Assistance Program (CAP) customers
 - Provide future projections if available.

Response: The number of customers, by customer class, who may receive termination notices if the Commission’s Emergency Order is rescinded is shown below. With the opening of the special LIHEAP program and the efforts by Peoples to assist customers with payment plans and CAP, we are unable to make future projections on potential terminations at this time.

2020	Residential*	Non-Residential	Total
Subject to Termination	63,731	3,614	67,345
* 9,993 confirmed low-income included in count			
2019	Residential*	Non-Residential	Total
Subject to Termination	67,337	2,773	70,110
* 9,487 confirmed low-income included in count			

- Is the utility currently assessing a “reconnection fee” to restore service? If yes, how is the fee billed and/or collected? Will this fee apply to customers reconnected under the Commission’s Emergency Order that wish to pay any arrearage and stay connected?

Response: Yes, reconnection fees are assessed. These fees are billed to the account and are not required prior to restoration of service. While Peoples Gas requires a reconnection fee for all customers, customers of Peoples Natural Gas with incomes up to 200% Federal Poverty Level are not assessed reconnection fees.

Universal Service Programs:

- Is the utility currently removing customers from CAP for non-payment or failure to recertify?

Response: No. Peoples does not remove customers from CAP for non-payment under its normal procedures and this policy continues during COVID-19. The company suspended removal from CAP for failure to recertify on March 16, 2020.

- What are the utility’s current Hardship Fund payment requirements to qualify low-income customers for grants (e.g., waiving payment history “good faith payment”, or CAP participation criteria) and have these requirements been revised due to the pandemic?

Response: Peoples began waiving the ‘good faith payment’ requirement on April 14, 2020. Peoples does not restrict CAP customers from participating in its Hardship Fund and this policy has continued during COVID-19.

Other Assistance Initiatives:

- Describe any policies/procedures the utility has updated to assist customers impacted by the pandemic that go beyond provisions in PUC policies or regulations.

Response: Peoples has temporarily suspended the requirement for CAP applicants to provide proof of income in order to participate in the program. Customers can be enrolled using verbal income information. Accounts enrolled using verbal income information are tracked by Dollar Energy Fund’s database so that follow up can occur in the future as restrictions related to the pandemic are eased.

Additional ways Peoples is assisting customers:

- Waive Late Payment Charges on a case-by-case basis
 - Waive Security Deposits on a case-by-case basis
 - Accept a lesser amount to reconnect service to get customers back in service
 - Educate & encourage Budget Billing to spread the costs
 - Offer Payment Arrangements even if they otherwise might not be eligible
- Describe any proposed or anticipated changes in programs/practices/policies to assist customers impacted by the pandemic after the Governor’s Emergency Proclamation and the PUC Emergency Order on Terminations expire or are lifted.

Response: As noted above, Peoples has temporarily suspended the requirement for CAP applicants to provide proof of income to enroll in CAP. Peoples has also suspended removal from CAP for failure to recertify and has removed the ‘good faith payment’ requirement for its Hardship Fund. These provisions will stay in place following the expiration of Governor’s Proclamation and PUC Emergency Order. These provisions were emailed to Ms. Sarah Dewey on Monday June 8, 2020.

Peoples will continue to work with customers in the same manner even after the Order is lifted. We are committed to helping our customers and our community through this event

Consumer Education and Outreach

- Descriptions and/or examples of how the utilities are educating their customers about their rights and responsibilities, assistance programs, energy efficiency and conservation, and/or COVID-19 recovery.

Response: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Peoples has utilized a combination of outreach mediums to communicate with our customers. We have used:

- Email messages – 2 messages dedicated to Peoples COVID-19 Response (messages attached)
- Peoples-gas.com website (dedicated COVID-19 page) and alerts (examples provided)
- Social media

In early April, we began sending payment reminder letters to customers who have fallen behind and would be subject to termination. These letters contain the following:

- Amount past due
 - Ways to contact Peoples to discuss payments options or plans
 - Ways to pay the bill by visiting the website
 - Assistance available using the Program
- Efforts to reach all utility consumers with information about income-qualified programs and resources and about non-income-qualified educational services, tools, and resources.

Response: The Company has placed an enhanced focus on educating customers about the programs that are available to support them with their Peoples bills. Efforts include:

- Social media posts regarding program availability
 - NewsRadio 1020 KDA Radio promotion highlighting Peoples online ProgramFinder tool. This promotion ran from April 20 to May 31st.
 - Promotion of the summer LIHEAP program including:
 - Press release to Pittsburgh area media will be distributed in early June
 - Bill insert for July distribution
 - Dollar Energy Fund promotions.
 - Helping Hand Liveathon to benefit Dollar Energy Fund. This was a first of its kind virtual fundraising event broadcast through Facebook Live. Peoples organized performers and partners to participate in the event to raise funds for Dollar Energy Fund. (Event recap is attached)
 - Bill insert to promote and support Dollar Energy Fund was distributed in June (example attached)
- Methods that utilities are using to make their customers aware of important proceedings that may include telephonic public input hearings and allowing consumers to be able to make their voices heard.
- **Response:** There are not current Peoples proceedings requiring public input hearings pending before the Commission at this time.

- Description of utility outreach methods that could be used to inform eligible Pennsylvanians about changes related to COVID-19 in the Lifeline Program for Telephone and Broadband Internet Service.

Response: Peoples is willing to provide this information on its website and share it in COVID-19 related email blasts to customers. Peoples can also share this information through its Universal Service Advisory Group whose participants include local social service agencies working directly with families and seniors facing financial difficulty as well as members from the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, Allegheny County Department of Aging and the Women’s Center and Shelter of Pittsburgh. Peoples will email the above communication information to Mr. Tom Charles as requested and in that communication, will offer to share information regarding Lifeline and Broadband Internet Service that Mr. Charles may be able to provide to the Company for distribution.

- If programs have been modified due to the pandemic, please provide current customer education tools and advertising so that the Commission’s own customer education efforts are based on current utility programs and practices.

Response: Peoples continues to follow its Consumer Education and Outreach Plan that was submitted to the Commission as part of its USECP proceeding in early January. Copies of recent customer communications are attached.

Respectfully submitted



Jennifer L. Petrisek
Counsel for Peoples Natural Gas Company
LLC and Peoples Gas Company LLC
375 North Shore Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15212
Phone: 412-208-6834; Fax: 412-208-6580
Email: jennifer.petrisek@peoples-gas.com
Attorney ID No. 83411

Dated: June 8, 2020



TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Our commitment to you is to provide safe and reliable natural gas service. That commitment is at the core of our response to COVID-19. As a utility that provides critical public services, our focus is on ensuring the continued reliability and safety of our natural gas service for our customers, as well as the health and safety of our employees.

Peoples is actively monitoring the novel coronavirus "COVID-19" outbreak globally and in the U.S. We are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local health authorities to continuously monitor the situation and evaluate our operational response plans.

Our preparedness efforts include providing ongoing guidance and resources to our employees to mitigate the spread of acute respiratory illness, lessen the potential impact of COVID-19 in our facilities and maintain business operations. At this time, we do not anticipate any disruptions or impact to our services as a result of the outbreak.

We will continue to provide any relevant updates as this situation evolves. Information is also available on our website, or you can follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

GET UPDATES

WE WANT TO HELP

We understand this global situation is having far reaching impacts that could affect our customers. Our focus is on the health and safety of our customers and employees.

Do you need help with your Peoples bill? We want to help. Peoples offers many programs to help our customers. **Some programs close soon, so call our customer service professionals during business hours at 1-800-400-9276** to learn about all of your options.

You can also use our confidential online ProgramFinder to see which programs may be right for you. Answer a few questions about your situation and income, and the ProgramFinder will provide information on programs that you may be eligible for. ProgramFinder is completely anonymous and always available.

[USE PROGRAMFINDER](#)



MANAGE YOUR ACCOUNT ONLINE

Peoples e-Account allows you to manage your account online. You can:

- View your current bill
- Pay your bill online
- Monitor your gas usage
- Update your notification preferences

[REGISTER NOW](#)



[NEWS](#) [PAY BILL](#) [CONTACT](#) [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

This email was sent to: %%emailaddr%%
This email was sent by: Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC
375 North Shore Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15212 US
We respect your right to privacy - view our [policy](#)

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)



TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Since our first email about COVID-19, the situation has changed rapidly. We want to assure you that throughout this crisis, we are committed to providing you with safe, reliable natural gas service.

To ensure the health and safety of our customers and employees while continuing our essential work, we are taking the following steps:

- **Continuing 24/7 Emergency Response.** The safety of our customers, employees and communities is our top priority. Our 24/7 emergency response remains active.
- **Maintaining Social Distancing.** If a Peoples employee must visit your home, please notify us if any member of your household is ill. We ask that you maintain a safe distance and do not shake hands with our employees.
- **Limiting Non-Emergency Field Work.** To adhere to social distancing guidelines, we have reduced field work that requires close contact, and have minimized the need for multiple employees in a vehicle. Critical construction work will continue in order to keep our communities safe, which will help maintain employment for the companies and vendors who support these projects.
- **Providing Customer Support.** We are committed to helping our customers during this difficult situation. If you're worried about your gas bill, we're here to talk through your options. Please contact our Customer Service team at 1-800-400-9276 or contactus@peoples-gas.com. You can also [use our ProgramFinder](#) to see which support programs you may be eligible for. Want to help a family member or neighbor? You can [give a Peoples gift card](#) to any Peoples customer.
- **Tracking Scams and Cybersecurity Concerns.** More scams and cybersecurity attacks are popping up every day. We created two new options on our [Contact Form](#), so customers can quickly report possible scams or cybersecurity concerns.

- **Offering Online Options.** CDC research suggests that COVID-19 is not transmitted by mail. However, we want to remind customers that you can pay your bill using [Peoples e-Account](#), [Google Pay](#) and [Apple Wallet](#).

For over 130 years, Peoples has been serving our communities. We are proud to continue our tradition of safe and reliable service during this challenging time. We will get through this together.

[READ THE LATEST](#)



THANK AN ESSENTIAL WORKER

Our employees continue to work day-in and day-out to serve you. We are proud of their dedication and grateful for their compassion. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) to **#ThankAnEssentialWorker** – a medical professional, a local grocery store clerk, a family member, or someone who has made your life better during this crisis. Tag **@peoplesnatgas** in a thank you message for any essential worker, and we will be sharing those posts on our social media pages.



[NEWS](#) [PAY BILL](#) [CONTACT](#) [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

This email was sent to: %%emailaddr%%
This email was sent by: Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC
375 North Shore Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15212 US
We respect your right to privacy - view our [policy](#)

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

Thank you for your continued support.

The **Dollar Energy Fund**, a nonprofit organization, provides help to older adults, the working poor and struggling families in our area. The **Dollar Energy Fund** is supported by utility customers like you and matched by Peoples.

Founded in 1983 in Western Pennsylvania, **Dollar Energy Fund**, Inc. has grown to become one of the largest fuel funds in the country. For more than 37 years, the Fund has distributed \$158 million in utility assistance grants to more than 573,000 households. Peoples customers have always been strong supporters of this worthwhile cause. Your 2019 contributions, combined with matching funds from Peoples, made it possible for many of our less fortunate neighbors to receive **Dollar Energy Fund** assistance last year.

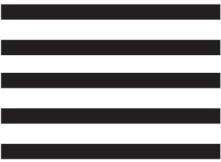
PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE



PEOPLES
P.O. BOX 535325
PITTSBURGH PA 15253-9831

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 1845 PITTSBURGH, PA



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



An Essential Utilities Company

YOU CAN HELP WITH JUST \$1

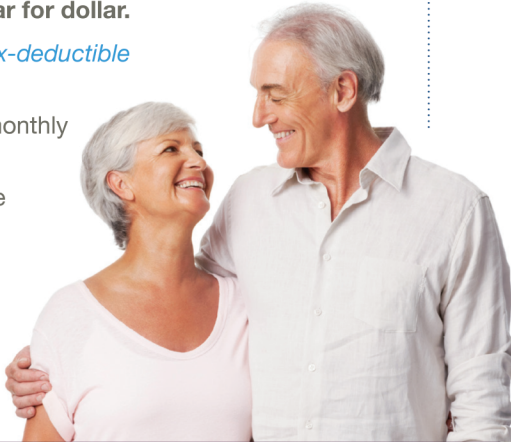


With your generous support, the Dollar Energy Fund can help even more local families who are experiencing difficult financial times. Each dollar you donate goes directly to helping these families with their utility bills, **and Peoples matches your contribution dollar for dollar.**

Choose from three easy ways to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Dollar Energy Fund:

- ✓ Add \$1 or more to the amount of your monthly gas bill by completing the pledge card;
- ✓ Call Peoples at 1-800-764-0111 to make a pledge of \$1 or more a month;
- ✓ Or send a check or money order for any amount to:

Dollar Energy Fund, Inc.
PO Box 42329
Pittsburgh, PA 15203-0329



For a copy of Dollar Energy Fund's official registration and financial information, call the Bureau of Charitable Organizations at **1-800-732-0999**. Registration does not imply endorsement.

2020 PLEDGE CARD

Please print clearly



Yes, I want to help my neighbors in need.

- I will add \$1 per month to my bill to help needy families stay warm. I understand that my gift will be matched with contributions from Peoples.
- I will add \$ per month to my bill to help needy families stay warm. I understand that my gift will be matched with contributions from Peoples.

If you contributed in 2019 and wish to increase your pledge in 2020, please note the new amount and return this card.

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

County of Residence.....

Day Phone..... Evening Phone.....

Your Peoples Account #

Signature

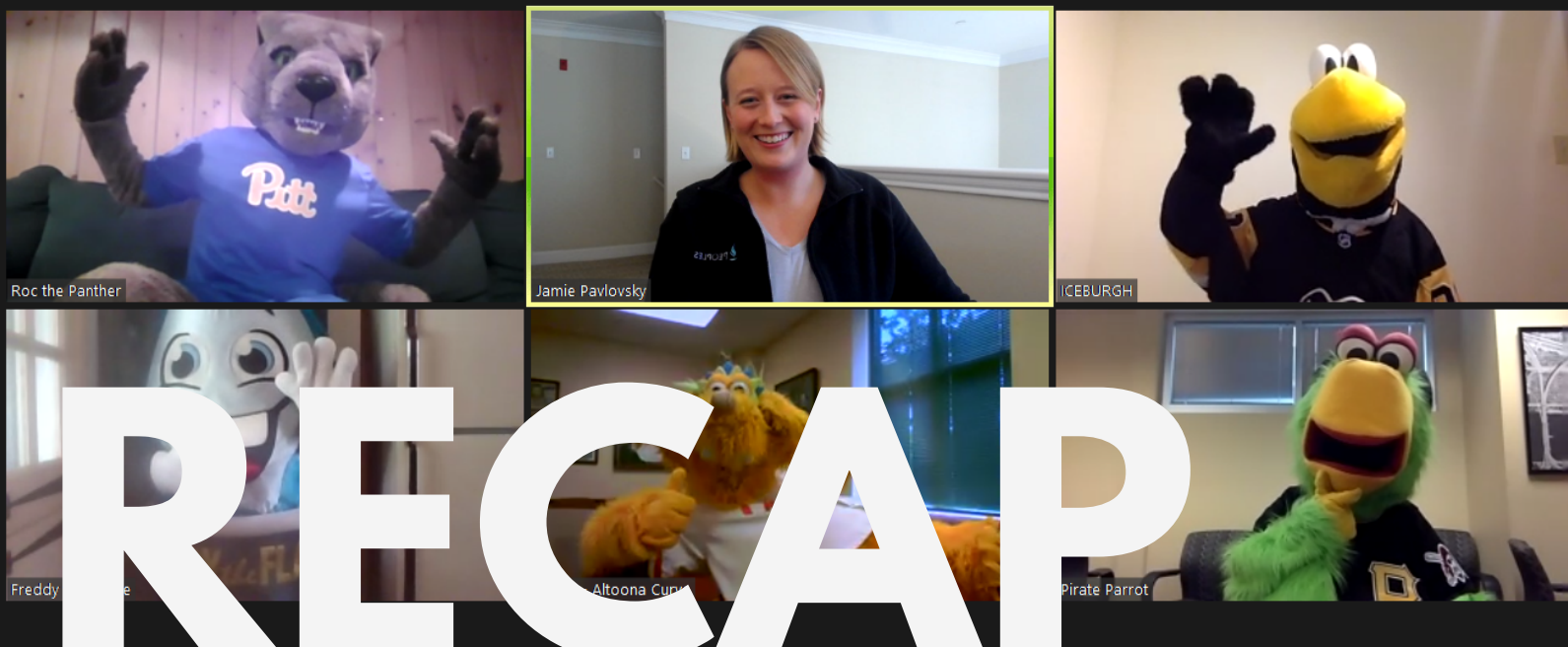
Tape to seal, then drop this postage-paid card in the mail.
Please do not enclose with your monthly gas bill payment.

THE PEOPLES #HELPHYOURNEIGHBOR LIVATHON



**Virtual Facebook Live Fundraiser
Benefiting Dollar Energy Fund**

MAY 15, 2020



VIEW AT: WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PEOPLESNATGAS



RESULTS

996

Live Viewers

1,015

Engagements

*(RSVPs, shares,
comments, likes)*

\$2,170

**Raised for Dollar
Energy Fund, including
Peoples' match**



Dollar Energy Fund is a nonprofit that serves utility customers in 14 states by providing grants to people in need.

Peoples has a long partnership with Dollar Energy Fund, and has previously supported fundraisers like the Cool Down for Warmth, Warmathon, and Jerseys for Warmth initiatives.

Peoples, along with other utility partners, matches donations to Dollar Energy Fund 100%.

We introduced this "Livathon" concept as a unique opportunity to raise funds for Dollar Energy Fund during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local entertainers and guests were recruited on a volunteer basis to participate, and Peoples leveraged existing partnerships to provide additional prizes to encourage engagement and donations.

Peoples created a Facebook Event page to promote the event in addition to running paid Facebook and Twitter ads, and organic social media promotion.

Using a video conference tool called StreamYard, Peoples broadcast interviews and performances live onto the Peoples Facebook page.

A link was provided under the live video that went directly to a secure donation page on Dollar Energy Fund's website where people could donate.

LINEUP & RECEPTION

"Nice to hear great music for a good cause this beautiful afternoon."

-Carmina Vitullo McGarry

"Really loving this collab y'all!!!!"

- Annabelle Goll

"Thank you for inviting the us to be a part of #HelpYourNeighbor Livathon to raise money for a very important cause!!!!"

-Jason Koval, Pirate Parrot

"I think that you hit it out of the park. Your preparation measures were evident in the way that the event turned out."

-Chad Quinn, CEO Dollar Energy Fund

"I can't even begin to explain what an awesome job you did with the Livathon!! This was such a great idea for a great cause. All the time and effort you had to put in to coordinate the interviews, performers, guests, etc. can't be thanked enough."

-Ed Palombo, Peoples Vice President

The #HelpYourNeighbor Livathon was hosted by Jamie Pavlovsky, Peoples employee.

Guests included:

- Chad Quinn, CEO Dollar Energy Fund
- Karen Clunas, Peoples Customer Relations
- Derek Shelton, Pittsburgh Pirates Manager
- Greg Brown, Pirates Play-by-Play Announcer
- Matt Dentinger, Pittsburgh Penguins Partnerships
- Chris Franklin, Essential Utilities CEO
- Derek Martin, Altoona Curve General Manager
- Gary Heeman, Lernerville Speedway
- Anne Kauffman, Peoples Volunteer Committee
- Joe Gregorini, Peoples President

Performances by:

- Tim Vitullo*, The Tim Vitullo Band
- Brian Seese*, The Redlines
- Urban Heat Island
- Austin Kerr*

**Peoples employees*

PLUS a special "Mascot Interview"

