

MANITOBA) Order No. 107/94
)
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD ACT) July 26, 1994

BEFORE: G. D. Forrest, Chairman
M. J. Anseeuw, Vice-Chairman
D. L. Barrett-Hrominchuk, Member
S. Lount, Member

**CENTRA GAS MANITOBA INC. -
APPROVAL OF SERVICE DISCONNECTION
AND RECONNECTION POLICY AND
PROCEDURES**

Pursuant to Subsection 104.1(6) of The Public Utilities Board Act (the Act), the Board makes this Order approving the Service Disconnection and Reconnection Policy and Procedures (Procedure) of Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. (Centra Gas).

The Procedure, attached as Appendix 1, sets out, amongst other things, a provision for customers to appeal a discontinuance of supply of natural gas. A guideline setting out the appeal process is available from the Board's offices.

The Board notes that this Procedure and the appeal process are new initiatives for Centra Gas and for the Board. Therefore to the extent amendments that are in the public interest and consistent with the Act are required to refine the process, such amendments will be considered.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

The Service Disconnection and Reconnection Policy and Procedures of Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. as attached hereto as Appendix 1 BE AND IS HEREBY APPROVED.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

"G. D. FORREST"
Chairman

"H. M. SINGH"
Acting Secretary

Certified a true copy of Order No.
107/94 issued by The Public
Utilities Board

Acting Secretary

APPENDIX 1

SERVICE DISCONNECTION AND RECONNECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

FOR

CENTRA GAS MANITOBA INC.

POLICY

1. Disconnection of gas service to customers may occur as outlined under **PROCEDURE**, except that no disconnection will occur for residential premises, as herein defined, during the heating season, from October 1 to May 14, inclusive.

For purposes of this Policy and Procedures, residential premises are defined as all premises in which there is a mix of residential and non-residential uses, where the person occupying the premises is billed for provision of the gas service.

Premises used for residential purposes for which the Landlord is billed by the Company are subject to disconnection, as detailed in the following section on procedures. In these cases, notice must be given to the Director, Residential Tenancies Branch.

2. Disconnection will occur Mondays to Thursdays, inclusive. Disconnection is permissible on Fridays, up to September 1, on condition that the company provides the identical level of customer service provided Monday to Friday, with specific reference to telephone inquiries, bill payment services, an opportunity to make payment arrangements and reconnection services on the Saturday following any Friday on which disconnections are done and between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
3. This policy does not affect the Company's power to disconnect in times of emergency and/or for reasons of safety.
4. Disconnection in accordance with the steps outlined in the Procedure following may occur if a customer is in arrears and full payment or payment arrangements suitable to the Company have not been made and if the contact procedures as hereinafter outlined with customers, landlords, social agencies and/or renters of the premises have been followed.

5. Restoration of service will be made as soon as it is reasonably possible after payment arrangements suitable to the Company and reconnection charge have been settled with the Company. Settlement may include the payment of a reasonable security deposit, if so demanded by the Company, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Service as approved by the Board from time to time. The security deposit, with interest, may be returned after one year, if a customer has a payment record satisfactory to the Company during the previous year.
6. The Company will notify all disconnected customers in writing and by making face to face contact with the customer or other responsible person residing at the residential premise that if full payment or payment arrangements suitable to the Company are not made service will not be reconnected prior to the start of the next heating season.

The Company will ensure that the disconnected customer or other person notified fully understands the consequences if service is not restored prior to the start of the next heating season. Social agencies will be contacted in writing if the customer does not fully understand.

7. Reconnection of service will occur where the Company fails to make face to face contact unless where otherwise permitted by the Board.
8. The Company will submit to the Board reports of disconnected customers detailing amongst other things the action taken by the Company.
9. The Company's Service Disconnection and Reconnection Policy and Procedures are subject to the Board's review, approval and supervision. The Board will, on its own initiative, or at the request of a customer, review the Company's actions with respect to this policy and procedures.
10. The Company will advise the customer that the customer may make a direct request to a social agency or the Residential Tenancies Branch for assistance in the negotiations leading to the determination of payment arrangements suitable to the Company.

PROCEDURE

Disconnection Procedure

The following procedures must be followed before disconnection occurs for all customers except where otherwise stated:

- M Steps 1, 2 and 3 may commence prior to May 15, but in the case of residential premises actual disconnection will not occur before May 15 and after October 1.
- M For non-residential premises the procedures will be generally applicable throughout the year. In exceptional circumstances these procedures may be varied, by the Company, for non-residential premises, where in its opinion, the Company is at substantial risk regarding the collection of outstanding arrears.

Step 1 Customers shall receive a bill each month (first in sequence) for natural gas consumption of the previous billing period. The due date which appears on the bill is no less than 21 days after the billing date for that consumption.

Step 2 If payment is not received prior to the next month's bill preparation (second in sequence), this message will appear on the bill:

"Our records indicate your account is past due. Please give this your prompt attention. If payment has been made, kindly disregard this notice.

[The following is applicable to residential premises only.]

Information on service disconnection, payment arrangements and financial assistance is enclosed."

The Company shall notify the customers of those social agencies which may be in a position to offer assistance.

Step 3 If payment is not received prior to the preparation of the next month's bill (third in sequence), the following message shall appear on the bill:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE

Your account is past due. Gas service will be discontinued on or after (actual date) if payment or suitable payment arrangements are not made by (actual date) (approximately 21 days after printing of the bill). A reconnect fee will be charged if this action is necessary. A security deposit may also be assessed on this account. If you wish to arrange for payment or if payment has been made, please notify us immediately by calling 956-1900.

The Company's Disconnection and Reconnection Policy and Procedures are subject to approval by The Public Utilities Board. Customers may appeal the Company's action by contacting The Public Utilities Board."

[The following is applicable to residential premises only.]

Notice of customers of rental premises subject to disconnection shall be forwarded to the Residential Tenancies Branch pursuant to subsection 60(2) of The Residential Tenancies Act by the Company at least 1 day prior to disconnection.

The Company will also forward notification of disconnection by regular mail to the registered owner of the premises, if different from the occupier.

Step 4 Following the completion of Steps 1, 2 and 3, service may be disconnected but no sooner than the date set out for such disconnection in Step 3.

Step 5 Subject to the Reconnection Procedure outlined below, no reconnection of service shall occur unless payment arrangements suitable to the Company (including a reconnection charge and a security deposit, if required) are made. Social agencies or other agencies may participate in making such arrangements.

Step 6 The following are exceptions to the above notice

requirements.

- A. Where the customer's account was past due and where an agreement on a payment arrangement was made between the customer and the Company, the Company may with 5 days notice disconnect the customer's service if the customer fails to adhere to the payment agreement.
- B. Where the customer's account was past due for gas consumed at a previous address and where the customer has moved to another site, the Company may with 10 days notice disconnect the customers service at the new site where the customer fails to make a payment arrangement.
- C. For the purposes of the above the wording of the notice shall be in the form as outlined in Step 3.

Reconnection Procedure

Step 1 The Company shall notify all customers who have been disconnected or are about to be disconnected in writing and by making face to face contact with the customer or other responsible person residing at the residential premise that if full payment or payment arrangements suitable to the Company are not made service may not be reconnected in the next heating season. The Company shall ensure that each disconnected customer or other responsible person residing at the residential premise notified, thoroughly understands such consequences. Should the Company find the customer unable to comprehend the consequences, the Company shall make a formal referral in writing to an appropriate social agency.

Step 1 shall commence immediately upon disconnection of the premises, May 14 to August 31. For those premises disconnected during this period, (May 14 to August 31), the Company shall maintain on going contact with the customer and record such customer contacts in its files. Where the face to face contact occurred prior to May 14th Centra must:

- 1) be satisfied that there is a level of understanding at the time of the face to face contact, AND
- 2) confirm after September 1, that a level of

understanding still exists (person still residing in the premises) and that family circumstances, i.e. children, sick, elderly, have not changed.

Step 2 Reconnection of service shall occur prior to October 1 where the Company fails to meet the face to face requirements for the customer or another responsible person residing at the residential premise.

Step 3 The Company will be considered to have complied with the face to face requirements when it is in compliance with the following procedures:

- a) The Company's representative must make contact with the customer or other responsible adult person residing at the residential premises and:
 - i) advise him/her that the gas is, or is about to be shut-off.
 - ii) advise him/her of the consequences with respect to a lack of heat.
 - iii) advise him/her that there is no requirement to turn-on the gas in the heating season.
 - iv) leave with him/her a pamphlet with information on social agencies, making financial arrangements and the relevant telephone numbers.
- b) The Company's records must indicate:
 - i) the number and ages of children under the age of eighteen (18) residing at the premises.
 - ii) whether any of the residents are elderly.
 - iii) whether any of the residents are sick.
 - iv) alternative heating arrangements of the customer, if any.
- c) Where there are children under the age of 18 and where the Company is of the opinion that the safety of the children is at stake, the matter must be referred in writing to the Child and Family Services by September 15th.
- d) Where the customer or any of the occupants of the premises are elderly, sick, appear to be unable to

understand the consequences or are experiencing financial hardship, the matter must be referred in writing to a social service agency as soon as the facts are known or no later than September 15th.

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- e) Where the Company complies with all of the above prior to October 1, the customer will be considered to have had face to face contact and can be left disconnected beyond October 1.

Step 4 Where the Company is of the opinion that a customer is intentionally avoiding its' representatives, rendering it unable to meet the face to face requirements in Step 3, the Company may contact the Board and show cause as to why it should not be obligated to comply with Step 2 of the Reconnection Procedures.

Step 5 The Company shall keep current data of all disconnected residential customers, which the Board may request and or inspect at any time. The Company shall make all reasonable efforts to collect this data which shall include the following information:

- a) name, address, home and work phone number of customer;
- b) account # _____;
- c) date of disconnection and reconnection;
- d) account balance \$ _____;
- e) details of payment arrangements if any;
- f) if applicable customer's employment status and employer's name;
- g) efforts made by the Company to contact the customer (letters, telephone calls, personal visits) and results of such efforts, including:
 - i/ where no response is made to contact efforts an assessment as to reasons therefore including currently uninhabited, vacation, illness, intentional avoidance, unexplained, etc.

ii/ where contact is made:

M details as to what suitable payment arrangements were agreed to and if not agreed to were requested by the Company and the reason why the customer declined to accept such arrangements.

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M any evidence of customers intent in, or acquisition of, alternative heating arrangements.

M assessment of customer's ability to pay.

M confirmation of customer's understanding of consequences of disconnection into the next heating season.

M when applicable any evidence of customer either contacting, or being encouraged to contact an appropriate social agency including, where necessary, a referral by a social agency to the Public Trustee.

M details of any follow-up action being undertaken by a social agency.

M information indicating the presence of children, the elderly and the infirm on the premises.

M results of inquiries with the neighbours relating to occupancy of the premises.

M results of inquiries with other utilities.

M results of title search.

M any other pertinent information.

Step 6 The Company shall keep current data of all disconnected commercial customers, which the Board may request and or inspect at any time. This data shall include Items (a),

(b), (c), (d) and (e) in Step 5 of the Reconnection Procedure.

Step 7 Reporting Requirements

Type "A-1R" and Type "A-1C" Reports

The Company shall provide to the Board, on a weekly basis, a report listing all of the residential customers whose services were disconnected during that week (Type A-1R Report), and on a monthly basis, a report listing all of the commercial customers whose services were disconnected during that month, providing in both instances, the information set out in Step 5(a), (b), (c) and (d) of the Reconnection Procedure (Type A-1C Report).

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Type "A-2R" and Type "A-2C" Reports

The Company shall provide to the Board, on a weekly basis, a report listing all of the residential customers whose service were reconnected during that week (Type A-2R Reports), and on a monthly basis, a report listing all the commercial customers whose service were reconnected during that month, providing in both instances, the name and address of the customer and the date of reconnection (Type A-2C Reports).

Type S-1 Report.

The Company shall provide to the Board on August 15th and 30th, on September 15th and 30th, and on October 15th and 30th an alphabetical listing of all residential customers who remain disconnected indicating for each:

- Name
- Address
- Amount Outstanding
- No. of Children and age
- Elderly persons
- Sick persons
- Employment status
- Financial status
- Referred to Social Service Agency
- Referred to Child and Family Services
- Alternative Heating and type

Face to Face Completed
Declared Vacant
Other Information/Comments