



VALLEY ENERGY

523 S. Keystone Avenue, P.O. Box 340, Sayre, PA 18840
800/998-4427 • 570/888-9664 • FAX 570/888-6199

November 13, 2018

Ms. Gladys M. Brown
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
PO Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Dear Ms. Brown:

This is in response to Commission correspondence regarding the “Prepare Now” campaign. Valley Energy is taking the following steps as we head into the winter season:

1. Improve efforts to link consumers to programs that are available to help them restore and maintain service, such as CAP, LIHEAP and utility or local Hardship Funds. *Valley Energy started contacting customers in October about reconnecting their natural gas service. If customers do not contact us and we cannot reach them by phone, we tag the door or contact the landlord. We mail LIHEAP applications, along with a letter, to customers we are unable to contact by phone or in person. We also notify them of local organizations, such as The Bridge and Salvation Army and the Dollar Energy Fund.*
2. Refer low-income customers to CAP when they call to make payment arrangements, so they may also benefit from arrearage forgiveness if they qualify. *Valley Energy does not offer CAP, but we do have a hardship fund (Dollar Energy) and there are a few local agencies that will help customers with their bills if faced with termination or if their service has been terminated. Customers are notified of these options when they call our or stop in our office.*
3. Restore service to low-income consumers upon enrollment into the company’s CAP for the first time. N/A
4. Exercise leniency when establishing payment arrangement plans for all consumers. Utilities have more discretion in making payment arrangements than does the

Commission. When assessing whether to grant a payment arrangement, please consider changes in circumstances such as lost or reduced income, extended illness of the ratepayer or a household member, or increased household size and accompanying expenses. *If a customer qualifies for LIHEAP, we will set up a payment arrangement according to the low income guidelines and depending on the balance due, we will use the longest term available. If a customer is not considered low income, we will set up an agreement according to household income and circumstances.*

5. Increase corporate donations to and fundraising for utility Hardship Funds and other local programs that assist consumers who need help paying their utility bills. *Valley Energy donates \$5,000.00 per year to our Dollar Energy Program. This is in addition to the customer contributions.*
6. Review company procedures to ensure that automatic payments and online payments allow for consumer contributions to Hardship Funds. *There is a notice on our bills that allows customers to contribute monthly to the fund and there is a link on our website for customers to contribute.*
7. Limit the number of terminations of confirmed low-income consumers by scaling back the company's termination programs as the cold weather approaches. This includes reviewing termination and reconnection procedures to allow consumers who are making a good faith effort to pay their bills to keep utility service whenever possible. *If customers have a termination notice during cold weather, Valley Energy will try to contact them and do whatever possible to help them keep their service from being terminated. We will allow payment arrangements or let them know about LIHEAP, the Hardship Fund and local agencies that can assist them from being terminated.*
8. Waive or reduce security deposits, reconnection fees and late payment charges if they are a barrier to restoration of service or establishing a payment arrangement. If a security deposit or reconnection fee is necessary, consider adding it to the consumer's bill instead of making it an initial condition of providing service. *Valley Energy waives the deposit for a low income customer that needs reconnection and we tell them to apply for heat assistance, if they haven't already done so. We will also waive late fees if they sign a payment arrangement.*
9. Accept any combination of LIHEAP grant, Crisis grant and Hardship Fund grant as sufficient funds to initiate or reconnect service for low-income consumers. If a consumer payment is also necessary, we encourage you to be as lenient as possible. *Valley Energy does accept these funds for reconnection. If we require more because of a large balance, we will accept funds from local agencies that can help, which will require the low-income customer to pay very little or nothing at all.*

- 10.** Provide customers with information about home heating safety and work to get consumers who have been “red tagged” the assistance or information needed to help in obtaining repairs to furnaces or heating systems. Refer low-income consumers to the LIHEAP crisis program for emergency repairs. *Valley Energy sends safety inserts in our bills and safety information is included on our website. We have referred our low-income customers to TREHAB, a community action agency, who works with the LIHEAP Crisis program if they need heating repairs or a new furnace.*

- 11.** Promote the use of budget billing programs and third-party notification forms. *We usually suggest the budget to our customers, especially the ones that have been on payment arrangements. We currently have 900 customers on budget billing. We mail an insert about third-party notification yearly and information about this is on our website.*

- 12.** Provide information to customers on how they can reduce their heating costs through conservation including information on weatherization programs available as well as cost-effective steps they can do themselves. *Valley encloses an insert in our bills explaining energy conservation. During the winter season we will add different tips on energy conservation as a message on the bills. We also refer consumers to the weatherization program through TREHAB.*

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact me at 570-888-9664 Ext. 5228.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pack
Customer Service Manager