

# PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN

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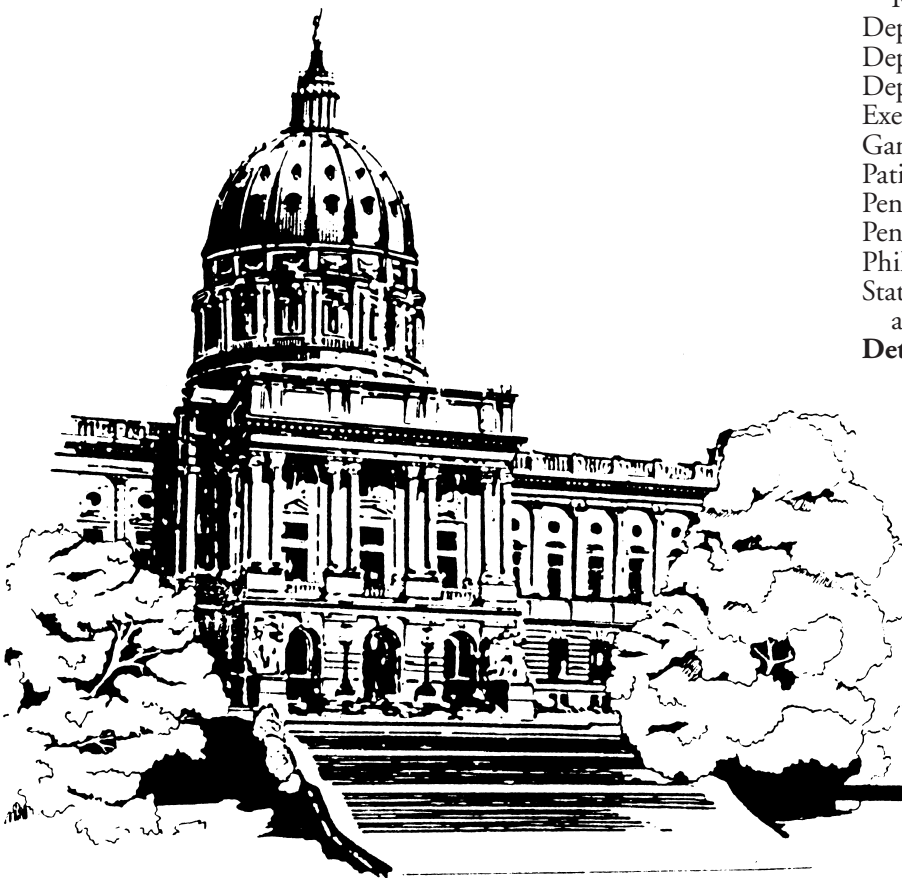
See Part II page 3157  
for the Notices

## Part I

### Agencies in this issue

The General Assembly  
The Courts  
Department of Agriculture  
Department of Banking and Securities  
Department of Conservation and Natural  
Resources  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Department of Health  
Department of Revenue  
Executive Board  
Game Commission  
Patient Safety Authority  
Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority  
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission  
Philadelphia Parking Authority  
State Board of Vehicle Manufacturers, Dealers  
and Salespersons

**Detailed list of contents appears inside.**



# PROPOSED RULEMAKING

## PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

[ 52 PA. CODE CH. 56 ]

[ L-2025-3058767 ]

### Rulemaking to Further Amend the Provisions of 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56

Public Meeting held  
February 19, 2026

*Commissioners Present:* Stephen M. DeFrank, Chairperson; Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chairperson, statement follows, dissenting; Kathryn L. Zerfuss; John F. Coleman, Jr.; Ralph V. Yanora

*Rulemaking to Further Amend the Provisions of 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56; Docket No. L-2025-3058767*

#### Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order

*By the Commission:*

On December 31, 2024, the former Chapter 14 of the Public Utility Code (Code), previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1401–1419, expired due to the sunset provision embedded within 66 Pa.C.S. § 1419. The former Chapter 14 sought to eliminate opportunities for customers capable of paying public utility bills to avoid paying those bills on time and to provide public utilities with the means to reduce their uncollectible accounts by modifying the procedures for delinquent account collections. In anticipation of the sunset of the former Chapter 14, the Public Utility Commission (PUC or Commission) entered a Statement of Policy on December 24, 2024, at Docket No. M-2024-3052328, to provide certainty to public utilities, consumers, and affected stakeholders regarding, inter alia, payment arrangements and public utility service terminations. We now propose to amend our regulations at 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56 to incorporate provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, as it was in effect prior to its sunset, including those currently being followed by the Commission via its Statement of Policy. The proposed modifications to the existing regulations and proposed new regulations are contained in the attached Annex. The PUC seeks comments on the proposed regulations set forth in the accompanying Annex consistent with this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NOPR) Order.

#### *Background*

The PUC is tasked with ensuring the provision of safe and reliable public utility service at just and reasonable rates. See e.g., 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1301, 1501. Chapter 56 of the Commission's regulations governs the standards and billing practices for residential public utility service. The stated goal of Chapter 56 is to establish and enforce uniform, fair and equitable residential public utility service standards governing eligibility criteria, credit and deposit practices, and account billing, termination and customer complaint procedures. Chapter 56 was promulgated to assure that residential customers receive adequate public utility service by restricting unreasonable termination of service or refusal of service by the public utility. In addition, Chapter 56 was promulgated to provide alternatives to termination of service or refusal to provide service by the public utility, while also eliminating opportunities from customers capable of paying for

public utility service to avoid the timely payment of public utility bills, reducing the need for rate increases resulting from public utility bill delinquencies. 56 Pa. Code § 56.1(a). Chapter 56 has a lengthy history spanning nearly 50 years, which, as detailed below, provides pertinent context for the proposed modifications to Chapter 56.

#### A. *The PUC's Creation Of Interim Regulations*

The process to create Chapter 56 of the PUC's regulations initially began on January 27, 1976, when the PUC entered an Order establishing interim regulations governing the termination of public utility service. Therein, the PUC noted two instances in which termination of service by regulated public utilities was associated with injury to the health of Pennsylvania consumers. The PUC explained that its then-current regulations and the voluntary practices of certain fixed utilities provided some measure of protection for the public when service is terminated but were neither adequate nor uniformly applicable. 6 Pa.B. 162 (January 31, 1976). The interim regulations prohibited public utilities or municipal corporations serving beyond their corporate limits, providing gas, electric, water, sewer, steam heat, or telephone service, from terminating service to any residential premises without PUC approval. The interim regulations also outlined information that must be submitted to the PUC with an application for approval, including the notice procedures followed by a public utility to advise occupants of termination. *Id.* Due to the urgency of the situation, the PUC omitted the notice of proposed rulemaking for the interim regulations. See 45 P.S. § 1204 (an agency may omit certain rulemaking procedures if, for example, it finds for good cause that the procedures are impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest under the circumstances). The PUC established the interim regulations under its authority pursuant to Sections 401, 901, 902, and 907 of the predecessor to the Public Utility Code, the Public Utility Law, codified at 66 P.S. §§ 1171, 1341, 1342, 1347. *Id.* The PUC later amended its interim regulations on two occasions to provide further clarity. 6 Pa.B. 326 (February 14, 1976); 6 Pa.B. 573 (March 20, 1976).

#### B. *Act 215 Of 1976*

On October 7, 1976, former Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp signed into law Act 215 of 1976 (Act 215). Act 215 established, in pertinent part, Section 402.2 of the Public Utility Law, which addressed personal contact before the discontinuance of service. Section 402.2 provided as follows:

Except when required to prevent or alleviate an emergency as defined by the Public Utility Commission or except in the case of danger to life or property, no public utility as defined in subclauses (a), (b), (e), and (g) of clause (17) of Section 2 of this act, shall discontinue, and the commission shall not authorize such a public utility to discontinue, except upon request of a customer, for nonpayment of charges or for any other reason, the rendering of service without personal contacting the customer at least three days prior to such discontinuance, in addition to any written notice of discontinuance of service. Personal contact shall mean:

(1) contacting the customer by means other than writing, or

(2) contact another person whom the customer has designated to receive a copy of any notice of disconnection, or

(3) if the customer has not made such designation, contacting a community interest group or other entity, including local police departments, which shall have previously agreed to receive a copy of the notice of disconnection and to attempt to contact the customer, or

(4) if the customer has not made such designation and no such community interest group or other entity has previously agreed to receive a copy of the notice of disconnection, contacting the Public Utility Commission or such other local government unit as the commission shall, by rule or regulation, designate.

S.B. 1216, P.N. 2146, Regular Sess. (Pa. 1975). Since the PUC's interim regulations and Section 402.2 had overlapping features, the PUC deemed it necessary to rescind its interim regulations and substitute them with new interim regulations. On October 26, 1976, the PUC amended Title 52 by adopting new interim regulations at 52 Pa. Code §§ 55.1—55.6. The PUC adopted these regulations pursuant to its authority under Sections 401, 402.2, 901, 902, and 905 of the Public Utility Law, 66 P.S. §§ 1171, 1172, 1341, 1342, 1345. 6 Pa.B. 2739 (October 30, 1976).

#### C. *The PUC's Establishment Of The Chapter 56 Regulations*

Subsequently, the PUC initiated a proposed rulemaking to establish a comprehensive set of rules governing the procedures by which residential utility service is provided and may be terminated by electric, gas, steam heat, water, and sewage utilities. The proposed regulations addressed billing practices and procedures, credit and deposit standards, the grounds for which service may be interrupted, discontinued, or terminated, and the procedures which must be adhered to before a cessation of service can occur. The PUC also proposed three-tier complaint procedures beginning on the utility level, continuing with informal conferences with PUC staff, and resulting in a formal PUC complaint. 6 Pa.B. 2998 (December 4, 1976). On April 21, 1978, after considering stakeholder comments and holding hearings on the proposed regulations to govern consumer standards and billing practices for residential service, the PUC entered an Order adopting Chapter 56 of Title 52, 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56. The PUC set forth the purpose of Chapter 56 as follows:

This chapter establishes and enforces uniform, fair and equitable residential public utility service standards governing eligibility criteria, credit and deposit practices, and account billing, termination and customer complaint procedures. This chapter assures adequate provision of residential public utility service, to restrict unreasonable termination of or refusal to provide that service and to provide functional alternatives to termination or refusal to provide that service . . . Every privilege conferred or duty required by this chapter imposes an obligation of good faith, honesty and fair dealing in its performance and enforcement. This chapter will be liberally construed to fulfill its purpose and policy and to insure justice for all concerned.

8 Pa.B. 1655 (June 17, 1978).

Chapter 56 initially consisted of Subchapters A—J and was applicable to “utilities,” which was defined therein as “any public utility or municipality, subject to PUC jurisdiction, which provides electric, gas, steam heat, sewer, or

water service.” The PUC established Chapter 56 pursuant to its authority under Sections 301, 304, 305, 401, 402, 412, 901, and 902 of the Public Utility Law, 66 P.S. 1141, 1144, 1145, 1171, 1172, 1182, 1341, 1342. *Id.*

#### D. *Implementation Of Former Chapter 14 Of The Code*

On November 30, 2004, former Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell, signed into law Act 201 of 2004 (Act 201), the Responsible Utility Consumer Protection Act. Act 201 amended the Public Utility Code, which was enacted by H.B. 489, P.L. 598, Regular Sess. (Pa. 1977) and replaced the Public Utility Law in 1978, by adding Chapter 14, 66 Pa.C.S. Chapter 14. Act 201 amended the Code by adding what is now the former Chapter 14. The former Chapter 14 of the Code sought, among other things, to eliminate opportunities for customers capable of paying public utility bills to avoid paying those bills on time. This represented the first significant change to the Commission's rules regarding public utilities' residential service standards with respect to billing and related issues in more than 25 years. As stated in the ‘declaration of policy’ formerly found in Section 1402 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1402, the General Assembly determined that the Commission's prior rules had not successfully managed the issue of bill payment and that increasing amounts of unpaid bills threatened paying customers with higher rates due to other customers' delinquencies. Accordingly, the goal of the former Chapter 14 was to increase timely collections, while ensuring that service is available to all customers based on equitable terms and conditions. With respect to the PUC's Chapter 56 regulations, Act 201 provided:

The addition of 66 Pa.C.S. Ch. 14 supersede[d] any inconsistent requirements imposed by law on public utilities, including, but not limited to, requirements imposed by 52 Pa. Code §§ 56.32, 56.33, 56.35, 56.41, 56.51, 56.53, 56.81, 56.82, 56.83, 56.91, 56.93, 56.94, 56.95, 56.96, 56.100, 56.101, 56.111, 56.112, 56.113, 56.114, 56.115, 56.116, 56.117, 56.181 and 56.191.

*Id.* Act 201 also stated that “[a]ll other regulations [we]re abrogated to the extent of any inconsistency with 66 Pa.C.S. Ch. 14.” Chapter 14 of the Public Utility Code, however, applied only to electric distribution companies, large natural gas distribution companies (NGDCs), and water distribution companies. Additionally, Chapter 14 was initially set to expire on December 31, 2014. *Id.*

In 2005, the Commission entered a series of Orders addressing the implementation of the former Chapter 14 at Docket No. M-0041802F0002. Additionally, since the former Chapter 14 of the Code superseded certain of the Commission's then-existing regulations regarding standards and billing practices for residential public utility service in Chapter 56, the Commission, in 2006, initiated a rulemaking at Docket No. L-00060182 to amend Chapter 56 so that it could effectively and fully administer and enforce the former Chapter 14. Following the advance notice of proposed rulemaking and notice of proposed rulemaking processes, the Commission promulgated final-form regulations that revised Chapter 56 to ensure that the regulations codified therein complied with the former Chapter 14. See Rulemaking to Amend the Provisions of 52 Pa. Code, Chapter 56 to Comply with the Provisions of 66 Pa.C.S. Chapter 14; General Review of Regulations, Docket No. L-00060182 (Revised Final Rulemaking Order entered June 13, 2011). The final-form regulations became effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on October 8, 2011. 41 Pa.B. 5473 (October 8, 2011).

### E. *Reauthorization Of The Former Chapter 14 Of The Code*

When it enacted the former Chapter 14 of the Code, the General Assembly provided for its sunset in 10 years, unless re-enacted. In 2014, the General Assembly enacted Act 155 of 2014, P.L. 2545, which reauthorized the former Chapter 14 for an additional 10 years. To implement the reauthorized former Chapter 14, the Commission, in 2015, issued a Tentative Implementation Order and Final Implementation Order at Docket No. M-2014-2448824. Moreover, in 2016, the Commission initiated a rulemaking to amend its Chapter 56 regulations in response to the reauthorization of the former Chapter 14. After the notice of proposed rulemaking process, the Commission promulgated final-form regulations, which became effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on June 1, 2019. See Rulemaking to Amend the Provision of 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56 to Comply with the Amended Provisions of 66 Pa.C.S. Chapter 14, Docket No. L-2015-2508421 (Final Rulemaking Order entered February 28, 2019) (2019 Final Rulemaking Order); see also, 49 Pa.B. 2815 (June 1, 2019).

### F. *Sunset Of The Former Chapter 14 Of The Code*

By its own terms, the former Chapter 14 expired on December 31, 2024. In anticipation of the sunset of the former Chapter 14, the Commission entered a Statement of Policy on December 24, 2024, at Docket No. M-2024-3052328, to provide certainty to public utilities, consumers, and affected stakeholders regarding, inter alia, payment arrangements and public utility service terminations. Sunset of Chapter 14, Title 66 of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Code, Docket No. M-2024-3052328 (Statement of Policy entered December 24, 2024) (Statement of Policy). The Statement of Policy provides that Chapter 56 of the Commission's regulations remain in effect until amended and that all final orders issued pursuant to the former Chapter 14 of the Code remain in effect and enforceable until the Commission abides by the specific process to amend an existing final order as prescribed by Chapter 7 of the Code, 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 701—703. *Id.* at 7.

On November 20, 2025, the Commission passed the Motion of Chairman Stephen M. DeFrank, at Docket No. M-2024-3052328, directing next steps with respect to the sunset of Chapter 14. Chapter 14, Title 66 of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Code, Docket No. M-2024-3052328 (Motion entered November 20, 2025) (Motion). The Commission found that it is now appropriate to move forward with a NOPR to incorporate into the Commission's regulations the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, as it was in effect prior to its sunset, including those currently being followed by the Commission via its Statement of Policy. *Id.* at 1. In adopting the Motion, the Commission directed Commission staff to prepare a NOPR for the Commission's January 15, 2026 Public Meeting. *Id.* at 2.

### *Discussion*

“As a creature of legislation, the Commission possesses only the authority the state legislature has specifically granted to it in the Code.” *Pickford v. Pub. Util. Comm'n*, 4 A.3d 707, 713 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2010); see *Feingold v. Bell of Pennsylvania*, 383 A.2d 791 (Pa. 1977). For over 25 years, the Commission has been following precedent in making consistent, evenhanded, predictable decisions evaluating utilities' termination procedures and residential consumers' requests for Commission-ordered payment arrangements regarding arrearages. Although the provi-

sions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code have expired, the Commission has continued to make decisions in alignment with prior decisions pursuant to the Commission's Statement of Policy, the current Chapter 56 of its regulations, and the persuasive statutory authority in Chapters 13 and 15 of the Code, 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1301—1330, 1501—1512. See e.g., *Ronald Crawford v. Philadelphia Gas Works*, Docket No. C-2025-3055235 (Order entered November 18, 2025) (issuing a payment arrangement pursuant to the Commission's Statement of Policy, which cites former Section 1405(a), previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1405(a)). It is the Commission's obligation to ensure the provision of safe and reliable utility service at just and reasonable rates. See e.g., 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1301, 1501.

Thus, even without the former Chapter 14 of the Code, there is sufficient statutory support in Chapters 13 and 15 of the Code for the promulgation of provisions in the former Chapter 14 to be added to Chapter 56 of our regulations to preserve the integrity of quasi-judiciary administrative due process before the Commission. See gen'lly Statement of Policy. Moving forward with the instant rulemaking will instill a consistent regulatory framework for public utilities, consumers, and affected stakeholders. This rulemaking will help to ensure clarity for public utility operations and allow consumer households to budget for essential public utility services accordingly. As noted in the Statement of Policy, the Commission will continue to ensure that public utility service is provided on a reasonably continuous basis without unreasonable interruptions or delay and that every public utility tariff governing the conditions of service is reasonable to maintain adequate, efficient, safe and reasonable service at just and reasonable rates. See 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 1301, 1501. Doing so mitigates unnecessary expenses and administrative burdens for the public, the public utilities, and the Commission and is in the public interest.

As detailed above, Chapter 56 of the Commission's regulations pre-dated Chapter 14 of the Code and the Commission's regulation of the standards and billing practices for residential public utility service is, thus, grounded in its authority under other provisions of the Code. Relevant legal authority to support the incorporation into the Commission's regulations of the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion, includes the Commission's jurisdiction and authority pursuant to the Code over the regulation of public utilities generally under Section 501, reports by public utilities under Section 504, just and reasonable rates under Section 1301, discrimination in rates under Section 1304, the advance payment of rates under Section 1305, the character and service of facilities under Section 1501, discrimination in service under Section 1502, the discontinuance of service under Section 1503, and the standards of service and facilities under Section 1504. 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 501, 504, 1301, 1304-1305, 1501—1504. The Commission also has relevant authority set forth in the Code pursuant to Section 308.1 regarding consumer protection and information, including informal complaints, Section 505 regarding the duty to furnish information to the Commission, Section 506 regarding the inspection of facilities and records, Section 701 regarding complaints, and Section 1509 regarding billing procedures. 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 308.1, 505, 506, 701, 1509.

Therefore, in this NOPR Order, we propose to amend the Commission's Chapter 56 regulations to incorporate the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code. We

also propose minor ministerial revisions to the Chapter 56 regulations in line with these amendments. In particular, we propose:

- Modifying the existing title of Subchapter A to eliminate the reference to the former Chapter 14 and replace it with appropriate language;
- Modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.2 (relating to definitions) to incorporate two definitions formerly found in Section 1403 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1403;
- Modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.22 (relating to accrual or late payment charges) to incorporate language regarding the waiver of improperly assessed late payment charges formerly found in Section 1409 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1409, and eliminate a citation to the former Section 1409;
- Creating a new regulation at Section 56.102 to incorporate the residential field visit charge for a city natural gas distribution operation formerly found in Section 1414(b) of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1414(b);
- Creating a new regulation at Section 56.153 to incorporate certain public utility duties regarding customer or applicant contact for payment arrangements formerly found in Section 1410.1 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1410.1;
- Modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.171 (relating to general rule) to incorporate certain language regarding public utility contact prior to the filing of certain formal complaints formerly found in Section 1410 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1410, and modifying the title of this section;
- Modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.181 (relating to duties of parties; disputing party's duty to pay undisputed portions of bills; public utility's duty to pay interest whenever overpayment found) to incorporate language regarding the obligation to pay subsequent bills which are not in dispute formerly found in Section 1410 of the Code;
- Creating a new regulation at Section 56.182 to incorporate the payment arrangement procedures formerly found in Section 1405(a)—(e) of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1405(a)—(e), and modifying the existing heading under which this section falls;
- Creating a new regulation at Section 56.225 to incorporate the prohibition against surcharges for uncollectible expenses formerly found in Section 1408 of the code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1408; and
- Modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.251 (relating to statement of purposes and policy) to eliminate a reference to the former Section 1417 of the Code, previously codified at 66 Pa.C.S. § 1417.

These proposed modifications to the existing regulations and proposed new regulations are discussed in detail below and contained in the attached Annex.

Where a provision of the former Chapter 14 is not addressed in this NOPR Order or the attached Annex, the Commission has initially determined that it is duly accounted for in the Commission's existing regulations or it is otherwise deemed by the Commission that no further action on that provision is necessary at this time.

We also note that the instant rulemaking is not intended as a general review of Chapter 56 of the Commission's regulations. This rulemaking is intended to

expeditiously amend the Chapter 56 regulations to address the areas identified above and provide prompt regulatory certainty in light of the expiration of Chapter 14 of the Code. While we recognize that a general review to evaluate whether there is a need for further amendments to the Chapter 56 regulations may be necessary in the future, this rulemaking serves to incorporate the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, as it was in effect prior to its sunset, including those currently being followed by the Commission via its Statement of Policy. Additionally, we ask interested stakeholders to organize all comments filed with the Commission according to the section headings in this NOPR Order to increase readability for public utilities, consumers, the Commission, and all other stakeholders. Lastly, we ask our jurisdictional public utilities to identify in their comments any financial or economic impact on their operations that may be associated with the proposed regulations. The PUC requests that the regulated community provide specific estimates of the costs and/or savings associated with compliance, including any legal, accounting or consulting procedures which may be required and thoroughly explain how the dollar estimates were derived.

#### *Subchapter A. Preliminary Provisions For Utilities And Customers Subject To Chapter 14 Of The Public Utility Code*

We propose modifying the existing title of Subchapter A to eliminate the reference to the former Chapter 14 of the Code. The former Section 1417 of the Code specified that former Chapter 14 did not apply to victims of domestic violence under a protection from abuse order as provided by 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 61 or a court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth, which provides clear evidence of domestic violence against the applicant or customer. Accordingly, the Commission established Subchapters A—K of Chapter 56 to apply to customers subject to the former Chapter 14 and separately established Subchapters L—V of Chapter 56 to apply to victims of domestic violence with a protection from abuse order or a court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth, which provides clear evidence of domestic violence. See gen'l'y, 2019 Final Rulemaking Order. We are not altering this framework. However, we propose eliminating the reference to the former Chapter 14 in the title of Subchapter A and replacing it so that the title is "Preliminary provisions for utilities and customers who are not victims of domestic violence with a protection from abuse order or a court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth which provides clear evidence of domestic violence." This title will maintain a clear distinction between Subchapters A—K and Subchapters L—V and the respective regulations therein.

The Annex reflects this modification. Annex at 1. We seek comments on the proposed modification to the title of Subchapter A in the Annex.

#### *§ 56.2. Definitions*

We propose modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.2 to add two definitions, including a definition for the term 'change in income' and a definition for the term 'significant change in circumstances.' Consistent with the former Section 1403 of the Code, we propose defining a 'change in income' as "[a] decrease in household income of 20% or more if the customer's household income level exceeds 200% of the Federal poverty level or a decrease in household income of 10% or more if the customer's household income level is 200% or less of the Federal poverty level." Additionally, consistent with the former

Section 1403 of the Code, we propose defining a ‘significant change in circumstances’ as:

Any of the following criteria when verified by the public utility and experienced by customers with household income less than 300% of the Federal poverty level:

- (i) The onset of a chronic or acute illness resulting in a significant loss in the customer’s household income.
- (ii) Catastrophic damage to the customer’s residence resulting in a significant net cost to the customer’s household.
- (iii) Loss of the customer’s residence.
- (iv) Increase in the customer’s number of dependents in the household.

By modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.2 to add definitions for ‘change in income’ and ‘significant change in circumstances,’ we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion.

The Annex reflects these definitions.<sup>1</sup> Annex at 1-2. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed modifications to Section 56.2 in the Annex.

#### § 56.22. *Accrual Of Late Payment Charges*

We propose modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.22(d) to add language regarding the waiver of improperly assessed late payment charges. Consistent with the former Section 1409 of the Code, we propose language that provides that “[a] public utility shall waive late payment charges on any customer accounts if the charges were improperly assessed.”<sup>2</sup> By modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.22(d) to add language regarding the waiver of improperly assessed late payment charges, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion. We also propose eliminating the citation to the former Section 1409 in this regulation as it is no longer relevant.

The Annex reflects these modifications. Annex at 2-3. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed modifications to Section 56.22 in the Annex.

#### § 56.102. *Residential Field Visit Charge*

We propose creating a new regulation at Section 56.102 to address the residential field visit charge for a city natural gas distribution operation. Consistent with the former Section 1414(b) of the Code, we propose language that provides that “[a] city natural gas distribution operation is authorized to charge a minimum fee of \$10 for each instance in which its representative is required to visit the residence of a customer in the process of attempting to complete required service termination steps.” By creating a new regulation at Section 56.102 to address the residential field visit charge, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion.

The Annex reflects this new regulation. Annex at 3. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed new regulation in Section 56.102 in the Annex.

<sup>1</sup> The Annex also includes the existing definitions that appear before and after definitions we propose to add so that the placement of the new definitions can be readily identified. One of these existing definitions is for the term “Class A water utility,” which is defined as “[a] water utility with annual revenues of greater than \$1 million.” As noted in Use of Fully Projected Future Test Year, 52 Pa. Code Chapter 53, Docket No. L-2012-2317273, at 124, n. 40 (Final Form Rulemaking Order entered January 8, 2025), the Commission intends to review its regulations to ensure that all adjustments to uniform system of accounts that have recently occurred are properly reflected in regulations.

<sup>2</sup> The former Section 1409 also addressed the waiver of any late payment charges levied by a public utility as a result of a delinquent account for customers with a gross monthly household income not exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level, which is already covered by the Commission’s existing regulation at Section 56.22(d).

#### § 56.153. *Public Utility Duties*

We propose creating a new regulation at Section 56.153 to address certain public utility duties regarding customer or applicant contact for payment arrangements. The former Section 1410.1 of the Code set forth duties for a public utility to follow when a customer or applicant contacts the utility to make a payment arrangement as required by the former Section 1410 of the Code.<sup>3</sup> As such, by referring to the former Section 1410 of the Code, the former Section 1410.1 referred to the requirement that a customer first contact the public utility before filing a complaint. This requirement appears in existing Sections 56.162 and 56.166 for informal complaints and will now appear in Section 56.171 for certain formal complaints, as discussed below. Thus, we propose the following new regulation regarding public utility duties:

When a customer or applicant contacts a public utility to make a payment arrangement as required by §§ 56.166 and 56.171 (relating to informal complaints; and general rule for formal complaints), the public utility shall:

- (1) Provide information about the public utility’s universal service programs, including a customer assistance program.
- (2) Refer the customer or applicant to the universal service program administrator of the public utility to determine eligibility for a program and to apply for enrollment in a program.
- (3) Have an affirmative responsibility to attempt to collect payment on an overdue account. Failure to make reasonable attempts to collect payments on overdue accounts with arrearages in excess of \$10,000 may result in civil fines or other appropriate sanctions by the Commission.

This new regulation is consistent with the former Section 1410.1 of the Code.<sup>4</sup>

We propose placing this regulation in a new Section 56.153 because, in this context, a customer or applicant’s contact with the public utility for a payment arrangement takes place before an informal or formal complaint is filed pursuant to the requirement in the former Section 1410 of the Code, which, as noted above, appears at existing Sections 56.162 and 56.166 for informal complaints and will now appear Section 56.171 for certain formal complaints. The regulations addressing informal and formal complaints come after the new Section 56.153 and, as such, placing the new regulation before these regulations flows chronologically. By creating a new regulation at Section 56.153 to address certain public utility duties regarding customer or applicant contact for payment arrangements, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion.

The Annex reflects this new regulation. Annex at 3. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed new regulation in Section 56.153 in the Annex.

#### § 56.171. *General Rule*

We propose modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.171 to add language regarding public utility contact

<sup>3</sup> The former Section 1410 required a customer or applicant to affirm that they have first contacted the public utility for the purpose of resolving the problem about which the customer wishes to file a complaint before the Commission will accept an informal or formal complaint.

<sup>4</sup> The former Section 1410.1 also contained a fourth duty to report to the Commission the number of medical certificates and renewals submitted and accepted in the service territory, which is already accounted for in the Commission’s existing regulation at Section 56.231(b).

prior to the filing of certain formal complaints. As noted above, the former Section 1410 of the Code required a customer or applicant to affirm that they have first contacted the public utility for the purpose of resolving the problem about which the customer wishes to file a complaint before the Commission will accept an informal or formal complaint. For informal complaints, the Commission's existing regulations at Sections 56.162 and 56.166 currently require a complainant to first contact the public utility for the purpose of resolving the problem about which they wish to file a complaint. The same requirement does not currently appear in Chapter 56 for formal complaints. However, requiring such public utility contact before the filing of a formal complaint that seeks review of a decision from BCS would be duplicative because the complainant was already required to contact the public utility prior to filing the informal complaint. Thus, we propose the following language regarding formal complaints in Section 56.171:

For a formal complaint that is not a request for review of an informal complaint decision of the Bureau of Consumer Services, the Commission will accept complaints only from complainants who affirm that they have first contacted the public utility for the purpose of resolving the problem about which the complainant wishes to file a complaint. If the complainant has not contacted the public utility, the Commission will direct the complainant to the public utility.

This language is consistent with the former Section 1410 of the Code.<sup>5</sup> It also aligns with the Commission's Formal Complaint Form,<sup>6</sup> which specifies in No. 7 that if a formal complaint is an appeal of a decision from BCS, no further contact with the public utility is required, but that if a formal complaint is not an appeal of a decision from BCS, the complainant must first contact the public utility.

We propose placing this additional language in a new Section 56.171(b) and, accordingly, the language currently in Section 56.171 becomes Section 56.171(a). By modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.171 to add language regarding public utility contact prior to the filing of certain formal complaints, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion. We also propose modifying the title of this section to make it "General rule for formal complaints" to promote clarity.

The Annex reflects these modifications. Annex at 3-4. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed modifications to Section 56.171 in the Annex.

§ 56.181. *Duties Of Parties; Disputing Party's Duty To Pay Undisputed Portion Of Bills; Public Utility's Duty To Pay Interest Whenever Overpayment Found*

We propose modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.181 to add language regarding the obligation to pay subsequent bills which are not in dispute. Consistent with the former Section 1410 of the Code, we propose language that provides that, "[p]ending the outcome of an informal complaint, the disputing party shall be obligated to pay that portion of a bill which is not honestly disputed and subsequent bills which are not in dispute" and that,

<sup>5</sup> The former Section 1410 also contained a requirement regarding the obligation to pay the portion of the bill which is not in dispute, which is already accounted for in the Commission's existing regulation at Section 56.181, and subsequent bills which are not in dispute, which is now being addressed in the proposed modification to Section 56.181 below. The former Section 1410 also contained a requirement regarding attestation for formal complaints, which is already accounted for in the Commission's existing regulations at Sections 5.22 and 5.411.

<sup>6</sup> The Commission's Formal Complaint Form is available at <https://www.puc.pa.gov/documents/utility-files/604/FormalComplaintFormPrint09282023.pdf>.

"[p]rior to the hearing on a formal complaint or prior to the issuance of a Commission order when no hearing is to be held in a formal complaint proceeding, the customer shall be required to pay that amount which the consumer services representative determines is not disputed and subsequent bills which are not in dispute." By modifying the existing regulation at Section 56.181 to add language regarding the obligation to pay subsequent bills that are not in dispute, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion.

The Annex reflects these modifications. Annex at 4. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed modifications to Section 56.181 in the Annex.

§ 56.182. *Payment Arrangement Procedures*

We propose creating a new regulation at Section 56.182 to address payment arrangement procedures, including the general rule, the length of payment arrangements, customer assistance program referrals, the number of payment arrangements, and the extension of payment arrangements. The former Section 1405(a)—(e) of the Code addressed these payment arrangement procedures. The Commission previously implemented the former Section 1405 through a series of Orders entered at Docket No. M-0041802F0002. As set forth in the Commission's Statement of Policy, all final orders issued pursuant to the former Chapter 14 of the Code remain in effect and enforceable until the Commission abides by the specific process to amend an existing final order as prescribed by Chapter 7 of the Code, 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 701—703. In light of this Statement of Policy, going beyond the provisions of the former Section 1405(a)—(e) to encompass these Orders in the instant rulemaking would be redundant. Therefore, we propose the following new regulation at Section 56.182:

(a) *General rule.* The Commission may establish payment arrangements between a public utility, customers and applicants within the limits established by this section.

(b) *Length of payment arrangements.* The length of time for a customer to resolve an unpaid balance on an account that is subject to a payment arrangement that is investigated by the Commission and is entered into by a public utility and a customer must not extend beyond:

(1) Five years for customers with a gross monthly household income level not exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level.

(2) Three years for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level and not more than 250% of the Federal poverty level.

(3) One year for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 250% of the Federal poverty level and not more than 300% of the Federal poverty level.

(4) Six months for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 300% of the Federal poverty level.

(c) *Customer assistance programs.* Customer assistance program rates must be timely paid and must not be the subject of payment arrangements negotiated or approved by the Commission.

(d) *Number of payment arrangements.* Absent a change in income, the Commission shall not establish

or order a public utility to establish a second or subsequent payment arrangement if a customer has defaulted on a previous payment arrangement established by a Commission order or decision. A public utility may, at its discretion, enter into a second or subsequent payment arrangement with a customer.

(e) *Extension of payment arrangements.* If the customer defaults on a payment arrangement established under subsections (a) and (b) as a result of a significant change in circumstance, the Commission may reinstate the payment arrangement and extend the remaining term for an initial period of 6 months. The initial extension period may be extended for an additional 6 months for good cause shown.

This new regulation is consistent with the former Section 1405(a)—(e).

In particular, the proposed Section 56.182(a) mirrors the former Section 1405(a)<sup>7</sup> except for minor language changes appropriate for the Commission's regulations, including a change from 'is authorized' to 'may' and from 'chapter' to 'section.' The proposed Sections 56.182(b)—(e) also mirror the former Sections 1405(b)—(e) except for a minor language change from 'shall' to 'must' to comply with the *Pennsylvania Code & Bulletin Style Manual*. By creating a new regulation at Section 56.182 to address payment arrangement procedures, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion. We also propose modifying the existing heading under which this new regulation falls to make it "Payment of bills pending resolution of disputes and complaints, and payment arrangement procedures" to account for the new section regarding payment arrangement procedures.

The Annex reflects this new regulation. Annex at 4-5. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed new regulation in Section 56.182 in the Annex.

§ 56.225. *Surcharges For Uncollectible Expenses Prohibited*

We propose creating a new regulation at Section 56.225 to incorporate the prohibition against surcharges for uncollectible expenses formerly found in Section 1408 of the Code. Consistent with the former Section 1408 of the Code, we propose the following language:

A public utility may not implement a cash receipts reconciliation clause or another automatic surcharge mechanism for uncollectible expenses. This section shall not affect any clause associated with universal service and energy conservation.

By creating a new regulation at Section 56.225 to address surcharges for uncollectible expenses, we are incorporating the provisions of the former Chapter 14 of the Code, in accordance with the Motion. Accordingly, the Annex reflects this addition. Annex at 5. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed addition of Section 56.225 in the Annex.

§ 56.251. *Statement Of Purpose And Policy*

We propose modifying existing Section 56.251 by eliminating the reference to the former Section 1417 of the Code. As noted above, the former Section 1417 specified that former Chapter 14 did not apply to victims of domestic violence under a protection from abuse order as provided by 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 61 or a court order issued

by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth, which provides clear evidence of domestic violence against the applicant or customer. Accordingly, the Commission established Subchapters A—K of Chapter 56 to apply to customers subject to the former Chapter 14 and separately established Subchapters L—V of Chapter 56 to apply to victims of domestic violence with a protection from abuse order or a court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth, which provides clear evidence of domestic violence. See gen'l'y, 2019 Final Rulemaking Order. We are not altering this framework. However, we propose eliminating the citation to the former Section 1417 of the Code in this Section as it is no longer relevant.

The Annex reflects this modification. Annex at 5-6. The Commission seeks comments on the proposed modification to Section 56.251 in the Annex.

*Conclusion*

For the reasons set forth above, the Commission commences the instant rulemaking process. The Commission seeks comments from interested stakeholders regarding the proposed modifications to the existing regulations and proposed new regulations set forth in the Annex attached to this NOPR Order.

Accordingly, under Sections 308.1, 501, 504—506, 701, 1301, 1304-1305, and 1501—1504, and 1509 of the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa.C.S. §§ 308.1, 501, 504—506, 701, 1301, 1304-1305, 1501—1504, and 1509; Sections 201 and 202 of the Act of July 31, 1968. P.L. 769, No. 240, referred to as the Commonwealth Documents Law, 45 P.S. §§ 1201-1202, and the regulations promulgated thereunder at 1 Pa. Code §§ 7.1, 7.2, and 7.5 (relating to notice of proposed rulemaking required; adoption of regulations; and approval as to legality); Section 204(b) of the Commonwealth Attorneys Act, 71 P.S. § 732.204(b); Section 5 of the Regulatory Review Act, 71 P.S. § 745.5, and Section 612 of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. § 232, and the regulations promulgated thereunder at 4 Pa. Code §§ 7.231—7.234 (relating to fiscal notes), we are considering adopting the proposed amendments to the existing regulations and proposed new regulations in 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56 set forth in the Annex attached hereto;

*Therefore,*

*It Is Ordered:*

1. That a proposed rulemaking be opened to consider the proposed amendments to the existing regulations and proposed new regulations in 52 Pa. Code Chapter 56 set forth in the attached Annex.

2. That a copy of this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex shall be posted on the Commission's website at Docket No. L-2025-3058767.

3. That the Secretary shall serve this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex upon all jurisdictional electric distribution public utilities, natural gas distribution public utilities, city natural gas distribution operations, steam heat utilities, water public utilities, wastewater public utilities, the Commission's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement, the Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate, and the Pennsylvania Office of Small Business Advocate.

4. That the Law Bureau shall deliver this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex to the Office of Attorney General for review as to form and legality and to the Governor's Budget Office for review as to fiscal impact.

<sup>7</sup> The former Section 1405(a) also addressed the Commission's investigation of complaints regarding payment disputes between a public utility, applicant, and customers, which is already covered by the Commission's existing regulations at Sections 56.163, 56.166, 56.171, and 56.173.

5. That the Law Bureau shall deliver this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex for review and comment to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission and Legislative Standing Committees.

6. That the Law Bureau shall deposit this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex with the Legislative Reference Bureau to be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

7. That interested stakeholders may file written comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex within 60 days following publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Comments may be electronically filed through the Commission’s eFiling system or by mail to Secretary Matthew L. Homsher, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120. All comments should reference Docket No. L-2025-3058767. All comments shall be posted on the Commission’s website.

8. That interested stakeholders may file written reply comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Order and Annex within 90 days following publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Comments may be electronically filed through the Commission’s eFiling system or by mail to Secretary Matthew L. Homsher, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120. All comments should reference Docket No. L-2025-3058767. All comments shall be posted on the Commission’s website.

9. The contact persons for this matter are Assistant Counsel Stephanie A. Wilson, (717) 787-1859, stepwilson@pa.gov; Executive Deputy Chief Counsel Kriss E. Brown, (717) 787-4518, kribrown@pa.gov; and Regulatory Review Assistant Karen Thorne, (717) 772-4597, kathorne@pa.gov in the Commission’s Law Bureau, as well as Manager of Regulatory Compliance Bobbi Anderson, (717) 782-5238, robertand@pa.gov in the Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Services.

MATTHEW L. HOMSHER,  
*Secretary*

ORDER ADOPTED: February 19, 2026

ORDER ENTERED: February 19, 2026

**Statement of Vice Chair Kimberly Barrow**

As I stated back at the November 2025 public meeting, since Chapter 14 sunset the end of December 2024,<sup>8</sup> I agree that the time is right to determine the next steps on utility and customer protections. I fully supported the Commission taking the initiative to provide confidence and expectations for customers and utilities when facing such uncertain times as terminations or past due balances. However, I do not believe that the expired Chapter 14 provisions should be the ultimate goal for this rulemaking. The Commission’s mission is to balance the needs of consumers and utilities; ensure safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; and protect the public interest. Ignoring lessons learned in the past 10—20 years Chapter 14 had been in place and ignoring the current landscape of affordability and vulnerability faced by Pennsylvania customers today does not achieve this mission. Simply copying and pasting the prior Chapter 14 into our regulations is not in the public interest, and is frankly a disservice. Accordingly, I would have appreciated seeking comments on and potentially incorporating into Chapter 56 the following topics:

- Adjusting payment arrangement lengths and levels;
- Adding an increased change in income as a justification for a new payment arrangement;
- Extending payment arrangements to small businesses;
- Creating a term length for restarting the clock for defaulted and fulfilled payment arrangements;
- Expanding the group of people who can sign a medical certificate;
- Establishing a summer termination prohibition procedure based upon heat advisories;
- Updating and/or creating provisions reconciling termination notices, or lack thereof, and LIHEAP eligibility for crisis grants;
- Updating provisions relating to personal contact prior to termination or other interruption or disruption of service; and
- Increasing minimum federal poverty levels for: waiver of late payments, prohibiting reconnection fees, and prohibiting in-person meter reading fees.

The Commission has had 20 years to evaluate what works and what doesn’t work for customers with regard to affordability and utilities with regard to collections under Chapter 14, and this is the opportunity to utilize the knowledge gained over those two decades. I’m disappointed that the Commission is wasting this opportunity to provide meaningful guidance in this area.

February 19, 2026

KIMBERLY BARROW,  
*Vice Chairperson*

**Fiscal Note:** 57-348. No fiscal impact; recommends adoption.

**Annex A**

**TITLE 52. PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**PART I. PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**Subpart C. FIXED SERVICES PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**CHAPTER 56. STANDARDS AND BILLING PRACTICES FOR RESIDENTIAL PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICE**

**Subchapter A. PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS FOR UTILITIES AND CUSTOMERS [ SUBJECT TO CHAPTER 14 OF THE PUBLIC UTILITY CODE ] WHO ARE NOT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER OR A COURT ORDER ISSUED BY A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION IN THIS COMMONWEALTH WHICH PROVIDES CLEAR EVIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**§ 56.2. Definitions.**

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

\* \* \* \* \*

*Billing period*—In the case of public utilities supplying gas, electric and steam heating service, the billing period must conform to the definition of “billing month.” In the case of water and wastewater service, a billing period may be monthly, bimonthly or quarterly as provided in the tariff of the public utility. Customers shall be permitted to receive bills monthly and be notified of their rights thereto.

<sup>8</sup> 66 Pa.C.S. § 1419.

**Change in income**—A decrease in household income of 20% or more if the customer's household income level exceeds 200% of the Federal poverty level or a decrease in household income of 10% or more if the customer's household income level is 200% or less of the Federal poverty level.

*Class A water utility*—A water utility with annual revenues greater than \$1 million.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Residential service*—

(i) Public utility service supplied to a dwelling, including service provided to a commercial establishment if concurrent service is provided to a residential dwelling attached thereto.

(ii) The term does not include public utility service provided to a hotel or motel.

**Significant change in circumstance**—Any of the following criteria when verified by the public utility and experienced by customers with household income less than 300% of the Federal poverty level:

**(i) The onset of a chronic or acute illness resulting in a significant loss of the customer's household income.**

**(ii) Catastrophic damage to the customer's residence resulting in a significant net cost to the customer's household.**

**(iii) Loss of the customer's residence.**

**(iv) Increase in the customer's number of dependents in the household.**

*Small natural gas distribution utility*—A public utility providing natural gas distribution services subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission that meets one of the following:

(i) Has annual gas operating revenues of less than \$6 million per year.

(ii) Is not connected to an interstate gas pipeline by means of a direct connection or any indirect connection through the distribution system of another natural gas public utility or through a natural gas gathering system.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Subchapter B. BILLING AND PAYMENT STANDARDS**

**PAYMENTS**

**§ 56.22. Accrual of late payment charges.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(d) A public utility may waive late payment charges on any customer accounts. **A public utility shall waive late payment charges on any customer accounts if the charges were improperly assessed.** The Commission may only order a waiver of late payment charges levied by a public utility as a result of a delinquent account for customers with a gross monthly household income not exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level. [ See 66 Pa.C.S. § 1409 (relating to late payment charge waiver). ]

**Subchapter E. TERMINATION OF SERVICE NOTICE PROCEDURES PRIOR TO TERMINATION**

(Editor's Note: Section 56.102 is proposed to be added and is printed in regular type to enhance readability.)

**§ 56.102. Residential field visit charge.**

A city natural gas distribution operation is authorized to charge a minimum fee of \$10 for each instance in which its representative is required to visit the residence of a customer in the process of attempting to complete required service termination steps.

**Subchapter F. DISPUTES; TERMINATION DISPUTES; INFORMAL AND FORMAL COMPLAINTS PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANY DISPUTE PROCEDURES**

(Editor's Note: Section 56.153 is proposed to be added and is printed in regular type to enhance readability.)

**§ 56.153. Public utility duties.**

When a customer or applicant contacts a public utility to make a payment arrangement as required by §§ 56.166 and 56.171 (relating to informal complaints; and general rule for formal complaints), the public utility shall:

(1) Provide information about the public utility's universal service programs, including a customer assistance program.

(2) Refer the customer or applicant to the universal service program administrator of the public utility to determine eligibility for a program and to apply for enrollment in a program.

(3) Have an affirmative responsibility to attempt to collect payment on an overdue account. Failure to make reasonable attempts to collect payments on overdue accounts with arrearages in excess of \$10,000 may result in civil fines or other appropriate sanctions by the Commission.

**FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

**§ 56.171. General rule for formal complaints.**

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, formal complaint proceedings will proceed according to the rules and regulations of the Commission governing complaint proceedings.

**(b) For a formal complaint that is not a request for review of an informal complaint decision of the Bureau of Consumer Services, the Commission will accept complaints only from complainants who affirm that they have first contacted the public utility for the purpose of resolving the problem about which the complainant wishes to file a complaint. If the complainant has not contacted the public utility, the Commission will direct the complainant to the public utility.**

**PAYMENT OF BILLS PENDING RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT PROCEDURES**

**§ 56.181. Duties of parties; disputing party's duty to pay undisputed portion of bills; public utility's duty to pay interest whenever overpayment found.**

Pending resolution of a dispute, including a termination dispute, the disputing party shall be required to pay the undisputed portion of bills, as described in this section.

(1) *Pending informal complaint.* Pending the outcome of an informal complaint, the disputing party shall be obligated to pay that portion of a bill which is not honestly disputed **and subsequent bills which are not in dispute.** An amount ultimately determined, by the

parties or the Commission, to have been validly due but not paid may be paid with interest at the tariff rate filed under § 56.22 (relating to accrual of late payment charges) except when interest charges have been reduced or eliminated by the parties or the Commission to facilitate payment by the disputing party.

(2) *Pending formal complaint.* Prior to the hearing on a formal complaint or prior to the issuance of a Commission order when no hearing is to be held in a formal complaint proceeding, the customer shall be required to pay that amount which the consumer services representative determines is not disputed **and subsequent bills which are not in dispute.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(*Editor's Note:* Section 56.182 is proposed to be added and is printed in regular type to enhance readability.)

**§ 56.182. Payment arrangement procedures.**

(a) *General rule.* The Commission may establish payment arrangements between a public utility, customers and applicants within the limits established by this section.

(b) *Length of payment arrangements.* The length of time for a customer to resolve an unpaid balance on an account that is subject to a payment arrangement that is investigated by the Commission and is entered into by a public utility and a customer must not extend beyond:

(1) Five years for customers with a gross monthly household income level not exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level.

(2) Three years for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 150% of the Federal poverty level and not more than 250% of the Federal poverty level.

(3) One year for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 250% of the Federal poverty level and not more than 300% of the Federal poverty level.

(4) Six months for customers with a gross monthly household income level exceeding 300% of the Federal poverty level.

(c) *Customer assistance programs.* Customer assistance program rates must be timely paid and must not be the subject of payment arrangements negotiated or approved by the Commission.

(d) *Number of payment arrangements.* Absent a change in income, the Commission shall not establish or order a public utility to establish a second or subsequent payment arrangement if a customer has defaulted on a previous payment arrangement established by a Commission order or decision. A public utility may, at its discretion, enter into a second or subsequent payment arrangement with a customer.

(e) *Extension of payment arrangements.* If the customer defaults on a payment arrangement established under subsections (a) and (b) as a result of a significant change in circumstance, the Commission may reinstate the payment arrangement and extend the remaining term for an initial period of 6 months. The initial extension period may be extended for an additional 6 months for good cause shown.

**Subchapter J. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

(*Editor's Note:* Section 56.225 is proposed to be added and is printed in regular type to enhance readability.)

**§ 56.225. Surcharges for uncollectible expenses prohibited.**

A public utility may not implement a cash receipts reconciliation clause or another automatic surcharge mechanism for uncollectible expenses. This section shall not affect any clause associated with universal service and energy conservation.

**Subchapter L. PROVISIONS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER OR A COURT ORDER ISSUED BY A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION IN THIS COMMONWEALTH WHICH PROVIDES CLEAR EVIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**§ 56.251. Statement of purpose and policy.**

Subchapters L—V apply to victims under a protection from abuse order as provided by 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 61 (relating to Protection from Abuse Act) or a court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in this Commonwealth which provides clear evidence of domestic violence against the applicant or customer [ **as provided by 66 Pa.C.S. § 1417 (relating to nonapplicability)** ]. These subchapters establish and enforce uniform, fair and equitable residential public utility service standards governing eligibility criteria, credit and deposit practices, and account billing, termination and customer complaint procedures. This chapter assures adequate provision of residential public utility service, to restrict unreasonable termination of or refusal to provide that service and to provide functional alternatives to termination or refusal to provide that service. Every privilege conferred or duty required under this chapter imposes an obligation of good faith, honesty and fair dealing in its performance and enforcement. This chapter will be liberally construed to fulfill its purpose and policy and to insure justice for all concerned.

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 26-762. Filed for public inspection May 29, 2026, 9:00 a.m.]

**GAME COMMISSION**

[ 58 PA. CODE CH. 139 ]

**Seasons and Bag Limits; Elk Management Area and Hunt Zones**

To effectively manage the wildlife resources of this Commonwealth, the Game Commission (commission) proposed at its April 11, 2026, meeting to amend § 139.18 (relating to elk management area and hunt zones) to rename and reorganize the elk management area hunt zones using current management data.

This proposed rulemaking will not have an adverse impact on the wildlife resources of this Commonwealth.

The authority for this proposed rulemaking is 34 Pa.C.S. (relating to Game and Wildlife Code).

This proposed rulemaking was made public at the April 11, 2026, meeting of the commission. Comments can be sent until July 3, 2026, to the Bureau of Information and Education, Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

1. *Purpose and Authority*

The purpose of the commission's established elk hunt zones is to provide managers with a method of monitoring