



Public Comment needed from small businesses for a Public Utility Commission Public Comment Hearing on NW Natural Gas Company's request to increase rates (UG 435)

Northwest Natural Gas Company known as "NW Natural" has asked the Oregon Public Utilities Commission permission to raise NW Natural's rates 9.7% for its small commercial customers. The Commission want to hear what rate payers think about this requested increase. So the Commission has set a Public Comment Hearing for 3/10/22 and needs to hear from the small business customers. NW Natural provides natural gas to small businesses throughout much of western Oregon for mostly heating and cooking, but includes for other business related uses.

This Public Comment Hearing is your chance to offer comment to the Commissioners in person via Zoom on **Thursday March 10, 2022** and by email.

Why should you submit a comment?

We need the Commission to hear the small business perspective. It's important to emphasize that small business is a vital part of our communities—they are not just a business, they are owned and operated by local people providing us our morning coffee, our groceries, or a nice night eating out. Or the materials we need for our transportation and our recreation, or all the stuff we may need for our work or home... things essential for our living standard and our quality of life in Oregon.

Key Events

PUC Public Comment UG 435	March 10th, 2022	6 PM (PST)
Attend via Zoom	https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HCG/ug435hcg11813.pdf	
Attend by Phone	Phone Number: 1 971 247 1195 Meeting ID: 816 8339 5354 Passcode: 5681303737	

To have the greatest impact when making your comments, members should focus on your own experience and understanding of the impact of increased rates on you and your business. Below SBUA provides some expert analysis of NW Natural's rate request and information that may be useful to you in your comments to the Public Utility Commission.

You can also submit your written comments via e-mail until 3/31/22 to
puc.hearings@state.or.us

Or by telephone to: Consumer Services Division - 503-378-6600
or 1-800-522-2404 (all relay calls accepted)



UG 435 Reviewed

NW Natural wants to increase the natural gas rates of the utility's small commercial customers (that is SBUA members) by 9.7%. As a group we need to remind the Commission that it needs to look closely at the increased costs since the last rate case. According to this NW Natural rate application in this case in 2022:

- Operating and maintenance costs of NW Natural Gas will have increased almost \$25 million since 2020, that's 14%
- The NW Natural Gas' depreciation expense will have increased \$21 million, that's 24% increase, and
- The company's net "utility plant-in-service" (think the storage tanks, gas pipes, and your gas meters) will have increased \$288 million or 16% or \$288 million. This will increase the Company's net plant-in-service to \$2,079 billion.

The needs of small businesses have been lost in the debate of fair rates when the Commission set rates in the past grouping them in with the large commercial customers that have different needs. We suggest that the Commission recognize that small business is a significant class within itself, and that the PUC has a duty to ensure the rates are FAIR and REASONABLE for all customers.

Please submit your comments and if you'd like to copy SBUA to your comments please add diane@utilityadvocates.org or guillermo@utilityadvocates.org