

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 19-057

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
d/b/a EVERSOURCE ENERGY**

**Petition for Base Rate Adjustment Pertaining to Fee Free
and New Start Programs**

**Order Approving Base Rate Adjustment Pertaining to Fee Free
and New Start Programs**

O R D E R N O. 26,568

January 25, 2022

In this order, the Commission approves an adjustment to Eversource's distribution charge rate effective for service rendered on and after February 1, 2022. For residential class customers, the average distribution charge rate will increase from 5.177 cents per kWh to 5.196 cents per kWh, an increase of 0.019 cents per kWh. This rate increase is designed to collect \$1,077,356 dollars annually to fund a reserve account to pay for arrearage forgiveness for customers with past due balances and who participate in Eversource's New Start Program.

This is one of three dockets that the Commission issues orders in today that will result in an overall decrease of approximately 3.6 percent to the delivery portion of electric energy bills for residential ratepayers for service rendered on and after February 1, 2022. The three dockets are: (1) the instant docket (DE 19-057), to increase Eversource's average distribution charge rate for residential customers by .019 cents per kWh; (2) DE 21-029, to decrease Eversource's Regulatory Reconciliation Adjustment Rate for residential customers by .016 cents per kWh; and (3) DE 21-117, to decrease Eversource's average stranded cost recovery charge rate for residential customers by .436 cents per kWh. Taken together, the average bill impact of the three

rate changes for residential customers using an average of 650 kWh per month is approximately 3.6 percent decrease to non-energy service bill components in monthly bills, from an average delivery service charge of \$77.81 to \$75.00. Residential customers who also take energy service from Eversource will experience a net percent increase of approximately 6.8 percent in their overall bill for energy supply and delivery services combined when the energy supply costs approved in Order No. 26,557 (December 16, 2021) also take effect on February 1, resulting in an average overall monthly bill increase from \$135.18 to \$144.35. None of the three orders issued today will have any effect on the energy supply portion of the bill for customers receiving energy from a competitive supplier.

I. BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On December 15, 2021, Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy (Eversource) filed a Petition for Base Rate Adjustment Pertaining to Fee Free and New Start Programs (Petition). In Support of its Petition, Eversource pre-filed the written testimony of Christopher G. Kishimoto, Theresa Washington, Erica L. Menard and Jennifer A. Ullram.

The Fee Free Program was implemented following the approval of the Settlement Agreement on Permanent Rates (Settlement Agreement), Exhibit 58 in the instant docket, and allows residential customers of Eversource to make one-time bill payments with a credit card without paying a separate transaction fee. Relating to the Fee Free Program, Eversource updated the Commission on its implementation, and proposed no changes to its base distribution rates. Eversource requested to defer reconciliation of incrementally higher or lower Fee Free Program costs than the forecasted amounts currently included in base rates until its next full rate case, as described in section 12.3 of the Settlement Agreement.

The New Start Program has not yet been implemented; however, once implemented, it will provide payment assistance for certain residential customers with past due utility bills. With respect to the implementation its New Start Program, Eversource requested authorization to begin collecting \$1,077,356 dollars annually through base distribution rates to fund a reserve account related to arrearage forgiveness, as detailed in section 13 of the Settlement Agreement.

On December 23, 2021, the Commission scheduled a hearing on Eversource's Petition to occur on January 14, 2021. The hearing was conducted as scheduled on January 14. The petition and subsequent docket filings are posted on the Commission's website at: <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2019/19-057.html>.

II. PARTY POSITIONS

a. Eversource

At hearing, Christopher G. Kishimoto, Theresa Washington, Erica L. Menard and Jennifer A. Ullram adopted their pre-filed testimonies and responded to questions from the Department of Energy and members of the Commission. Eversource requested approval of its Petition as filed.

b. New Hampshire Department of Energy

At hearing, the Department of Energy stated that it interpreted the Petition as implementing the terms of the Settlement Agreement and did not object to or otherwise comment on the base rates proposed.

III. COMMISSION ANALYSIS

Pursuant to RSA's 374:2, 378:7, and 378:28, the Commission may approve proposed rate changes if it finds they are just and reasonable. In determining whether rates are just and reasonable, the Commission acts as arbiter between the interests of

customers and the regulated utility. RSA 363:17-a. The utility bears the burden of demonstrating that rates are appropriate for recovery. RSA 378:8. In addition, the Commission will consider whether the costs proposed for inclusion in rates are consistent with the terms of the Settlement Agreement approved by Order No. 26,433 (December 15, 2020).

Based on the record before us, we find Eversource used an appropriate method to calculate changes to its base distribution rates, consistent with the terms of the Settlement Agreement approved by Order No. 26,433. As such, we find the proposed increase to distribution rates related to the implementation of the New Start Program, as authorized by Order No. 26,433, to be just and reasonable. We further authorize Eversource to use deferral accounting for incrementally higher or lower costs associated with the Fee Free Program as described in the terms of the Settlement Agreement. We recognize the concern raised by the Department of Energy relating to the presentation of any request for future recovery of incremental costs related to the Fee Free Program and direct the Company to make any recovery proposal at the outset of its next rate case.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that Eversource's Petition for Base Rate Adjustment Pertaining to Fee Free and New Start Programs is **APPROVED**; and it is

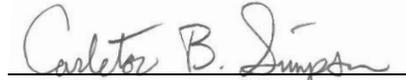
FURTHER ORDERED, that Eversource's request to collect \$1,077,356 annually through distribution rates relating to the New Start Program, as authorized by the Settlement Agreement approved by Order 26,433 (December 15, 2020), is **GRANTED**, and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that that Eversource shall file properly annotated tariff pages in compliance with this order no later than 20 days from the issuance date of this order, as required by N.H. Admin. R., PART Puc 1603.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this twenty-fifth day of January, 2022.



Daniel C. Goldner
Chairman



Carleton B. Simpson
Commissioner

Service List - Docket Related

Docket# : 19-057

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