

IR 20-089  
**NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC UTILITIES**  
Investigation into the Effects of the COVID-19 Emergency  
on Utilities and Utility Customers

Abenaki Water Company  
Filing Date: February 2, 2021

- 1) Provide information regarding changes in payment behavior or patterns and account receivables levels since the declaration of the State of Emergency on March 13 and the Governor’s Emergency Order #3 issued on March 17. Such information should be provided for each utility rate class.

Response: UPDATED Response: Since the March 17<sup>th</sup> order, Abenaki Water Company’s aged receivable accounts has increased on a per monthly basis as shown below.

**Accounts Receivable Aged Analysis – December 31, 2020**  
**Per Month**

|          | Current | 30 Day | 60 Day | 90+Days | Total \$ | % Late    | (60 + 90 DAYS) |
|----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Jan-19   | 2,583   | 764    | 534    | 363     | 4,243    | 0.2113779 | 21%            |
| Jan-20   | 8,582   | 5,048  | 1,808  | 2,013   | 17,450   | 0.2189727 | 22%            |
| Feb-19   | 9,880   | 908    | 98     | 133     | 11,019   | 0.0209355 | 2%             |
| Feb-20   | 38,757  | 1,479  | 590    | 1,414   | 42,240   | 0.0474507 | 5%             |
| Mar-19   | 9,555   | 1,434  | 400    | 0       | 11,389   | 0.0350858 | 4%             |
| Mar-20   | 15,905  | 2,848  | 706    | 726     | 20,186   | 0.0709683 | 7%             |
| Apr-19   | 13,637  | 1,765  | 626    | 11      | 16,039   | 0.0396864 | 4%             |
| Apr-20   | 43,557  | 1,415  | 382    | 498     | 45,853   | 0.0191932 | 2%             |
| May-19   | 8,193   | 1,036  | 136    | 0       | 9,365    | 0.0144920 | 1%             |
| May-20   | 31,422  | 490    | 204    | 1,748   | 33,864   | 0.0576415 | 6%             |
| Jun-19   | 8,193   | 1,036  | 136    | 0       | 9,365    | 0.0145220 | 1%             |
| Jun-20   | 43,954  | 14,063 | 471    | 1,952   | 60,440   | 0.0400890 | 4%             |
| July-19  | 10,312  | 1,111  | 461    | 56      | 11,941   | 0.0433650 | 4%             |
| July-20  | 25,326  | 4,535  | 2,597  | 4,074   | 36,533   | 0.1115170 | 11%            |
| Aug-19   | 13,470  | 2,119  | 310    | 226     | 16,125   | 0.0140190 | 1%             |
| Aug-20   | 21,843  | 4,591  | 2,876  | 5,642   | 34,953   | 0.1614282 | 16%            |
| Sept-19  | 9,485   | 1,446  | 492    | 44      | 11,467   | 0.0038022 | 0.38%          |
| Sept- 20 | 27,907  | 4,188  | 2,528  | 4,847   | 39,470   | 0.1227985 | 12%            |

|         |        |       |       |       |        |           |     |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|-----|
| Oct-19  | 2,309  | 2,677 | 846   | 113   | 5,959  | 0.1632381 | 16% |
| Oct- 20 | 7,418  | 1,939 | 1,975 | 5,877 | 17,209 | 0.4562685 | 45% |
|         |        |       |       |       |        |           |     |
| Nov-19  | 11,657 | 2,040 | 1,692 | 639   | 16,029 | 0.1454508 | 14% |
| Nov- 20 | 32,158 | 1,511 | 623   | 6,857 | 41,150 | 0.1817797 | 18% |
|         |        |       |       |       |        |           |     |
| Dec-19  | 8,582  | 5,048 | 1,808 | 2,013 | 17,450 | 0.2189724 | 21% |
| Dec-20  | 35,246 | 829   | 172   | 6,265 | 42,512 | 0.1182554 | 15% |

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- 2) Provide the following data for each utility rate class:
- The number, and percentage, of customers who made partial or no payment in March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December of 2019 and 2020.
  - The number, and percentage, of customers who made partial or no payment in March, April, May, June, July, August, and September of 2019 and 2020 and did not have an outstanding March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December of 2019 and 2020 during the prior six months.

Response: UPDATED Response: Abenaki Water Company's billing software does not give us the ability to report the number or percentage of customers who made partial or no payments retroactively. The percentage of customers who made no payment or partial payment for December 2020 bills was 30%.

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- 3) Describe any programs or initiatives undertaken to assist customers specifically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Emergency, Emergency Order #3, and the related stay-at-home restrictions.

Response: The Company has and will continue to offer flexible payment plans when a customer is in need of one. (No updates to this response)

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4) Provide a detailed description of customer outreach undertaken to date.

Response: As customers call into the office with questions pertaining to Covid-19 they're being addressed on a case by case basis. (No updates to this response)

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- 5) Describe the Utility's review and evaluation of best practices and successful initiatives undertaken in other states.

Response: The Company has representatives that participate in the CT DPH and MA DEP weekly updates pertaining to COVID-19. These representatives also speak with other similar sized utilities to review best practices and feasibility of implementation. These best practices are reviewed and discussed in a team setting and implemented as necessary.  
Further, the Company utilizes its consultants in obtaining best practice methods for review and implementation. (No updates to this response)

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- 6) Describe whether the Utility has updated its sales forecasts in light of the pandemic and its effects on the economy.

Response: The Company has not formally updated its forecasts. The Company's significant commercial customer that was previously shutdown has since re-opened but on a limited basis and with many of its amenities and restaurants still currently closed. (No updates to this response)

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7) Describe any operational changes the Utility is making or planning to make in response to the effects of the pandemic, including changes in budgets or personnel.

Response: No changes in personnel have been made. Budgetarily, reductions were made for available capital for capital expenditure work in an order to preserve cash given the uncertain economic forecast. Operationally, all non-essential work to be performed at a customer's residence has been put on hold. Our office has been closed to visitors and customers to reduce exposure to our employees. The Company requires its employees to wear face masks and gloves as necessary. (No updates to this response)



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8) Describe any changes to capital projects and related planning budgets the Utility has made or is planning to make in response to the effects of the pandemic.

Response: Capital project work has been placed on hold with the exception of required/emergency projects to ensure a safe and reliable service can be maintained. This has been done in an effort to preserve cash flow. (No updates to this response)

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- 9) Describe any supply chain disruptions the Utility is experiencing or expects may occur and the effects of such supply chain disruptions.

Response: The only supply chain issues that have been apparent is for the purchase of N-95 masks. The Company has however been able to obtain cloth face coverings. (No updates to this response)

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10) Describe whether the Utility and/or its parent company has adequate access to capital or has been negatively affected in accessing the capital markets or has been downgraded by any credit rating services.

Response: The Company, and its holding Company, have adequate access to capital. No negative effects have been received, nor any credit downgrading. (No updates to this response)

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- 11) Describe incremental costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic since the State of Emergency order, how the cost is calculated, cost to date, accounting treatment, impact on earnings, and proposed or planned rate treatment.

Response: The only real costs that the Company has incurred would be the loss of revenue from commercial accounts and an increase in accounts receivables. No other substantial costs have been incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic from Abenaki Water Company. (No updates to this response)

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- 12) Require each utility to identify cost savings associated with the impacts of COVID and to track and report COVID cost savings since March 31, 2020, to be included in monthly COVID reporting. Savings to be tracked should include, but not be limited to, savings attributable to the suspension of disconnections, limiting customer work to essential services only, having all non-essential employees work from home, and any other measures during the emergency declaration which may offset incremental expenses incurred.

Response: The Company has not had any cost savings associated with the impact of COVID-19.

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- 13) Require each utility to identify any loans, grants, assistance, tax credits, or benefits received by the utility in connection with COVID, regardless of form or source, that would offset any COVID related expenses, and describe and report them in monthly COVID reports. Items to be reported should include, but not be limited to, CARES Act payments, Paycheck Protection Program payments, and FFCRA tax credits.

Response: The Company has not received any loans, grants, assistance, tax credits or benefits in connection with COVID to date.