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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

June 17, 2020 - 9:18 a.m. MORNING SESSION ONLY

[Remote hearing conducted via Webex]

RE: DG 20-089  
NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC UTILITIES  
COMMISSION: Investigation into Effects  
of the COVID-19 Emergency on  
Utilities and Utility Customers.  
(Status Conference)

PRESENT: Chairwoman Dianne Martin, Presiding  
Commissioner Kathryn M. Bailey  
Commissioner Michael S. Giaimo

Jody Carmody, Clerk  
Eric Wind, PUC Remote Hearing Host

APPEARANCES: Reptg. Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.  
Gary Epler, Esq.

Reptg. Liberty Utilities:  
Michael J. Sheehan, Esq.

Reptg. Eversource Energy:  
Matthew J. Fossum, Esq.

Reptg. New Hampshire Electric Co-Op:  
Mark Dean, Esq.

Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:  
D. Maurice Kreis, Esq., Consumer Adv.

Reptg. PUC Staff:  
Paul B. Dexter, Esq.  
Christopher Tuomala, Esq.

Court Reporter: Susan J. Robidas, NH LCR No. 44

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5	Energy Systems)	CHRISTOPHER GOULDING	
6		DANIEL HURSTAK	
7		RAYMOND LETOURNEAU	
8		CHRISTOPHER LeBLANC	
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## P R O C E E D I N G S

1  
2 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Good morning,  
3 everyone. Let's go on the record. We're  
4 here this morning in Docket IR 2020-089,  
5 which is a New Hampshire Public Utilities  
6 Commission investigation into the effects of  
7 the COVID-19 emergency on utilities and  
8 utility customers. This morning we'll be  
9 hearing from electric and gas utilities. I  
10 need to make some findings before we can  
11 proceed because we're doing this hearing  
12 remotely.

13 As Chairwoman of the Public  
14 Utilities Commission, I find that due to the  
15 state of emergency declared by the Governor  
16 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in  
17 accordance with the Governor's Emergency  
18 Order No. 12, pursuant to Executive Order  
19 2020-04, this public body is authorized to  
20 meet electronically. Please note that there  
21 is no physical location to observe and listen  
22 contemporaneously to this hearing which was  
23 authorized pursuant to the Governor's  
24 Emergency Order. However, in accordance with

1 the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we  
2 are utilizing Webex for this electronic  
3 hearing. All members of the Commission have  
4 the ability to communicate contemporaneously  
5 during this hearing through this platform,  
6 and the public has access to  
7 contemporaneously listen and, if necessary,  
8 participate. We previously gave notice to  
9 the public of the necessary information for  
10 accessing the hearing in the Order of Notice.  
11 If anyone has a problem during this hearing,  
12 please call (603)271-2431. In the event the  
13 public is unable to access the hearing, the  
14 hearing will be adjourned and rescheduled.

15 Okay. I know Mr. Wind went through  
16 some ground rules with you all, and many of  
17 you have heard them before, so I'm just going  
18 to reiterate the important ones. If you need  
19 a recess, please let me know. Any party who  
20 takes a recess should make sure to mute  
21 themselves and turn their video off. The  
22 utilities will be making PowerPoint  
23 presentations, as I understand it, or at  
24 least some of them will. The Commission

1 would appreciate it if you would submit those  
2 to the Commission, and any other information  
3 you rely on during your presentation, so it  
4 can be posted and shared with the public.

5 So we have a lot of people on the  
6 screen as you all know. I will do my best to  
7 keep track of everybody, as I know Ms.  
8 Robidas will. But please be patient. If  
9 you're not recognized and some time has  
10 passed, please speak out, and that will help  
11 me to find you on the screen.

12 Let's start by taking roll call  
13 attendance of the Commission, and then we'll  
14 take appearances. When each Commissioner  
15 states their presence, please also state  
16 where you are located. And if anyone else is  
17 with you, please identify them.

18 My name is Dianne Martin. I am the  
19 Chairwoman of the Public Utilities  
20 Commission. I am located in my home in  
21 Deerfield, New Hampshire, and no one else is  
22 with me.

23 Commissioner Bailey.

24 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Commissioner

1 Kathryn Bailey. I'm located at my home in  
2 Bow, New Hampshire, and no one else is with  
3 me.

4 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Good morning.  
5 Mike Giaimo. I am at the PUC offices in  
6 Concord, and no one is with me.

7 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
8 you.

9 Now we'll take appearances from  
10 counsel, starting with Mr. Epler, please.

11 MR. EPLER: Thank you, and good  
12 morning, Chairwoman Martin, Commissioners,  
13 and assembled guests. My name is Gary Epler.  
14 I am the chief regulatory counsel for Unitil  
15 Service Corporation. And with me this  
16 morning is Patrick Taylor, senior counsel  
17 also of Unitil Corporation, appearing this  
18 morning on behalf of Unitil and Energy  
19 Systems and Northern Utilities. Thank you  
20 very much. (connectivity issue)

21 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Off the record  
22 for a moment, please.

23 (Discussion off the record.)

24 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Now

1 we'll go back on the record.

2 Were you all done, Mr. Epler?

3 MR. EPLER: Yes, I was, unless  
4 there was something that the court reporter  
5 was not able to understand.

6 (Court Reporter interrupts.)

7 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Mr.  
8 Sheehan.

9 MR. SHEEHAN: Good morning. My  
10 name's Mike Sheehan. I am counsel for the  
11 two Liberty Utilities entities here in New  
12 Hampshire, liberty Utilities (Granite State  
13 Electric Corp.) and Liberty Utilities  
14 (EnergyNorth Natural Gas Corp.) And we have,  
15 as others do, a number of people available to  
16 answer questions as this goes along. Thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
19 you.

20 Mr. Fossum.

21 MR. FOSSUM: Good morning,  
22 everyone. Matthew Fossum. I'm here this  
23 morning on behalf of Public Service Company  
24 of New Hampshire, doing business as



1 Eversource Energy. And as you have  
2 indicated, we, like others, will have a  
3 presentation of speakers and will introduce  
4 those at the appropriate time.

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
6 you.

7 Mr. Dean.

8 MR. DEAN: Good morning. Testing  
9 to see if I'm coming through here. I'm  
10 showing up as muted.

11 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: I can hear you.

12 MR. DEAN: Okay. Then I think  
13 we're okay. Thank you.

14 Good morning. Mark Dean, lawyer  
15 here in Concord, New Hampshire. I represent  
16 the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative. Also  
17 today, on behalf of the Co-Op, Michael  
18 Licata, the vice-president of Member Services  
19 and Public Affairs will be available; Drew  
20 Duggan, who is the chief financial officer of  
21 the Co-Op, will be available; and James  
22 Backus, who is the vice-president of  
23 Operations and Engineering for the Co-Op will  
24 be available. Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.

2 Thank you.

3 Mr. Kreis.

4 MR. KREIS: Good morning,  
5 everybody. I am D. Maurice Kreis, the  
6 consumer advocate, appearing here today on  
7 behalf of the residential customers of all of  
8 these fine public utilities.

9 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Thank you.

10 And Mr. Dexter.

11 MR. DEXTER: Good morning,  
12 Chairwoman and Commissioners. I'm Paul  
13 Dexter, Staff counsel, appearing on behalf of  
14 Commission Staff. And I'm joined by  
15 co-counsel, Chris Tuomala.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.

17 Thank you.

18 So it's my understanding we will  
19 start with Unitil, and they will do a  
20 presentation. Is that everyone's  
21 understanding?

22 [No verbal response]

23 Okay. Can we swear in the Unitil  
24 witnesses, please? And Mr. Epler, if you

1           could identify all of your witnesses, that  
2           would help Ms. Robidas.

3                       MR. EPLER:  Yes.  First of all,  
4           good morning, and thank you for the  
5           opportunity to present such an important  
6           subject.  We have several witnesses who will  
7           be speaking:  John Closson, vice-president,  
8           People Shared Services and Organizational  
9           Effectiveness; and Mark Lambert,  
10          vice-president, Customer Operations.  Those  
11          are the two assigned speaking roles.  We have  
12          several other individuals available to answer  
13          questions.  They are:  Chris Goulding,  
14          director, Rates and Revenue Requirement;  
15          Daniel Hurstak, vice-president and  
16          comptroller; Ray Letourneau, vice-president,  
17          Electric Operations; Christopher LeBlanc,  
18          vice-president, Gas Operations; and Kevin  
19          Sprague, vice-president, Engineering.

20                      And my understanding is that  
21          Christopher Goulding is not able to get  
22          into -- being recognized as an attendee.  He  
23          says his e-mail won't allow him to attend as  
24          a panelist.

1 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
2 Let's go off the record for a minute and see  
3 if we can rectify that.

4 (Discussion off the record.)

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Back on  
6 the record.

7 MR. EPLER: That completes the list  
8 of attendees on behalf of Unitil and Northern  
9 Utilities.

10 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Ms.  
11 Robidas, can you please swear them in.

12 (Court Reporter interrupts.)

13 (WHEREUPON, JOHN CLOSSON, MARK LAMBERT,  
14 CHRISTOPHER GOULDING, DANIEL HURSTAK,  
15 RAYMOND LETOURNEAU, CHRISTOPHER  
16 LEBLANC, KEVIN SPRAGUE were duly sworn  
17 and cautioned by the Court Reporter.)

18 JOHN CLOSSON, SWORN

19 MARK LAMBERT, SWORN

20 CHRISTOPHER GOULDING, SWORN

21 DANIEL HURSTAK, SWORN

22 RAYMOND LETOURNEAU, SWORN

23 CHRISTOPHER LEBLANC, SWORN

24 KEVIN SPRAGUE, SWORN

1 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Mr.  
2 Epler, you may proceed.

3 MR. EPLER: Thank you very much. I  
4 will, now having introduced the witnesses and  
5 their titles, I will now hand the  
6 presentation over to John Closson, who will  
7 begin the presentation. He will then, when  
8 he's completed, he will hand it over to Mark  
9 Lambert. Those are the two assigned speakers  
10 as indicated. The others are available  
11 should the Commission have more detailed  
12 questions. Thank you very much.

13 Mr. Closson.

14 MR. CLOSSON: Thank you, Gary.

15 (Document shared on screen.)

16 MR. CLOSSON: Is everybody seeing  
17 the presentation?

18 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Yes.

19 MR. CLOSSON: This is John Closson  
20 from Unitil. And as Mr. Epler mentioned, I  
21 am the vice-president of People Shared  
22 Services and Organizational Effectiveness for  
23 Unitil. In addition to that role, I am the  
24 incident commander for Until's Pandemic

1 Response.

2 Today we are going to provide a  
3 brief presentation regarding Unitil's overall  
4 crisis response, the measures we've taken to  
5 ensure the health and well-being of our  
6 employees and our customers. I will talk a  
7 little bit about the expenses that we are  
8 accruing as a result of COVID-19. I will  
9 then turn it over to my colleague, Mike  
10 Lambert, vice-president of Customer  
11 Operations, to provide an overview of our  
12 operations and communications with respect to  
13 customers, our engagement, our accounts  
14 receivable experience, as well as the impact  
15 on sales, and then we will close the  
16 presentation with some lessons learned. And  
17 we will be taking questions throughout. So  
18 we encourage -- if there's any clarity  
19 required, we're happy to answer those  
20 questions. As Mr. Epler said, we have a  
21 number folks on with us today to help support  
22 the presentation.

23 Regarding Unitil's crisis response,  
24 our environmental health and safety and

1 business continuity teams began receiving  
2 information regarding a pneumonia epidemic in  
3 China at the end of last year. They  
4 continued to work with various information  
5 channels to keep an eye on that epidemic. As  
6 it began to spread, they raised the issue  
7 internally to our safety leadership  
8 committee, which invoked a Pandemic Task  
9 Force in accordance with our Crisis Response  
10 Plan, which was originally, in January,  
11 charged with maintaining situational  
12 awareness about the spread of the virus, as  
13 well as coordinating preparedness activities  
14 internally.

15 As we moved into February and we  
16 saw the virus move across the globe, we began  
17 to take measures in terms of making sure we  
18 had the appropriate supply in place to  
19 respond to a pandemic of this nature, as well  
20 as instituting and developing internal  
21 protocols for the organization and how to  
22 respond.

23 When we moved into March, our  
24 senior management team formally stood up our

1 Strategic Response Plan. So if you look at  
2 the chart on the right of this screen, you'll  
3 see that our overall crisis response is led  
4 by our Strategic Response Committee, which is  
5 comprised of all our senior management team.  
6 They have assigned me as the incident  
7 commander. We had a task force in place. We  
8 expanded that task force to include other  
9 folks from the organization, and then we  
10 brought together a group of essential  
11 business units to ensure communications  
12 throughout the organization about what was  
13 expected and about how we were going to  
14 transition from predominantly a office-based  
15 organization to one that was capable of  
16 working remotely.

17 As we moved into April and the  
18 following months, as the pandemic has come  
19 through we've seamlessly moved to a  
20 predominantly remote workforce, specifically  
21 in our call center, as well as in our office  
22 areas. We instituted a number of protocols  
23 for social distancing to preserve the health  
24 and well-being of our employees, including



1           staggering shift times for field workers,  
2           making sure that we are using separate  
3           vehicles reporting to job sites, and we are  
4           reviewing which work orders we are going to  
5           complete and which ones we aren't and that  
6           can be deferred in order to adhere to social  
7           distancing guidelines.

8                         One of the main efforts of the  
9           Pandemic Task Force was to establish a  
10          framework for how we would do our work, as  
11          well as how we would re-enter the office.  
12          The nature of the work that we do and  
13          everyone on the call could not be interrupted  
14          due to the pandemic. However, when we look  
15          about -- when we talk about opening up, we  
16          refer to it as "re-entering the workplace."  
17          What we've established is a four-phase  
18          process, starting with our current phase,  
19          which is restricted, and reducing those  
20          restrictions for employees as we move towards  
21          a point at which we have either a vaccine, a  
22          therapeutic, some kind of herd immunity that  
23          mitigates the risk of the virus on our  
24          employees. Each of the phases of our

1 framework provide guidance to employees  
2 regarding hygiene practices, social  
3 distancing expectations, you know, how we're  
4 supposed to use company vehicles, what travel  
5 is permitted and not permitted, visitor  
6 access, as well as a number of other  
7 requirements for effectively operating  
8 remotely in the way that we are.

9 As we transition from one phase to  
10 the next, we're using a four-pillar approach  
11 to evaluate those decisions. First and  
12 foremost, we're evaluating the health and  
13 status of our employees at our locations to  
14 make sure we do not have concern about an  
15 outbreak or outstanding COVID-19 tests at any  
16 given location. We're also evaluating data  
17 from the states in which we operate to ensure  
18 that there are positive trends with respect  
19 to new cases, percentage of new cases, and  
20 overall impact of COVID-19. We're making  
21 sure that there's no state or federal  
22 guideline that would preclude us from  
23 transitioning or reopening in a manner that  
24 would prevent us from doing so, whether it's

1 a stay-at-home order or some other kind of  
2 mandate from the state that we want to adhere  
3 to. And then finally, it's our internal  
4 preparedness. We recognize that we want to  
5 be measured in how we return to the office.  
6 So we are asking each of our departments to  
7 establish a specific plan for each of the  
8 phases that we will transition through, to  
9 ensure that we're not stepping on each  
10 other's toes and that we can adhere to the  
11 social distancing and other guidelines  
12 established.

13 We've also been very active in  
14 managing our customer health and well-being.  
15 As my colleague Mark will note, we had a  
16 number of different channels that we've  
17 outreached to customers since the start of  
18 this pandemic. And we are focused on making  
19 sure that they are understanding our  
20 response, what we're doing to make sure that  
21 they're safe and our people are safe as well.  
22 One of the areas that we're focusing on is  
23 home-entry protocols. So the nature of the  
24 work we do, specifically in our gas

1 operations, requires folks to enter homes to  
2 either investigate odor calls or to re-light  
3 equipment based on a transition of an older  
4 gas line to a newer gas line? We've  
5 established specific protocols that we  
6 believe will help ensure the health and  
7 well-being of those individuals involved.  
8 And we're talking about everybody involved:  
9 Our employees, our customers, the contractors  
10 we work with, the municipal partners who are  
11 out working with us as well. These measures  
12 include daily attestations about people,  
13 checking themselves to make sure that they  
14 are not expressing any symptoms of COVID-19.  
15 We have provided specific guidelines on the  
16 appropriate personal protective equipment  
17 individuals need to don and doff when  
18 entering customer homes, with the appropriate  
19 way to remove and dispose of that material  
20 once it's been used. Those materials include  
21 face coverings, Tyvek tubes, nitrile gloves,  
22 eye protection, face shields and others.  
23 We've also outlined specific hygiene  
24 protocols that we expect from our technicians

1 in order to manage their tools and equipment,  
2 their work spaces. We've had communication  
3 with customers through our customer service  
4 and through our technicians about what our  
5 social distancing protocols and requirements  
6 are, to ensure that folks are working 6 feet  
7 apart, giving us the space we need to do the  
8 work and get out of there safely and quickly.

9 An additional measure that we've  
10 taken related to our home entry is a routine  
11 process for testing individuals that may be  
12 asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19. We  
13 recognize that some individuals may carry the  
14 virus and express no symptoms of the virus.  
15 As such, we've instituted a process whereby  
16 every 14 days we are testing those  
17 individuals who routinely enter customer  
18 homes for COVID-19. We use a third party to  
19 help us administer those tests and provide  
20 results within 24 to 36 hours. I would say  
21 so far we are in a situation where we're very  
22 blessed at Unitil. We've only had two  
23 individuals in our operation test positive.  
24 Both of those individuals are doing very

1 well. One of those positive tests came out  
2 of -- came as a result of this asymptomatic  
3 testing protocol.

4 Today we have incurred a number of  
5 expenses that are specific to COVID-19. We  
6 have instituted a few accounting measurements  
7 to make sure we're tracking those costs as we  
8 move along. At a high level, those costs  
9 include facility cleaning protocols,  
10 additional leasing of vehicles to ensure we  
11 can maintain social distancing. We are  
12 buying personal protective equipment in  
13 volume that we haven't in the past as a  
14 result of COVID-19. There are costs  
15 associated with managing our remote  
16 workforce, including expanding the band width  
17 of our internet capabilities, increasing our  
18 VPN licensing. And beyond these incremental  
19 costs, the Company's also facing expenses  
20 related to bad debt and the lost fees  
21 associated with revenue. And both companies  
22 are having to increase their cash working  
23 capital requirements due to a lag in  
24 customers paying their bills.

1           At this point I'll turn it over to  
2 my colleague, Mark Lambert, our VP of  
3 Customer Operations, who can talk a little  
4 bit more about the customer experience with  
5 COVID-19.

6           MR. LAMBERT: Thank you, John, and  
7 thank you Commissioners. My name is Mark  
8 Lambert. I'm the vice-president of Customer  
9 Operations. And I will move through some of  
10 the customer impacts that John has spoken  
11 about.

12           Looking at our customer operations  
13 and communications protocols, as John said,  
14 here in Concord we have our office here  
15 containing 72 employees that serve the  
16 capacity for our customers in the customer  
17 service call center area, collections,  
18 billing, making sure payments get remitted  
19 accurately and timely, and then our quality  
20 assurance and training. All of that was  
21 remote on March 19th as we quickly started to  
22 understand the impacts of this.

23           I don't know if anyone else is  
24 having -- oh, there it is.

1           But through all of this, we've been  
2           intensely committed to providing the  
3           necessary assistance to all of our customers  
4           during this pandemic and economic downturn.  
5           Typically when we realized this area, about  
6           April or May, we're dealing primarily with  
7           our residential customers as they come out of  
8           winter protection periods. But we also are  
9           realizing that our commercial customers, as  
10          all the utilities are realizing, are  
11          certainly suffering during this time. So the  
12          messaging that -- and I won't go through  
13          everything here. But the messaging that  
14          we're focusing on is to really try to engage  
15          our customers. We're focused on financial  
16          hardships. We're trying to provide the  
17          assistance to our customers. So, even though  
18          disconnections are -- there's a moratorium on  
19          disconnections or disconnection dates that  
20          usually engage customers, we're trying to  
21          engage them to help them understand or to  
22          prevent an overwhelming high balance when  
23          this does expire. We're also educating  
24          customers, and they're calling us on any scam



1 preparedness since scams have increased quite  
2 a bit during this time.

3 Next slide, John.

4 So some of the customer assistance  
5 that we are -- I won't go through all of  
6 these. But we've obviously disconnected --  
7 our disconnection notices and disconnections  
8 have ceased during this time. We're not  
9 charging late fees to any of our customers.  
10 Returned check fees are waived. We're not  
11 charging any deposits for customers who are  
12 impacted. And all of that is really on an  
13 honor system basis. It's an opportunity for  
14 our customers to speak with our -- for our  
15 CSRs to speak with the customers as to  
16 whether they're having -- whether they're  
17 impacted financially. And no collection  
18 agencies are -- we're not referring to any  
19 collection agencies. And of those customers  
20 that were referred to a collection agency  
21 prior to this occurring, we're not -- we've  
22 asked them to halt their reporting to the  
23 credit bureau.

24 The payment arrangements that we'd

1       like to engage our customers with, and we  
2       have in some cases, are very flexible, where  
3       there's no payment required as a down-payment  
4       to engage in a payment arrangement. We  
5       certainly look to spread these payments out  
6       up to 12 months. But in some cases working  
7       with the customers, they have gone beyond  
8       that. We've worked up to 18 months with some  
9       of our customers. And very early on, in  
10      early April, the Company stepped up quickly  
11      to implement our UCARE Grant for customers  
12      who have been financially impacted by  
13      COVID-19. They have an opportunity to  
14      qualify for a benefit at \$150 per customer,  
15      per residential customer, through this. And  
16      it's those customers who just qualify just  
17      above the LIHEAP fuel assistance funds.

18                 Next slide, John.

19                 Customer engagement. This is one  
20      of those slides you would like to say we're  
21      all trying to engage our customers and you  
22      want to be successful in doing so. And we're  
23      really working hard to try to engage them.  
24      But despite our best efforts to proactively

1           communicate with them, we are falling behind  
2           in our customer engagements. You'll see the  
3           impacts as we look from March to May. Just  
4           those three months, when we look at our  
5           comparisons from this year during those  
6           three-month periods to last year, our phone  
7           calls, and our collections-related phone  
8           calls as well, are down by roughly  
9           40 percent. Customers who have called us,  
10          though, are talking a little bit longer. So  
11          you see the average talk time increased about  
12          a minute per call since this pandemic has  
13          hit. And it's really inquiring from those  
14          customers about what their options may be,  
15          are they getting disconnected, and those  
16          types of questions. And it may be even more  
17          personal conversations, which is what started  
18          in March and April, as customers were feeling  
19          a bit isolated. Some of the things we  
20          experienced.

21                   Our payment arrangements have  
22                   alarmingly declined with our inability to  
23                   provide more active notifications to them.  
24                   They've declined 44 percent since March of

1           2020, and they're 75 percent less than what  
2           they were this time last year. And the  
3           percentage of our customers who are not  
4           paying has also increased. Five percent of  
5           our electric UES customers are not paying;  
6           that's an increase over 2019. And that  
7           number correlates to 7 percent for our gas  
8           customers since that same period of time.

9                       Next slide, John.

10                      So moving into some of the AR  
11           impacts since March, taking a look at the  
12           very first table that I've provided here,  
13           this is total arrearages, anything over 30  
14           days past due. You'll see that overall the  
15           number of customers has increased by only  
16           2 percent. It's a decline in residential by  
17           1 percent that have moved into an arrears  
18           situation. But our commercial customers, a  
19           number of them have increased by 28 percent.  
20           And that's the largest impact that we've  
21           seen. And for the commercial customers,  
22           looking at them specifically, the average  
23           dollar amounts for those customers have  
24           increased from March to May by 34 percent.

1           Similarly looking at our oldest arrearages,  
2           over 90 days, it's a very similar story on a  
3           much larger scale -- and that is, for  
4           customers in the 90-day categories, these  
5           were bills issued in February, mid to late  
6           February, with a due date in mid to late  
7           March. And that's where we're seeing some of  
8           our largest increases in arrearages. And  
9           that's the over-90-day category. I don't  
10          have to read all the numbers, but you'll see  
11          the impacts that our commercial customers are  
12          realizing, 238 percent increase in the number  
13          of commercial customers and 139 percent  
14          increase in the average payment amount that  
15          has moved into the over-90-plus category.

16                         And when I look at the accounts  
17          receivable aging chart down below, this line  
18          graph --

19                         John, if you can move the cursor  
20          around to March of 2019.

21                         You'll see that that's typically a  
22          peak period in arrearages, in total  
23          arrears. And by the way, this is  
24          arrears that we've combined for both UES

1 and Northern Utilities. It's a very similar  
2 story. So if you look at March 2019, that's  
3 a peak period. And it makes a lot of sense  
4 as customers move and the moratorium begins  
5 to end. We engage our customers per the  
6 rules. Customers enter payment arrangements.  
7 We're actively working with them. And in  
8 April and May those numbers start to decline.  
9 And they really kind of lull out all the way  
10 through October or November, and then we move  
11 into a period where the moratorium rules move  
12 back in. Well, not only do you see in March  
13 of 2020 that we reached a peak, but in April  
14 of 2020 as well that number increased  
15 significantly. And as we look to "flatten  
16 the curve" -- with COVID-19 we've always  
17 heard that -- we are looking to "flatten the  
18 curve" on our arrearages for our companies.  
19 And May 2020 may indicate that that curve has  
20 flattened. It's about the same as it was in  
21 April. But it certainly has not declined  
22 like it has in prior periods. So we'll be  
23 anxious to see what happens for June and  
24 July.

1                   Next slide, John.

2                   And I've got two more slides, and  
3                   they're just sales impacts for our electric  
4                   and natural gas companies. As you'll see  
5                   from our UES sales impacts, this is comparing  
6                   three months, March through May 2019 versus  
7                   2020, obviously during the COVID-19 period.  
8                   Our sales for electric have increased in our  
9                   residential sector by 3 percent but have  
10                  declined by more than 10 percent, or around  
11                  10 percent for our commercial sector, for an  
12                  overall impact of reduced sales by 5 percent  
13                  during those three-month periods. In the  
14                  charts you see below, going from left to  
15                  right, tell that really alarming story on our  
16                  sales, where our total billed kilowatt hours,  
17                  comparing 2018 in the blue and the orange  
18                  2019. And this year, in the gray line,  
19                  you'll see that those sales have  
20                  significantly dropped. And the same story  
21                  applies when we move to the right chart on  
22                  total billed demand as well. You'll see the  
23                  bar chart in the gray has significantly  
24                  declined from last year and as well from

1           2018.

2                           And moving to the last slide,  
3           looking at a very similar slide for Northern  
4           New Hampshire, our gas sales and the impacts  
5           there, we've seen declines in both those  
6           residential and commercial sectors, more so  
7           on the commercial side, for an overall gas  
8           reduction of 13 percent. And these are  
9           typically, actually during shoulder months.  
10          March you would say certainly has more  
11          heating degree days; it's a colder month. We  
12          experience cold in April as well. But when  
13          we looked at the sales we had over last year,  
14          when we compared our heating degree days, the  
15          impact was 7 percent less heating degree days  
16          in 2020. So you would almost expect a  
17          7 percent decline in sales to correlate to  
18          that; yet, we've seen a 13 percent decline in  
19          sales. And the total billed therms chart  
20          shows that story as well. And if we look at  
21          May, May seems to be leveling off a bit when  
22          we compare to the prior years.

23                           We appreciate the time to work with  
24          the Commission. We look forward to working



1 with all members on a strategy that we could  
2 use together to ensure that we can provide  
3 this assistance that we're working with our  
4 customers day in and day out, and to also  
5 ensure that we can provide the safe and  
6 reliable services that we are also diligently  
7 committed to during this.

8 And lastly, we've been tracking  
9 these numbers that represent the figures that  
10 I've proposed today or presented today, and  
11 we have this in a detailed Excel spreadsheet  
12 that we'd be happy to provide the Commission  
13 during this proceeding, but then also on a  
14 regular basis as well so that the Commission  
15 could further understand the impacts that I  
16 presented here today. So with that, I'll  
17 turn this back over to John.

18 MR. CLOSSON: Thank you, Mark.  
19 This is John Closson again. At a high level,  
20 the lesson learned that we've had so far, you  
21 know, we're not out of this by any stretch.  
22 I think everybody recognizes that. I don't  
23 think originally anybody could have  
24 anticipated how long this was going to go on

1           for. So we got an early start in our  
2           response; however, you know, we did not  
3           understand fully how long this would go on  
4           for, and that caused us some trouble over  
5           time that we had to get over. In the early  
6           stages of this, you know, we moved very  
7           quickly. We were getting information from a  
8           lot of different sources, and in some  
9           instances the information, you know, proved  
10          to be incorrect later down the road. So, you  
11          know, we were encouraged to move quickly but  
12          take some caution about all the information  
13          that's coming in.

14                        We developed a communications  
15          strategy, you know, both internally and  
16          externally, and we executed it. And if we  
17          run into this again, this type of event, we  
18          would execute the same way. And then we also  
19          had to realize that, you know, we had to be  
20          humble enough to realize that good ideas came  
21          from everywhere. There was a lot of  
22          information that had been coming in about  
23          this virus, about the appropriate response to  
24          it. And it's best to look in areas both

1           within and outside of our industry to make  
2           sure we're doing everything we can to  
3           preserve the health and well-being of our  
4           customers and our employees and all the  
5           stakeholders that we work with.

6                        So at this point we'd really just  
7           like to open it up to any questions that  
8           anyone has about our response, about our  
9           customer experience, and about where Unitil  
10          is directed at this point with respect to the  
11          pandemic.

12                       CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
13          Thank you very much for that.

14                       Commissioner Bailey, do you want to  
15          start?

16                       COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Sure. Thank  
17          you very much for that excellent  
18          presentation. I have a couple of questions  
19          about whether you've quantified the expenses  
20          yet. Do you have projections about the  
21          amount of receivables that you think may be  
22          uncollectibles?

23                       MR. CLOSSON: Mark, you want me to  
24          handle that?

1           MR. LAMBERT: We have actually --  
2           yeah, and I can turn this back over to John  
3           and Dan Hurstak as well.

4           Commissioner, we have made some  
5           attempts right now at projecting based on the  
6           information that we've seen from March  
7           through May, what the receivable balances may  
8           look like in that chart that I had shown,  
9           what that may grow to, and we're trying to  
10          use all the data that we have right now to  
11          indicate that.

12          In addition, the realization that  
13          our customers will not be getting into a  
14          termination proceeding, where they perhaps as  
15          disconnections moved forward they get  
16          disconnected, that would prompt them to move  
17          into a non-active status, which unfortunately  
18          may lead ultimately to a charge-off or a  
19          write-off, which would be our bad debt  
20          expense. And as we know from this period  
21          during the state of emergency, with the  
22          moratorium, customers are naturally not going  
23          to move into that phase. So we're trying to  
24          anticipate growing arrears and less

1 write-offs which would be used to reduce  
2 those balances. So we're in the process of  
3 that, and I know we're moving in to try to  
4 identify those bad debt costs.

5 But Dan or John, if you have  
6 anything more specific, that's fine.

7 MR. CLOSSON: Dan, do you want to  
8 respond?

9 MR. HURSTAK: Sure. I'd just like  
10 to say for the first quarter we had included  
11 additional bad debt reserve amounts for UES  
12 of approximately 20,000 and for Northern New  
13 Hampshire approximately 44,000. And then we  
14 are considering all of the items that John  
15 and Mark covered as we move through the  
16 remainder of the year for what bad debt costs  
17 will be, but we do not have amounts for  
18 those.

19 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Do you  
20 know what the impact of the lag from payments  
21 is on your cash working capital? Do you have  
22 a number for that?

23 MR. HURSTAK: No, we do not have a  
24 number for that. We're assessing the impacts

1 had over the past two or three months as we  
2 kind of moved out of March and into full  
3 months with the Emergency Order of the  
4 pandemic. But no, we do not have a  
5 quantified amount yet.

6 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. I had  
7 a follow-up for Mr. Lambert about the  
8 uncollectible question. What you're saying  
9 is that, because of the executive order and  
10 the fact that customers can't be  
11 disconnected, the arrearages that are  
12 increasing will become uncollectible and bad  
13 debt until after that Emergency Order  
14 expires?

15 MR. LAMBERT: Well, I think what I  
16 was saying -- and certainly correct me if I'm  
17 missing the question, Commissioner -- but  
18 what I was saying was right now those  
19 customers just continue to age, and we're  
20 not -- they're not engaging to make the  
21 payment. If, and this may happen, this may  
22 occur, if the moratorium is lifted and the  
23 Company has opportunities to resume normal  
24 business through the rules -- disconnections

1 through the rules and that notification  
2 process, we hope that that would engage  
3 customers. And our plan is to protect  
4 customers with payment arrangements. And  
5 they'd be very flexible. They'd be long  
6 payment arrangements. So as the moratorium  
7 is lifted, customers would still remain  
8 protected from disconnection for a long  
9 period of time, well through even next year,  
10 as they make payments towards their  
11 outstanding balance. If customers, once this  
12 is lifted, choose not to pay because they  
13 can't pay, it would probably then go final  
14 and terminate the account, would then go  
15 through the normal process where they would  
16 be prepared for write-offs after we've had  
17 ample time to collect.

18 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So that's  
19 years away because the Executive Order says  
20 that you have to have a long payment  
21 arrangement after the disconnection --  
22 disconnection moratorium is lifted.

23 MR. LAMBERT: That's correct.  
24 That's how we see it, Commissioner, yes.

1 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: All right.

2 Thank you.

3 Can you -- can anybody give me an  
4 indication of the increased expenses? I know  
5 you mentioned, you know, PPE, extra cleaning  
6 costs, vehicle leases and more IT bandwidth  
7 and licenses for working remotely. Anybody  
8 have an idea about what that increase in  
9 expenses is going to be?

10 MR. CLOSSON: For UES right now,  
11 those have achieved 31,000, and for Northern  
12 Utilities 34,000. Am I saying that  
13 correctly, Dan?

14 MR. HURSTAK: Yeah. Those numbers,  
15 John, mainly include additional PPE and  
16 cleaning, as John described earlier in his  
17 remarks. We are still trying to assess and  
18 compile the costs related to remote workforce  
19 and any other pandemic costs that may have  
20 come in the past two months.

21 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Has  
22 the pandemic had any effect on your ability  
23 to operate the system, maintain the system?

24 MR. LETOURNEAU: Commissioner



1 Bailey, this is Ray Letourneau on the  
2 electric side. As John has indicated in his  
3 presentation, you know, we had to get  
4 creative with staggering shifts to try to  
5 limit the number of folks that were in the  
6 office. We had to maintain a contractor  
7 workforce that was job-site reporting, so  
8 that we would assure ourselves also that if  
9 we had any type of weather event, that we  
10 could manage that, because mutual aid was  
11 virtually very difficult to obtain during  
12 this period of time.

13 But to specifically answer to your  
14 question on the electric side -- and I'm sure  
15 Chris LeBlanc can answer for the gas -- we  
16 had -- essentially we were able to manage  
17 through this with virtually no impact in our  
18 ability to operate the system.

19 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: What about  
20 public jobs and the construction that you do  
21 during the summer period?

22 MR. LETOURNEAU: Yeah, we were able  
23 to -- we had to certainly amend I guess just  
24 schedules. A lot of the work that we were

1 doing, especially when we start looking at  
2 some of the major upgrades that we're doing  
3 to our system, we do have to take outages to  
4 do some of that work. And so a lot of those  
5 outages were scheduled earlier in the year,  
6 in the March-April time frame. And because  
7 everybody was working from home, you know,  
8 all the students were home and people were  
9 relying on their Internet router and  
10 telecommuting, et cetera, we postponed a lot  
11 of that work until about a month ago. We  
12 started notifying customers. We started  
13 taking those outages. We started working  
14 with different entities, if we got a call  
15 from somebody that couldn't withstand an  
16 outage during a certain period of time. But  
17 we were able to reschedule those. And we've  
18 done that successfully. And we've done that  
19 virtually with no customer feedback --  
20 negative feedback I should say. So we're  
21 still moving along with our construction.

22 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And how's the  
23 level of requests for new service  
24 installations? Is it normal or is it less

1           than normal?

2                       MR. LETOURNEAU:  Yeah, that's a  
3           good question.  On the electric side I would  
4           have to say it's definitely dropped off.  And  
5           a lot of that is as a result of the  
6           municipalities.  It's not because the  
7           construction hasn't continued.  It's the  
8           municipalities have been basically stopping  
9           any type of permitting for electric service.  
10          You need an inspection done by an inspector,  
11          and a lot of municipalities weren't allowing  
12          the inspectors to go out into the field to do  
13          that work.  So a lot of it has been  
14          backlogged.  But we're starting to see that  
15          slowly start to turn around now.  And I think  
16          that if we have another couple months, we'll  
17          be caught up to where we would expect to be  
18          with service work.

19                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY:  Great.  How  
20          about the spokesperson for Northern?

21                      MR. LEBLANC:  Hi, Commissioner  
22          Bailey.  This is Chris LeBlanc.  Much like  
23          Ray said, we implemented staggered shifts  
24          from remote locations when the virus first

1 hit. And we did put restrictions on all work  
2 that was company-driven that required access  
3 to customers' homes. That restriction was in  
4 place for April and May, and we've recently  
5 lifted that. We have moved forward with our  
6 construction program, so we haven't seen the  
7 diminution of our construction. We have  
8 recently, as I mentioned, lifted those  
9 restrictions for customer entry, and we're  
10 starting to catch up on that delayed work at  
11 this point in time.

12 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So did you  
13 have a similar delay of work for new  
14 installation because of municipalities?

15 MR. LEBLANC: Yes. But typically  
16 this time of year when -- construction for  
17 the gas side pretty much starts around  
18 April 15th. And initially when we first  
19 start construction, our new installs are  
20 contracts that were received towards the end  
21 of last year. So new customer requests are  
22 slow this time of year. But we have seen a  
23 diminished amount of new customer requests  
24 for gas service.

1                   COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Can we  
2 go back to the graph that showed the  
3 reduced -- the accounts receivable? That  
4 one. That one, yeah.

5                   So it looks to me like May of 2019  
6 and May of 2020 are at about the same level.  
7 Am I reading that wrong? And it even looks  
8 like April might be a little bit -- April of  
9 2020 might be a little bit lower.

10                  MR. LAMBERT: Yes, that's correct.  
11 We actually were experiencing -- we had moved  
12 into a new customer information system back  
13 in 2017, Commissioner. And one of those  
14 exercises with that was we wanted to make  
15 sure we had a reliable system in place. And  
16 one thing that was -- we certainly did not  
17 want to jeopardize any accuracy in terms of  
18 collections, whether we were notifying  
19 customers incorrectly. So we really took our  
20 time on the collection side because it is  
21 such a sensitive issue for our customers.  
22 So, you know, our arrearages had grown during  
23 that time. So we saw that, you know, those  
24 numbers were starting to really come down to

1 normal levels. And we knew this was going to  
2 take time.

3 So we could almost use that as a  
4 lesson for ourselves, too, as we move into  
5 this pandemic, that arrears will probably  
6 certainly grow to higher levels. But yes,  
7 you're right. In April of 2020 versus April  
8 of 2019, it's about the same area. So we  
9 started I think at a much higher point in  
10 2018 as we were trying to come out of that  
11 system-imposed -- or self-imposed moratorium.

12 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So the  
13 increase in the amounts in the chart above,  
14 are those increases from the low point, like  
15 in October, November?

16 MR. LAMBERT: No, those are impacts  
17 just since the pandemic began in March of  
18 2020. That's what we've seen. And it would  
19 be depicted on the right side of the chart  
20 that you see below. So from March 2020, and  
21 you look at April 2020, how much it  
22 increased, those are the depictions above in  
23 the residential and commercial classes.

24 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. So

1 comparing that to last year -- well, the  
2 graph is starting to go down beginning in  
3 March, and this year the graph is going up in  
4 March. So that really shows the difference.

5 MR. LAMBERT: Yes, that's correct.  
6 That was that "flattening the curve"  
7 reference I made. It usually flattens in  
8 March of each year, and as we head out of a  
9 normal period where winter moratorium ends,  
10 you'll see that decline, you know, very  
11 consistently until we get to a time where we  
12 head back into the moratorium period. And  
13 that's the alarming trend, that we haven't  
14 seen that. We may have flattened it from  
15 April to May. May would indicate that it's  
16 flattened. But I think June and July may  
17 tell, you know, an interesting story. So  
18 that will be good information to continue to  
19 provide the Commission, you know, even  
20 through this investigation.

21 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: All right.  
22 Thank you very much. That's all the  
23 questions I have. I really appreciate your  
24 time.

1 MR. LAMBERT: Sure. Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner  
3 Giaimo.

4 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Good morning.  
5 I'm going to see if people can shake their  
6 heads to indicate that I'm being heard. All  
7 right. Great.

8 So my first point is going to be  
9 more of a comment than anything else, and  
10 it's actually for the other utilities to  
11 consider as well. The utilities with -- that  
12 are doing business in multiple jurisdictions,  
13 I guess I'd like to hear if there are any  
14 differences. I imagine each utility needs to  
15 handle customers slightly differently because  
16 each set of customers has different needs.  
17 I'd imagine Fitchburg would be different than  
18 Concord, New Hampshire, than Dartmouth,  
19 Maine -- (connectivity issue).

20 (Court Reporter interrupts.)

21 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: So I'm  
22 wondering if there are any -- if Unitil has  
23 any observations with respect to differences  
24 or observations they have within the multiple



1           jurisdictions. And maybe you can say that  
2           you think New Hampshire has done it right  
3           with respect to the Governor's Executive  
4           Order or Commission activity such as this.

5                       MR. CLOSSON: I would say that  
6           there are overall differences between the  
7           three states we operate from, you know, an  
8           operational and crisis response perspective.  
9           They have different criteria in each of the  
10          states. You know, we've learned from each of  
11          them. We've adopted best practices across  
12          state lines when we felt it was in the best  
13          interest of our employees and our customers.  
14          You know, some of the regions that we operate  
15          in in Massachusetts is less impacted than the  
16          Greater Boston area and some of those areas.  
17          So the consistency in terms of our experience  
18          is more like what's happening in New  
19          Hampshire and Maine. I'd let Mark and/or  
20          Chris or Ray respond to this question as  
21          well.

22                      MR. LAMBERT: Commissioner Giaimo,  
23          thanks for the question. Speaking from the  
24          customer side and the collection side

1 perhaps, one of the differences -- and I  
2 think New Hampshire's done a great job, you  
3 know, with this. One difference when we look  
4 at the collection side and the docket that we  
5 have open in New Hampshire -- and  
6 Massachusetts is entertaining expanding their  
7 arrears forgiveness program. And New  
8 Hampshire does not have an arrears management  
9 or arrears forgiveness program. And for  
10 those unfamiliar with it, it's for those  
11 customers who are experiencing bad debt and  
12 they meet certain qualifications, residential  
13 customers right now. They have an  
14 opportunity to enter into this arrangement,  
15 where as soon as they continue to make their  
16 payments, the Company will provide, you know,  
17 arrears forgiveness up to a certain point per  
18 month and a certain amount per year where  
19 they forgive the arrears from the bottom up  
20 or the oldest up. And that's recovered  
21 through a mechanism. And Massachusetts is  
22 entertaining -- in fact, we actually are --  
23 all the companies, I believe, and I know  
24 Unutil specifically, has increased those

1 amounts of arrears forgiveness. And in  
2 Massachusetts, they're starting to understand  
3 could that be used for, you know, certain  
4 commercial customers as well. I don't think  
5 there's a determination on that just quite  
6 yet. So Massachusetts has been active in  
7 that arena to understand this. And they  
8 understand the challenges of customers not  
9 engaging right now during this time as well.

10 I don't have any information on  
11 Maine, Commissioner. We haven't been in  
12 those discussions just quite yet with Maine  
13 on the customer level.

14 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you.  
15 That was helpful.

16 I have a couple other questions.  
17 They'll be pretty quick. People don't have  
18 to feel the need to be too elaborate. I  
19 think you can go through these quickly.

20 So if I heard you right, it sounds  
21 like the call center, at least in early  
22 March, did not have many people there, if at  
23 all, and now you've moved to having some at  
24 social distance; is that correct?

1           MR. LAMBERT: In the customer  
2           service center, we've only had three people  
3           that rotate in the customer service center  
4           for business reasons. Perhaps there's manual  
5           payments that get sent in here. They need to  
6           intercept those and post them and for other  
7           various reasons regarding mail. But  
8           everybody else has been working remote.

9           COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: And the slide  
10          that mentioned the four phases -- which is  
11          actually five because one phase of the phases  
12          is Phase Zero -- it looked like Phase 4 still  
13          has an emphasis on stay-at-home and remote  
14          work. Will that become the new normal? Does  
15          the Company foresee a significant amount of  
16          its workforce working from home?

17          MR. CLOSSON: I think that this has  
18          really forced us to take a look at that.  
19          Traditionally, Unitil has not been the type  
20          of organization that has a lot of remote  
21          work, although we do have a flexible work  
22          environment. Traditionally it's not been our  
23          culture. This has certainly opened our eyes,  
24          and I do anticipate we're going to see more

1 remote work as we move forward. Certainly  
2 there are departments internally that are  
3 thriving in this environment and are  
4 advocating to continue to do so after the  
5 pandemic.

6 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: With respect  
7 to customer engagement and communications,  
8 has a PR or communications firm been utilized  
9 to help enhance communications and to do  
10 maybe social media?

11 MR. LAMBERT: Yes. Our  
12 communications department utilizes a public  
13 relations firm here locally in Portsmouth,  
14 New Hampshire. And I know they've been  
15 involved, Commissioner, on both of those  
16 aspects. On our outward communications, all  
17 communications are run through our  
18 communications department, especially during  
19 this sensitive time. And we try to replicate  
20 those same messages online on our web as  
21 well. And this firm that we use plays an  
22 active role there.

23 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Have you  
24 ramped up the utilization of the consultation

1 of the consulting firm?

2 MR. LAMBERT: I don't -- I'm not  
3 sure the answer to that. I certainly could  
4 get back to you.

5 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: I was just  
6 wondering.

7 One thing that came across my mind  
8 during the presentation was, is there any  
9 move by the utility to actually, in order to  
10 safeguard the employees as they go out in the  
11 field and as they may have go to a customer's  
12 house, to ask the customers to take a test?  
13 Is that something that's even being  
14 considered? And/or do you think the  
15 customers would react so poorly to that, that  
16 it wouldn't be worth doing?

17 MR. CLOSSON: We have not  
18 considered that at this point.

19 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. There  
20 was a discussion about the UCARE Program.  
21 How are customers made -- the UCARE grants,  
22 how are customers made aware of that? If a  
23 customer comes and says they're having  
24 trouble paying their bills, can a customer

1 representative on the spot provide a grant,  
2 or do they provide paperwork? And who makes  
3 the final decision as to who gets those  
4 grants?

5 MR. LAMBERT: That's a very good  
6 question. The way we have initially set this  
7 up, Commissioner, is we've established very  
8 detailed relationships with our CAP agencies  
9 where customers are referred to for LIHEAP  
10 money, because the LIHEAP money is certainly  
11 there and available for our most needy  
12 customers and challenged customers. So the  
13 CAP agency will be the one to determine, hey,  
14 listen, we've got LIHEAP money here available  
15 for you, and they'll qualify them. Because  
16 many customers aren't sure if they do  
17 qualify.

18 Our customer service  
19 representatives, to answer your question,  
20 will refer them to the CAP agencies who will  
21 make that ultimate decision. But CAP  
22 agencies have the ability, like they don't  
23 have during most of the years that they do  
24 business with our customers, to provide

1 something additional if they don't meet those  
2 qualifications. So then they will provide  
3 the grant. It's not a staggered level. It's  
4 not a tiered level. Everybody gets \$150.  
5 And they communicate that information to  
6 Unitil. Going forward, however, though,  
7 Commissioner, we are evaluating as this  
8 continues and funds still remain available  
9 for customer service representatives to  
10 provide those funds directly as well.

11 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. That's  
12 great.

13 I guess my final question or  
14 comment is on the slide that appears before  
15 us. And so my first reaction was residential  
16 customer arrearages 30 days plus is down  
17 1 percent. Wow, that's counterintuitive.  
18 You'd never expect that to be the case. But  
19 I think, and what I heard -- (connectivity  
20 issue) that the amount of arrearages 90 plus  
21 days are actually up almost 30 percent. So  
22 I'm just trying to connect the dots.

23 Is it fair to say that the  
24 residential customers who had 30- or 60-day



1           arrearages actually are now in the 90-day  
2           arrearage bucket? So those who were  
3           economically stressed are even more  
4           economically stressed?

5                       MR. LAMBERT: Yes, I think it's  
6           fair to say that, Commissioner, because what  
7           we're finding in all of this -- and it's hard  
8           to get at these percentages or these impacts  
9           or these numbers. What we're finding is the  
10          customers who are challenged coming out of  
11          moratorium or do not pay their bills or enter  
12          into payment arrangements and they're  
13          qualifying for funds that they've always  
14          qualified for or -- that they're still in the  
15          same situation. So those customers that are  
16          always challenged, there's even more of them  
17          at this point. But the customers who  
18          normally pay -- although we're seeing some of  
19          those customers slip into arrearages that  
20          have never been there before -- generally  
21          speaking, those customers are paying their  
22          bills.

23                      COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Thank  
24          you, Mr. Lambert. Thank you, Mr. Closson.

1 Very insightful.

2 Madam Chair, those are all the  
3 questions I have.

4 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
5 Thank you.

6 We heard a description of a program  
7 where you are taking -- having tests done for  
8 employees who are going into homes every 14  
9 days, and you indicated you had one positive  
10 test come out of that of an asymptomatic  
11 employee. What is your practice, or have you  
12 developed one, for letting customers know  
13 they have been exposed to an employee?

14 MR. CLOSSON: So our protocol right  
15 now is to -- and we have done this in this  
16 case -- is work with the Department of Health  
17 and Human Services on contact tracing. So we  
18 are taking their guidance. We've been in  
19 contact with them about this case. The  
20 individual is going back for subsequent  
21 testing to ensure this is not a false  
22 positive. And it is my information that the  
23 Department of Health and Human Services will  
24 lead the contact tracing effort through our

1 customers. Some criteria that they evaluate  
2 is has the individual been within 6 feet of  
3 somebody else for longer than a period of 10  
4 minutes, approximately 10 minutes, and were  
5 they employing any PPE at the time. In both  
6 of those cases our protocol is to maintain  
7 6 feet of distance and to wear specific  
8 personal protect equipment when entering  
9 homes.

10 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
11 you.

12 You mentioned, and there was more  
13 discussion about the grant that's available,  
14 and I think the term was "customers  
15 impacted." And I was wondering how, if  
16 you've given any guidance to your  
17 representatives as to how to determine  
18 whether they are a customer who is more  
19 impacted, and if so, what that guidance is.

20 MR. LAMBERT: Yeah, thank you for  
21 the question. It's really loose guidelines  
22 we would say. They're subjective. And it's  
23 just a series of questions and picking up  
24 queues from the customers that they're having

1 difficulty paying their bill, their business  
2 hasn't opened, they're unemployed. And  
3 usually those are some of the key words as  
4 they're talking with customers on this. And  
5 usually those have really readily come out  
6 and it hasn't been really difficult to obtain  
7 that information. So those are the customers  
8 that our CRS, our customer service reps, are  
9 referring to CAP agencies, explaining to them  
10 that these funds may be available to them, or  
11 some funds would be available to them, and  
12 perhaps even more on fuel assistance or  
13 LIHEAP funding.

14 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.

15 Thank for that.

16 There was a slide that showed the  
17 percentage of customers not paying for each,  
18 for Unutil and Northern, compared to 2019,  
19 and it had a percent increase. Can you give  
20 me the numbers for 2019 so I can see the  
21 overall impact?

22 MR. LAMBERT: Yes. Yes, one  
23 moment. So in terms of our -- I don't have  
24 them combined. I combined them for the

1 purposes of the slide. But for our UES  
2 customers in -- I don't have them combined  
3 for March, April and May. But as an example,  
4 in May of 2019, the total customers that were  
5 not paying were 8,632; that increased to  
6 13,115 in 2020. And then on the gas side,  
7 the total number of customers who have not  
8 paid in May of 2019 was 1,087, and that  
9 number increased in 2020 to 3,471. And I  
10 hope my math works right there. But I think  
11 my chart had depicted March, April and May  
12 comparison in 2019 to the same in 2020, and  
13 the numbers I gave you was just for May as an  
14 example.

15 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Got you.

16 I think all my other questions have  
17 been answered. So Commissioners, do you have  
18 any other questions you want to follow up  
19 with, or should we move on to the next  
20 presentation?

21 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: No, thank  
22 you, I'm all set. We can move on to the next  
23 presentation.

24 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner

1 Bailey.

2 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I'm wondering  
3 if we should take a five-minute break maybe  
4 just to give people a stretch.

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Sure. Let's  
6 take a brief recess until 10:35.

7 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Off the record.

9 (Brief recess was taken at 10:30 a.m.,  
10 and the hearing resumed at 10:38 a.m.)

11 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: So let's go  
12 back on the record, please. Before we  
13 proceed with Liberty, I just want to thank  
14 Unitil and Northern for their presentations.  
15 That was very helpful. And I wanted to let  
16 you know that, to the extent you are done  
17 your presentation, your witnesses are free to  
18 leave.

19 All right. Let's proceed with  
20 Liberty, please. Mr. Sheehan.

21 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you. Following  
22 the pattern set with Liberty [sic], I will  
23 introduce the people that we will have  
24 available to speak, for them to be sworn in,

1 and they are as follows: Main presenter this  
2 morning will be Steve Mullen, who you know  
3 well from the regulatory group. Also  
4 present, and I asked them to turn their  
5 screens on to be sworn in, Heather Tebbetts,  
6 manager of Rates and Regulatory Affairs;  
7 Kevin Spottiswood, who is the Regional  
8 Employee Health and Safety Manager; Peter  
9 Dawes, is the vice-president of Finance  
10 Administration for the Eastern Region -- and  
11 of course the Eastern Region includes New  
12 Hampshire, Massachusetts, Georgia, and New  
13 Brunswick Gas and St. Lawrence Gas.  
14 Christine Downing is the manager of Customer  
15 Care here in New Hampshire. Jessica Arnold  
16 is a supervisor of Billing and Collections  
17 here in New Hampshire. Carmen Liron-Espana  
18 is manager of Energy Forecasting. Bill  
19 Killeen is the director of Energy  
20 Procurement. Carmen and Bill are both  
21 responsible for forecasting and energy  
22 procurement throughout the country, so  
23 they'll be able to offer some insight there.  
24 So those are the people that are prepared to

1 be sworn.

2 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right. Ms.  
3 Robidas.

4 (WHEREUPON, STEVEN MULLEN, HEATHER  
5 TEBBETTS, KEVIN SPOTTISWOOD, PETER  
6 DAWES, CHRISTINE DOWNING, JESSICA  
7 ARNOLD, BILL KILLEEN, CARMEN  
8 LIRON-ESPANA were duly sworn and  
9 cautioned by the Court Reporter.)  
10 STEVEN MULLEN, SWORN  
11 HEATHER TEBBETTS, SWORN  
12 KEVIN SPOTTISWOOD, SWORN  
13 PETER DAWES, SWORN  
14 CHRISTINE DOWNING, SWORN  
15 JESSICA ARNOLD, SWORN  
16 BILL KILLEEN, SWORN  
17 CARMEN LIRON-ESPANA, SWORN

18 MR. SHEEHAN: So if Steve could  
19 assume the screen again, and we're going to  
20 have Steve walk through our presentation,  
21 which is similar to what you heard from  
22 Unitil. There will be some different  
23 emphasis as we developed our own presentation  
24 here. And then all the others will be



1 available for questions. Steve.

2 MR. MULLEN: Good morning, all.

3 Thanks for the opportunity to make this  
4 presentation. Let me start out by just going  
5 through briefly some of the customer and  
6 employee safeguards we have in place.

7 The Company instituted a policy  
8 where employees who can work from home must  
9 work from home. Currently that has been  
10 extended to at least Labor Day. There will  
11 be some further consideration after that.  
12 Employees must wear masks in company  
13 buildings. We've kept the field crews  
14 together and isolated from others. We do the  
15 temperature checks daily and the screening  
16 questions. We've done extra cleaning of the  
17 facilities and vehicles. When we go to  
18 customer homes, they're asked scripted  
19 questions before we go for visits. We're  
20 using additional personal protective  
21 equipment when entering the homes. We also  
22 only perform essential work when we're in the  
23 customer homes to minimize the exposure to  
24 both employees and the customers. We had

1 weekly crisis teams locally. In addition,  
2 the corporate organization initially had a  
3 team that met daily; they now meet twice a  
4 week. We closed the walk-in centers. And we  
5 have provided employees with a significant  
6 amount of PPE to perform their duties, as  
7 well as when they're going out either to  
8 customer premises or visiting the company  
9 facilities.

10 In terms of the some of the  
11 initiatives we've done on the customer side,  
12 we've done some adjustments to our payment  
13 arrangements. We offer commercial customers  
14 up to six months, residential customers up to  
15 12 months, and allow for zero down-payments  
16 if necessary. We've done a series of  
17 different types of customer outreach, whether  
18 it's social media, PSAs on the radio,  
19 information on the web site, on the IVR. And  
20 we've done outbound e-mails and calls to set  
21 up payment arrangements and notifying  
22 customers of potential assistance. In  
23 addition, consistent with the order by the  
24 Commission and the Governor's order, we've

1 discontinued the disconnects for non-payment,  
2 and we've discontinued the assessment of late  
3 charges. I have some information later on  
4 that will quantify the late charge  
5 information in terms of how much for each  
6 utility.

7 Also, we have -- the Company has  
8 made some donations to Neighbor Helping  
9 Neighbor and to employee-chosen local  
10 charities to help customers during this time.  
11 And we also have an initiative where customer  
12 service reps can apply a good will credit of  
13 up to \$250, based on their discretion and the  
14 customer's particular circumstance, to help  
15 them with being able to meet their bill  
16 payment requirements.

17 In terms of the impacts on sales,  
18 the Company has done an analysis of the  
19 wholesale demand changes and excluding the  
20 weather impacts. What you see on the table  
21 is for each month of March, April and May  
22 2020, a comparison of the actual sales to  
23 what was expected prior to the pandemic.  
24 We're in the process of updating our

1 long-term sales forecast which will go  
2 through 2026, and that's going to be  
3 completed July 30th. That's going to be done  
4 at a more granular level, and it's going to  
5 look at the longer-term impact of COVID-19.

6 So you can see when you look at  
7 March, April and May there's been some  
8 significant drops in sales, again, excluding  
9 weather related to this. So it remains to be  
10 seen how long this continues and what those  
11 trends will continue to look like in the  
12 upcoming months.

13 We've looked at the revenue impacts  
14 for both EnergyNorth and Granite State. So  
15 next series of slides are going to go through  
16 those. But you can get an idea of what's  
17 been happening in terms of payments.

18 So on this slide you see a  
19 comparison of the dollar amount that varies  
20 when you compare the similar months of March,  
21 April and May of 2019 and 2020. And then you  
22 also see the number of payments received.  
23 This is for EnergyNorth. So you can see that  
24 the dollar amount went down as much as

1           29 percent in a month as compared to a  
2           similar month in 2019. And the number of  
3           monthly payments was down almost 10 percent,  
4           at least in the month of May, as compared to  
5           the similar month in 2019. So there has been  
6           a significant decrease in the number of  
7           payments and in the revenue that's come in.

8                         In terms of looking at the accounts  
9           receivable, what you see on this graph is  
10          looking at the accounts receivable that are  
11          more than 60 days past due. The first 4 bars  
12          are the months of March, April, May and till  
13          June 11th of 2020, and the next four are the  
14          same months of 2019. As you can see, the  
15          pattern is the same, in terms of the number  
16          of and the percentage of the accounts that  
17          are more than 60 days past due, in terms of  
18          going up from March to April to May to June.  
19          However, if you compare 2020 to 2019, you  
20          will also see that for each month there's  
21          been an increase as compared to the month in  
22          the prior year of the percentage of the  
23          accounts that are more than 60 days past due.  
24          So we are certainly seeing an increase in our

1 accounts receivable.

2 And as shown on this next graph,  
3 this is compared -- this is taking a look at  
4 the number of days sales outstanding. What  
5 that basically means is if you look at  
6 May 31st of 2020, you will see that that's  
7 41.04 days. That means as of that time the  
8 number of days average sales outstanding was  
9 just over 41 days. Comparing to the same  
10 point in time in 2019, and even 2018, you can  
11 see that that's gone up quite a bit.

12 Moving on to Granite State, here's  
13 a similar table to what you saw for  
14 EnergyNorth, again, comparing the revenue  
15 dollar amounts as well as the number of  
16 payments received. Similar to what we just  
17 saw for EnergyNorth, there is a decrease in  
18 the amount of dollar payments that are coming  
19 in, as well as particularly in April and May  
20 we will see that the number of payments we  
21 received is down. Again, the percentages are  
22 at the top of the slide. But, you know, it's  
23 a similar type of situation for both  
24 EnergyNorth and Granite State.

1           Also similar is, again, the pattern  
2 here -- this is again a graph just like the  
3 one for EnergyNorth. Again the pattern is  
4 the same when you compare the months in 2020  
5 to the months in 2019. There is a continued  
6 increase as compared to the similar months  
7 for each year. So, you know, we're  
8 experiencing the same things on the electric  
9 side and on the gas side in terms of  
10 increased accounts receivable.

11           And again, if you look at a similar  
12 graph for the number of days sales  
13 outstanding, again it is increased to roughly  
14 40 days at the end of May of 2020, and the  
15 prior years were 38 and 39 days. So again,  
16 similar to EnergyNorth, you know, both of our  
17 commodities are experiencing similar results.

18           In terms of dollars, dollar impacts  
19 so far, this is where I quantify the labor,  
20 non-labor, waived fees. The footnotes at the  
21 bottom say what the labor is -- again, labor  
22 is non-productive time for quarantined  
23 employees. No. 2, Footnote 2 for non-labor  
24 is primarily PPE. And No. 3, the waived

1 fees, you will notice there's a lot more for  
2 EnergyNorth than Granite State, and that's  
3 particularly because for Granite State we  
4 don't charge late payment fees for  
5 residential accounts, so that's why the  
6 number is lower there. I know that these  
7 amounts were all as of the end of May 2020.  
8 I've seen more recent information on waived  
9 fees, and again, both the numbers are up a  
10 little bit from the numbers that you see  
11 there.

12 So we're continuing to track all of  
13 this in the accounting system where we track  
14 these costs. (connectivity issue)

15 And then just moving on to the last  
16 slide -- trying to go through this fairly  
17 quickly so we can get into the questions.  
18 One of the things as we went through this is  
19 that we learned that we need to establish and  
20 rotate a pandemic inventory of PPE to keep  
21 employees safe. And that was particularly  
22 with supply chain issues, which were not  
23 unique to Liberty. I think that was  
24 happening even with the state, as well as



1 other utilities. But that's one of the  
2 things that we learned, that we really  
3 probably should have that stuff on hand and  
4 spread out throughout the organization.

5 As part of this, we updated our  
6 business continuity plans and pandemic plans  
7 in each department and update weekly in terms  
8 of any changes in status; so that way,  
9 corporate-wide, we know exactly what's  
10 happening throughout the company and if any  
11 changes need to be made or if we need to  
12 shift personnel out to cover or make other  
13 arrangements.

14 We currently attend weekly and  
15 monthly NGA calls to try to learn best  
16 practices. And, you know, best practices  
17 also go with the communications we have with  
18 other Liberty Utilities companies across the  
19 country, as well as other utilities in the  
20 region. We're always looking for shared  
21 ideas of tracking the impact of customer  
22 outreach, and that's part of when we meet in  
23 our corporate level, looking for best  
24 practices across the Company.

1                   And, you know, as the last item  
2                   says, this is an ongoing situation. It's a  
3                   learning experience for us, for the  
4                   regulators, for the customers, for all  
5                   involved. So it certainly has been  
6                   interesting. And, you know, all the extended  
7                   time working at home and trying to operate  
8                   remotely has been an interesting experience.  
9                   It's actually worked out better than, I think  
10                  personally, than I would have expected. Once  
11                  you figure out the logistics and you get into  
12                  more of a routine, it's actually worked out  
13                  fairly well.

14                  That brings us to the end of the  
15                  presentation. We're certainly open for  
16                  questions, whether to me or to any of my  
17                  colleagues.

18                  CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
19                  Thank you for that.

20                  Commissioner Bailey.

21                  COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you.

22                  Can you talk a little bit about the  
23                  impact to your operations, to the extent  
24                  there has been any? How's your construction

1 work going, new installs?

2 MR. MULLEN: Based on the  
3 information that I have, in terms of on the  
4 gas side, we are expected to still meet our  
5 targets in terms of new customer connections  
6 as compared to what we expected before  
7 COVID-19. And I'm not aware of any slowdown  
8 on the electric side. Of course the gas side  
9 is expanding more now than the electric side.

10 I do know anecdotally, in terms of  
11 doing some work, for instance, with the City  
12 of Nashua, they're planning to do some main  
13 work downtown. And the pandemic provided a  
14 good time to do that with less traffic than  
15 once some of the restaurants began doing  
16 outdoor seating and expanding into the road.  
17 We were informed that that wasn't going to  
18 happen. So there has been some shifts like  
19 that that we've experienced related to it.  
20 But in terms of new connections, I'm not  
21 aware that we've run into any issues.

22 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So you didn't  
23 have any municipalities that didn't want you  
24 to be in customer homes or they -- did you

1 hear the Unitil presentation?

2 MR. MULLEN: Maybe Mr. Spottiswood  
3 may have a better take on this.

4 MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Yeah,  
5 absolutely, Steve.

6 We did run into some concerns,  
7 where initially when the pandemic hit, the  
8 protocols that we put in place, we really  
9 responded only to emergency calls at that  
10 point. In similar locations, say Manchester,  
11 some of the municipalities did not open up  
12 the opportunity to dig and put mains in  
13 service in the ground just based on pandemic  
14 and some of the things that they had put in  
15 place.

16 But to get inside the homes, we  
17 really, only to mitigate the risk, went in  
18 for emergency purposes. And some customers  
19 didn't want us to go in the home, so we  
20 respected that as well. But when we did go  
21 in the homes, we did go through a checklist.  
22 We did go through a scripting. Our customer  
23 service group reached out to the customers  
24 when it was a scheduled order, and they asked

1 the questions before our employees arrived,  
2 is it safe or unsafe to go in the home. If  
3 it was unsafe to go in the home, we had a  
4 protocol where employees wore specific PPE if  
5 they had to go in, regardless of -- or if  
6 6-foot social distancing couldn't be obtained  
7 and things like that. Hopefully that answers  
8 your question.

9 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: What about  
10 requests for new service to customers? Have  
11 you had any -- do you have a backlog to be  
12 satisfied now?

13 MR. SPOTTISWOOD: As far as what I  
14 have for information, I think the random  
15 services have been slowed down a bit. Main  
16 and service replacement due to the CIBS  
17 program and stuff have continued. But the  
18 random services has slowed down a bit at this  
19 point compared to last year. And they're not  
20 a hundred percent sure it's related to  
21 COVID-19, but that is the information that  
22 was provided.

23 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Mr. Mullen,  
24 do you have any testing protocols in place

1           where your employees who are working in  
2           residences have to get tested for COVID-19  
3           every so often?

4                       MR. MULLEN:  Mr. Spottiswood would  
5           be best to address that.

6                       MR. SPOTTISWOOD:  Yeah, we have not  
7           initiated tests for our employees at this  
8           point in time.  We are following the  
9           Governor's order at this point which  
10          continues.  We do continuously take -- or  
11          have the employees take their temperatures  
12          prior to arrival, answer the questions that  
13          were part of the process.  We have exercised  
14          the communication to the employees that, if  
15          you're sick, we don't want you to participate  
16          or come to work.  But we have not -- there's  
17          been a lot of discussions about it.  We just  
18          are not a hundred percent sure in our minds  
19          that, you know, if testing is going to give  
20          us the answers that we are, you know, hoping  
21          to get with the uncertainty of the  
22          asymptomatic piece of it.  And there's still  
23          some things that we have to work through to  
24          be confident in testing.

1                   COMMISSIONER BAILEY: To be -- so  
2                   that you're confident in the testing?

3                   MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Yes. So we get  
4                   the results that we're confident the results  
5                   are what they are.

6                   COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Have  
7                   any -- how many of your -- have any Liberty's  
8                   employees in New Hampshire had COVID-19?

9                   MR. SPOTTISWOOD: We had two  
10                  employees in the customer service group that  
11                  contacted COVID, but none in the operations  
12                  side at this point.

13                  COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And do you  
14                  have protocols in place about keeping social  
15                  distancing and wearing masks when out in  
16                  public?

17                  MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Yeah. If our  
18                  crews are out in public or our employees who  
19                  are single, lone workers are out in public,  
20                  if they cannot maintain that social distance,  
21                  they're required to wear a mask. Visitors to  
22                  the job sites are required to wear a mask.  
23                  If you go into any of our facilities, if you  
24                  report there normally, or if you, you know,

1 report in Londonderry and show up in  
2 Manchester, which is very infrequent now  
3 because people are working from home, but you  
4 have to wear mask the whole time you're in  
5 the building, unless when you get to your  
6 office or so and you can isolate, you can  
7 take the mask off at that point. But anytime  
8 you go in common areas or any time in the  
9 building, we ask that -- we require you to  
10 put the mask on at this point in time. And  
11 we haven't relaxed that restriction.

12 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. On one  
13 of your slides it said employees are  
14 performing only essential services inside  
15 homes. So can you tell me what services are  
16 not being performed?

17 MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Essential service  
18 would be some mandated work, meter changes at  
19 this point. When we do the CIBS program,  
20 some of that work is now being done as well.  
21 We consider that essential to tie over the  
22 existing service to the new service.  
23 Emergency orders, which would be gas leaks,  
24 CO leaks, turn-ons, things like that we're



1           doing at this point in time. But again, it  
2           is a scripting process prior to any entry to  
3           a customer's home, whether it's a scheduled  
4           task or something that you're going and  
5           you're meeting with the customer to set up,  
6           you know, an "in to out" so to say, or move  
7           the meter to the outside.

8                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So what kind  
9           of work that's not considered essential is  
10          not being done right now?

11                       MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Well, we have a  
12          walking survey where we're not -- we're doing  
13          the exterior of the building. And if we  
14          can't get inside, we go to the CGI process  
15          which we would get at a -- (connectivity  
16          issue) we can't get in and we do at a later  
17          date. And any service that a customer is not  
18          comfortable with us doing, we would not, you  
19          know, participate in. We would reschedule it  
20          when the customer feels comfortable, whether  
21          it be, say, a high bill complaint or a meter  
22          exchange per customer request or something  
23          along that line.

24                       COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. So I

1 understand if a customer asks you to not  
2 come, that you work with that customer not to  
3 do that kind of work. But the slide said  
4 essential services -- employees perform only  
5 essential work inside customer homes,  
6 minimize exposure. So I'm just asking you  
7 for an example of what isn't essential work  
8 that you're putting off.

9 MR. SPOTTISWOOD: I work in the  
10 health and safety field, so I don't have all  
11 the operational background of what the  
12 employees do for that question. Maybe I'm  
13 not the right person to answer that question.  
14 Maybe it's more of an ops question. Just  
15 from what I know, that's the only answer to  
16 the question I can give you at this point.

17 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I think I'd  
18 like to hear from somebody from ops, please.

19 MR. SHEEHAN: Commissioner, we  
20 don't have someone directly in operations on  
21 the call right now. And if someone knows,  
22 they can pipe up; otherwise, we will provide  
23 you a list of those tasks that we aren't  
24 performing as indicated on the sheet this

1           afternoon.

2                       COMMISSIONER BAILEY:   Okay.   Could  
3           the operational personnel also explain any  
4           other impacts to operations as a result of  
5           the pandemic, or if that hasn't been done,  
6           when you expect that will resume, that kind  
7           of thing?

8                       MR. SHEEHAN:   I will.   I can convey  
9           that the Company has participated in what was  
10          weekly calls with the Safety Division.   And I  
11          understand they've been conducting with all  
12          the utilities.   So I've listened in on a  
13          bunch of those.   And other than occasionally  
14          quarantining an employee who traveled or  
15          situations like that, the general report from  
16          our operations folks has been business as  
17          normal.   And that's at a very high level.  
18          But I will get you detail of anything that is  
19          counter to that.

20                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY:   Is that for  
21          both gas and electric or just gas?

22                      MR. SHEEHAN:   That's for both.  
23          Weekly reports have indicated, like I said,  
24          like electric ops would say we have two

1 people at home because they traveled or  
2 because their cousin traveled, whatever the  
3 case may be; otherwise, things are going  
4 well. As Kevin mentioned and Steve  
5 mentioned, the three or four people on a crew  
6 stay together and don't mix with other crews.  
7 So we've isolated them to prevent any  
8 cross-pollination -- (connectivity issue).

9 So the basic message has been we're  
10 working hard to get PPE, and we're respecting  
11 customers' wishes and following the orders.  
12 And otherwise, business is still remarkably  
13 normal at this time.

14 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay.

15 Thanks.

16 Mr. Mullen, can you switch to the  
17 slide that shows the revenue impacts, please?  
18 Yeah, that's the one. So this shows that  
19 revenue is down. But I can't tell if the  
20 revenue is down because of decreased sales or  
21 because of non-payment. And my question is  
22 it because of both, or is it -- do you have  
23 any way to separate that out?

24 MS. ARNOLD: Hi, this is Jessica

1           Arnold, the billing and collections  
2           supervisor. So this chart specifically is  
3           payments. These numbers are only indicative  
4           of payments received or, you know, in a lot  
5           of these cases not received for the three  
6           months in question in 2019 and 2020.

7                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So the  
8           information that shows the variance indicates  
9           revenue that was billed but not paid, the  
10          difference? Or is it just -- in March of  
11          2019 you had \$13 million in revenue from  
12          residential customers, and in March of 2020  
13          you had \$11 million without really any  
14          indication of why that is.

15                      MS. ARNOLD: Right. So this chart  
16          would only capture the number of payments  
17          that were received. So for March it would be  
18          13 million in payments. In 2020, 11 million.  
19          But to your point, it doesn't indicate what  
20          the sales part of this would be.

21                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. And  
22          the sales on another slide were down about  
23          4 percent for Granite State Electric?

24                      MR. KILLEEN: Slide 8, Steve.

1 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Can you hear me?  
2 This is Carmen from Liberty. Can you hear  
3 me?

4 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Yes, we can  
5 hear you.

6 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Exactly.  
7 Granite State, in the month of May, we are  
8 down by 3.9 percent.

9 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And  
10 3.9 percent compared to last May?

11 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Yes, exactly.  
12 So parameters -- (connectivity issues)

13 (Court Reporter interrupts.)

14 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Yes. So the  
15 methodology we use was same across the board,  
16 and we just took the parameters for the  
17 previous last year paid the same month as --  
18 (connectivity issue)

19 (Court Reporter interrupts.)

20 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: So I was saying  
21 to the Commissioner that we have been using  
22 the same methodology across the board for  
23 every single month, and this percentage is  
24 the comparison between expected sales in May

1 2020 with COVID versus May 2019, no COVID-19.

2 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. And  
3 can we go back to the revenue slide? What  
4 was the percentage decrease between May -- so  
5 about 879,000 -- (connectivity issue) lower  
6 than 10 percent?

7 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Yup.

8 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay.

9 MR. KILLEEN: Commissioner Bailey,  
10 this is Bill Killeen speaking. Just wanted  
11 to point out, you know, we got a little of  
12 apples and oranges here because the  
13 particular slide that's up here now, No. 9,  
14 is reflective of the revenue received by the  
15 Company. So the revenue received in March  
16 could have been billed in, you know, December  
17 and January period. And if we all recall,  
18 January -- or sorry -- the month of January  
19 was quite cold, or warm, or whatever it was.  
20 I can't even remember now, it was so long  
21 ago. Apologies. Whereas the impact that we  
22 showed on Slide 8 was an attempt to estimate  
23 what the monthly impact is based on wholesale  
24 levels that were seen -- in other words, what

1 we're seeing flowing through the meters from  
2 a supply perspective. So there's a bit of a  
3 timing difference when we're looking and  
4 comparing different percentages. So I just  
5 wanted to caution that.

6 I also wanted to share that, in  
7 general, both the electric and gas companies  
8 in New Hampshire seem demand impacted by  
9 around 5 percent likely due to COVID-19.  
10 What we've tried to do in our methodology is  
11 take out the weather impact -- in other  
12 words, normalize the consumption that we  
13 would have expected. And then those  
14 percentages that you're seeing here are the  
15 demand below what would have been expected at  
16 those weather levels. And these particular  
17 levels in New Hampshire are somewhat similar,  
18 if not slightly lower than I would say gas  
19 and electric utility is. We have electric  
20 companies in three different states, and on  
21 average they're down kind of in the 7-ish  
22 percent range. So, again, Granite State's  
23 reduction is a little bit below that. And  
24 likewise, an average for our gas companies



1           that are in eight different states and  
2           provinces are down kind of in the 7-1/2  
3           percent range. So once again, New Hampshire  
4           seems to be impacted a little bit less by  
5           COVID-19. So just a little few other points  
6           that I just wanted to share with you.

7                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you. I  
8           think -- (connectivity issue)

9                        (Court Reporter interrupts.)

10                      MS. ARNOLD: No, I'm sorry. I just  
11           wanted to reiterate again that Slides 6 and 9  
12           are just indicative of cash revenue. Those  
13           are payments only.

14                      CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner  
15           Bailey, did you say something? I didn't hear  
16           it.

17                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I said I  
18           think Commissioner Giaimo has a follow-up  
19           question.

20                      CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay.  
21           Commissioner Giaimo, go ahead.

22                      COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: I do. I want  
23           to make sure I understand Slide 5 right,  
24           because I thought I heard Mr. Mullen say that

1 the numbers were not weather-normalized. And  
2 then I'm not sure what I think Mr. Killeen  
3 had said. It sounded like he was suggesting  
4 that they may be weather-normalized. I just  
5 want to clarify.

6 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Yeah, this is  
7 Carmen again with Liberty Utilities. You're  
8 correct. The numbers have no weather  
9 normalize, but we are comparing two  
10 numbers -- or two sales subject to the same  
11 weather, put it this way. So this number is  
12 take the difference between what the Company  
13 sales -- what the Company would have expected  
14 for May 2020 to sales given the level of  
15 weather that we have without COVID-19. And  
16 then we compare that number with the actual  
17 weather -- actual sales, I'm sorry, that we  
18 see in May 2020. So that's was the  
19 confusion. When we say there's no weather  
20 impact, it means that we are comparing two  
21 numbers, two sales, subject to the same  
22 weather. Does that make sense?

23 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: No. I don't  
24 understand. It might just be me, but it

1 sounds like what you described was basically  
2 weather-normalized. But we don't have to  
3 belabor it. Thank you.

4 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Yup.

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner  
6 Bailey, do you have more questions?

7 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I was looking  
8 at my questions, and I don't think so. I  
9 think I'll turn the mic over to Commissioner  
10 Giaimo at this point. Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
12 you.

13 Commissioner Giaimo.

14 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Great. I  
15 have just a few. So the slide -- is Slide 9  
16 the one that indicates the monthly  
17 deviations, the monthly deviations slide? It  
18 has a -- no. Yes, that one. And so that's  
19 for Granite State. That's the electric. I  
20 want to make sure I understand this right.

21 So over the past three months, each  
22 month the Company has received, on average,  
23 about maybe \$1.1 to \$1.2 million less than  
24 they received for the same time in 2019; is

1           that correct?

2                       MS. ARNOLD: That's correct.

3                       COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Thank  
4 you, Ms. Arnold. And it looks, similarly for  
5 EnergyNorth, it's almost 5 million a month.  
6 Is that correct?

7                       MS. ARNOLD: Jessica Arnold again.  
8 And yes, that's about correct.

9                       COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Thank  
10 you. That's helpful.

11                      I guess these questions are maybe  
12 for Mr. Mullen. Is there a control center --  
13 does the Company have a control center, like  
14 an operations room?

15                      MR. MULLEN: Yes. It's in  
16 Londonderry.

17                      COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Has  
18 that been continually manned -- or I'm  
19 sorry -- continually staffed over the  
20 COVID-19 pandemic?

21                      MR. MULLEN: Yes, that's been  
22 manned. The control center covers not just  
23 New Hampshire. It covers across the country.  
24 I think Mr. Killeen might have something to

1 add to that.

2 MR. KILLEEN: Yes, Steve's correct.  
3 Our control center for both gas and electric  
4 is based in the office in Londonderry. But  
5 they do also have a backup site in New  
6 Hampshire as well in case of situations just  
7 like this. So the business continuity plan  
8 that was created by the Company many years  
9 ago made sure that that control room is  
10 flexible and durable in situations just like  
11 this. And they have been making sure that  
12 that control room -- you know, where they  
13 happen to have it in the office 24/7, 365,  
14 there's not quite as many people in there  
15 every day because they are maintaining the  
16 social distancing. And they've put in many,  
17 if not more, protocols than what Kevin  
18 described earlier and what was presented by  
19 Steve earlier, in terms of the various  
20 temperature checks, social distancing, hand  
21 sanitizing practices, et cetera. So they  
22 continue to operate 24/7 and with no issues  
23 and no illnesses and are keeping the gas and  
24 electrons flowing.

1                   COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you for  
2                   that. Is it compatible? If there's like a  
3                   big screen that shows the system, that shows  
4                   all the systems in the control room in  
5                   Londonderry and in the control room elsewhere  
6                   in New Hampshire, can they look at the same  
7                   thing? Can they work concurrently, and did  
8                   you do that? Or do you need to have -- are  
9                   you just working one operation? The backup  
10                  control center is truly just a backup control  
11                  center and doesn't run concurrent with the  
12                  primary control center?

13                  MR. KILLEEN: I believe I'd have to  
14                  check. But my understanding is -- the short  
15                  answer would be yes, I believe they have both  
16                  locations. But we can certainly doublecheck  
17                  on that.

18                  COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Thank  
19                  you.

20                  Slide 2 talked a little bit --  
21                  there was a bullet about vehicles. And it  
22                  almost suggested like the Company does extra  
23                  vehicle cleaning. What's the protocol for  
24                  vehicles? Are there multiple people in the

1 same vehicle? I'll pause there and wait to  
2 hear that answer.

3 MR. SPOTTISWOOD: Yeah, this is  
4 Kevin Spottiswood. We have tried to reduce  
5 that possibility the best we could. But if  
6 there is a possibility that somebody has to  
7 drive or more than one have to drive, then  
8 people in the vehicle wear face coverings or  
9 masks as they are in the vehicle.

10 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. And my  
11 last question is a follow-up to some of the  
12 questions Commissioner Bailey was having.  
13 And if these fall within the basket of being  
14 answers best for operations and no one here  
15 can answer, that's fine. But it sounds like  
16 I heard the CIBS work has continued  
17 unaffected. Is that right?

18 MR. SHEEHAN: Commissioner Giaimo,  
19 you will hear more about this. I think we  
20 have our CIBS hearing tomorrow.

21 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Yeah. Okay.

22 MR. SHEEHAN: The high-level  
23 message is Steve mentioned a particular  
24 situation in Nashua where a particular CIBS

1 project was cancelled for this year because  
2 of COVID-19. Generally speaking, it is going  
3 as planned.

4 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay.  
5 Thanks. And vegetation management and  
6 reliability enhancements, same answer?

7 MR. SHEEHAN: Correct. As we know,  
8 most of those people have trucks in the  
9 woods.

10 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Great. Okay.  
11 And I think you already answered the new  
12 connections information.

13 So with that, thanks to Liberty and  
14 all its experts. I appreciate it.

15 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right. I  
16 had a question about the outbound calls  
17 regarding payment arrangements. Are you  
18 seeing an increase in outreach? Is it  
19 effective in getting folks to enter into  
20 payment arrangements, or are you seeing a  
21 decrease in payment arrangements like we have  
22 with Unital?

23 MS. ARNOLD: This is Jessica  
24 Arnold. So with the increased outreach,



1 we've seen a good amount of customers who are  
2 renegotiating current payment arrangements  
3 that they have to take advantage of the  
4 longer periods that we're offering at this  
5 point. In general, though, the amount of  
6 payment arrangements has dropped not  
7 significantly. And unfortunately, I don't  
8 have those numbers in front of me. But they  
9 have dropped marginally over the last few  
10 months.

11 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Do you have any  
12 numbers that would show those that are  
13 existing and just renegotiated versus actual  
14 new payment arrangements?

15 MS. ARNOLD: I do not have those  
16 numbers in front of me, but it is something I  
17 could provide.

18 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
19 you. I would appreciate that.

20 The sales projections slide that  
21 you had showing that the sales were down as  
22 compared to the projections, do you have a  
23 breakdown between residential and commercial  
24 for that? It looks like it was a

1 compilation.

2 MS. LIRON-ESPANA: Not at this  
3 time, but we would be able to provide you  
4 with that.

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: I think it  
6 would be helpful if you could provide a  
7 breakdown for residential and commercial, to  
8 the extent you didn't in the slides. Thank  
9 you.

10 Looks like the rest of my questions  
11 were answered. So unless the Commissioners  
12 have follow-up questions -- I can't see you  
13 both -- all right. Now I can see you.

14 All right. Obviously, thank you,  
15 everybody, for the presentation and for all  
16 your people being here. This was very  
17 helpful. And your witnesses are excused, and  
18 we will move on to the next presentation.

19 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Thank you.

21 Mr. Fossum.

22 MR. FOSSUM: I'm here.

23 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: I can't see  
24 you. There you are. Okay. Are you prepared

1 to go?

2 MR. FOSSUM: I'm just scanning the  
3 screens to make sure everybody from our team  
4 is on and available. Mine's refreshing, but  
5 it looks like everybody is here. So I think  
6 we are ready to go.

7 So, like some of the others, I will  
8 just sort of read off the names of those who  
9 will be presenting today. And we have a  
10 presentation, and I'll turn it over to them.

11 So, primarily running our  
12 discussion today is going to be Joe  
13 Purrington, president and chief operating  
14 officer of PSNH; and Jessica Cain,  
15 vice-president of Customer Operations for  
16 Eversource. Additionally on the line for  
17 answering questions or providing details we  
18 have Erica Menard, manager of Revenue  
19 Requirements for New Hampshire; Dan Ludwig,  
20 manager of Sales and Revenue Forecasting; Dan  
21 Traynor, senior analyst in the Customer  
22 Group; and Tim McGrath, director of the  
23 Contact Center. So those are the people that  
24 we have online and prepared to answer and

1 respond to questions today.

2 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.

3 Thank you.

4 Ms. Robidas, can you swear the  
5 witnesses, please.

6 (WHEREUPON, JOE PURRINGTON, JESSICA  
7 CAIN, ERICA MENARD, DANIEL LUDWIG, TIM  
8 MCGRATH were duly sworn and cautioned  
9 by the Court Reporter.)

10 JOE PURRINGTON, SWORN

11 JESSICA CAIN, SWORN

12 ERICA MENARD, SWORN

13 DANIEL LUDWIG, SWORN

14 TIM MCGRATH, SWORN

15 MR. FOSSUM: Commissioners, I  
16 apologize. Just one correction. I was just  
17 informed that Mr. Traynor has had to drop off  
18 the conversation, so he will not -- he's not  
19 available. But we have adequate people  
20 hopefully to answer the questions.

21 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
22 you.

23 MR. FOSSUM: So with that, I will  
24 share the presentation that we have, and I

1 will turn it over to Mr. Purrington.

2 MR. PURRINGTON: All right. Good  
3 morning, everyone. Can you hear me okay?  
4 Okay. Thanks. And I do want to say thanks  
5 for the opportunity to present this morning  
6 to all of you.

7 So Matt, if you can go to the next  
8 slide, please.

9 So, you know, at the onset of the  
10 pandemic, you know, we treated this as a  
11 large-scale emergency response event and  
12 focused on our business continuity plans. In  
13 early March we activated the Eversource  
14 Emergency Coordination Team to provide  
15 oversight of this large-scale event and  
16 implemented various daily calls on the  
17 pandemic, and continue to do that, as well as  
18 participate in EEI and AEI Safety Committees  
19 on this effort. Our top priorities were  
20 employee and public safety. You know, the  
21 strategy for the event has been focused on  
22 transparent and frequent communications to  
23 relieve employee anxiety and concerns. And  
24 we wanted to ensure a consistent approach

1 across the enterprise of the three states we  
2 operate in. So we stood up an HR command  
3 center to field employee and supervisor  
4 questions. Our focus on social distancing  
5 was established through remote work  
6 opportunities. And where we don't have those  
7 and we have folks working, we have  
8 face-covering requirements. And right now in  
9 New Hampshire at PSNH, we have more than  
10 50 percent of our workforce working remotely.

11 For our field crews, you know,  
12 we've established social distancing by  
13 separating crews with one person in the  
14 vehicle. We have job-site reporting. And we  
15 also have eliminated crew member rotations so  
16 that we have consistent crews together  
17 through the duration of the pandemic.

18 You know, as many of you know, PSNH  
19 is the local control center for ISO-New  
20 England in the state of New Hampshire. We  
21 have three control center locations: We have  
22 our primary control center here at Energy  
23 Park; we have a backup at Derry, and we have  
24 an area at Elm Street that also can serve as

1 a control center if needed. So those  
2 employees in the system operations,  
3 transmission and distribution and control  
4 centers have a unique set of skills that  
5 aren't easily replicated or replaceable. So  
6 we treated these employees, you know, very  
7 carefully. We separated the day shift, and  
8 we have the day shift working here at Energy  
9 Park. We have the night shift working at  
10 Derry, at our backup control center. We have  
11 an open-bridge conference line between the  
12 two control centers when we do shift  
13 turnover. And in the event that we have a  
14 storm, we have operated out of both control  
15 centers with that bridge line being open.

16 Those facilities go through  
17 rigorous cleaning in between shifts,  
18 including electrostatic cleaning. For the  
19 employees also that come and work in the  
20 control center, they come through and do  
21 their temp screening. They ask the  
22 questions. And we actually have separation  
23 protocols for both the transmission and  
24 distribution control centers. So what we're

1           trying to do is eliminate co-mingling.

2                         And also in our business continuity  
3 plans we have developed a sequestration plan  
4 if needed. We have not implemented that  
5 sequestration plan at this point, but we are  
6 prepared to do so and feel like within 24  
7 hours' notice that we would be able to get up  
8 and running and do that.

9                         To this day, you know, we're  
10 continuously modifying our safety plans based  
11 on updated information and guidelines. We  
12 have two primary documents: The field  
13 operation safety plans and remote on-site  
14 worker safety plans.

15                         So through all of these efforts,  
16 you know, here in New Hampshire we've had  
17 minimal impact to the PSNH workforce. We  
18 only had one positive case, and that was a  
19 person that was working remotely. And it is  
20 evident that our cautious approach has served  
21 us very well. As we speak, you know, we're  
22 developing our re-entry into the workplace  
23 guidelines. They're being finalized. It'll  
24 be a multi-phase approach. But we envision



1           that we'll stay in this current state of the  
2           majority of our workforce working from home  
3           while we monitor the impact of the virus to  
4           the state and the impacts of reopening the  
5           state for business. And it also gives, you  
6           know, our employees -- we feel it reduces  
7           their anxiety through the summer as they're  
8           challenged with enough going on outside the  
9           pandemic. So we envision that for the  
10          remainder of the summer. And, you know,  
11          we'll continue to evolve into our re-entry  
12          into the workplace guidelines as we go  
13          through the summer based on updated  
14          information.

15                         So Matt, if you could go to Slide  
16                         2, please -- or Slide 3. Excuse me. Thank  
17                         you.

18                         So meeting our customers' needs is  
19                         obviously our top priority. You know, having  
20                         a safe and reliable electric system, you  
21                         know, is more critical than ever. So we've  
22                         established safety guidelines for working on  
23                         customer premises, including scripted  
24                         questions through our customer service

1 center, including asking the customer to wear  
2 a mask while we are there if we have to go  
3 inside.

4 We've expanded our critical  
5 facilities list to include surge sites as  
6 they were developed and put online. And we  
7 performed additional inspections on those  
8 circuits feeding those hospital and surge  
9 sites.

10 We've also focused a lot on our  
11 communication to our communities, to ensure  
12 them that we were up to date with how we were  
13 adjusting to this pandemic and also  
14 reassuring them that we are focused on system  
15 reliability.

16 As far as our ability to execute  
17 our work plan, you know, we've been able to  
18 continue to execute our work plan. The only  
19 caveat I'd say is that during the  
20 stay-at-home order from the Governor, we  
21 delayed planned system outages, those outages  
22 that would be, you know, multiple customers  
23 for, say, conversion work, where we were  
24 converting a circuit and upgrading the

1 voltage. Now that the Governor's  
2 stay-at-home order has expired, we're  
3 starting to focus on doing that work as well.  
4 Although we changed how we've gotten some of  
5 our work done, we still are able to execute  
6 all of our capital work and maintenance work.  
7 And I would say that based on year-over-year  
8 comparisons, our new customer service work is  
9 very similar to what we've seen in past  
10 years, so we haven't seen the drop-off there  
11 in the pandemic environment.

12 So, you know, we're always  
13 preparing, you know, for emergencies. We've  
14 now entered into the hurricane season. And,  
15 you know, one of the unique challenges that  
16 we have in the pandemic is, you know, if you  
17 had a devastating hurricane come through, how  
18 would you operate. So our emergency  
19 coordination team and our emergency response  
20 folks are developing the protocols and  
21 processes that we'd implement in the event  
22 that we were hit with widespread outages. We  
23 have had a few minor outage -- minor storms  
24 in March and April. Our deployment of

1           technology in the field with our line  
2           workers, our new OMS and GIS have served us  
3           very well. We've been able to manage minor  
4           storm events, you know, with people working  
5           remotely. Like our damage assessment  
6           coordinators, for example, can run damage  
7           assessment crews from their houses, and we've  
8           been able to restore power very quickly.

9                        On the community front, you know,  
10           earlier this year we did make a corporate  
11           donation of \$100,000 to the Granite United  
12           Way to help with the pandemic, and also  
13           \$10,000 to the New Hampshire Food Bank,  
14           demonstrating, you know, our commitment to  
15           our customers. You know, we will continue to  
16           focus on system reliability and ensuring  
17           that, you know, when people need their  
18           service, that we're there for them.

19                        So I'm going to go to the next  
20           slide, Matt, and turn it over to Jessica.

21                        (Pause due to connectivity issue)

22                        MS. CAIN: Can people hear me okay?  
23           Okay.

24                        Good morning. I'm Jessica Cain, I

1 am vice-president of Customer Operations  
2 across Eversource's three states. So I've  
3 got the contact centers, the meter reading,  
4 field collection, billing and credit and  
5 collections. So I'll walk through today from  
6 the start of the pandemic what we're seeing  
7 for impact on customer behavior and customers  
8 overall since the pandemic and then our next  
9 steps. We have been working with Amanda  
10 Noonan and Rorie Patterson and our peer  
11 utilities over the last month and a half or  
12 so about how we can collaborate best as an  
13 industry and then within New Hampshire and  
14 across our states so that we can leverage  
15 lessons learned from this unprecedented time.

16 So starting off in March, we did --  
17 similar to the other utilities, we suspended  
18 basically all collections, shut-offs for  
19 non-payments, all security deposits, late  
20 fees, and then all delinquent balance  
21 notifications. So that would mean across --  
22 typically we would notice customers with  
23 letters. It would be on a bill via e-mail  
24 text if they're signed up for those

1 notifications. So we put a halt to all of  
2 that, and we reconnected those customers who  
3 had been -- any who had been disconnected  
4 that needed to be reconnected prior to  
5 COVID-19. We also started offering those  
6 extended payment plans. Specifically for  
7 businesses, we opened up to a 12-month  
8 payment arrangement with no down-payment and  
9 on past due amounts, because we saw, like  
10 others did, that businesses were hit very  
11 hard.

12 Next page. So moving straight into  
13 the impacts, I could hear from the questions  
14 earlier like a lot of what happens in  
15 collections and with revenue is seasonal. So  
16 this is our No. 1 metric that we measure all  
17 the time in credit and collections. And we  
18 do normalize it because otherwise it doesn't  
19 give us a good indicator of the performance  
20 and the health of credit. So what you're  
21 looking at here is our accounts receivable  
22 that's greater than 60 days old as a  
23 percentage of the revenue billed two months  
24 prior -- so, meaning the full amount of the

1 revenue that was billed in March that -- and  
2 you'd have the accounts receivable, the money  
3 that still hasn't come in over that. And  
4 that's the -- that amount has increased from  
5 19.6 percent May last year to 28.5 percent  
6 this year, which is a 45 percent increase  
7 year over year. Compared to our other  
8 states, this is about in line with the other  
9 states.

10 We also participate very actively  
11 in two forums, but the most valuable we found  
12 is an every-other-week EEI forum with about  
13 40 utilities that we presented at and gather  
14 lessons learned and insights. So the results  
15 we've shared are not out of the norm within  
16 our three states, nor are they out of the  
17 norm with peer utilities at this point. I'll  
18 translate this to dollars in the next slide.  
19 Actually, I pulled that out. So pull back  
20 one slide.

21 And the translation of dollars in  
22 this case, it's about a \$5 million nominal  
23 increase for AR at this point. Then I'll  
24 pull forward to the next slide.

1           So another new indicator that we've  
2           been looking at during this unprecedented  
3           time is how many customers -- as an indicator  
4           of customer health, financial health, how  
5           many customers would be eligible for a  
6           disconnect notice if we were doing notices  
7           and if we had collection activities going on.  
8           And again we compare the same month last year  
9           because we're so seasonal and that we know in  
10          winter there's always -- you know, customers  
11          don't have the same incentives to pay as they  
12          do once the winter moratorium is over. So  
13          there are 9 percent more customers total who  
14          are eligible for a disconnect notice this May  
15          compared to last May. But what was positive  
16          is there was an improvement from April to  
17          May.

18                 So the total number of customers  
19                 with the green bars are the 2020 and the  
20                 turquoise is the 2019. But you can see the  
21                 total number of customers who would have been  
22                 eligible for a disconnect went down from over  
23                 36,000 to 32,000. So I think that -- you  
24                 know, a lot of questions about the why. But



1 I think in New Hampshire, I know you opened a  
2 lot of businesses in May. So those who might  
3 have been furloughed or shuttered completely,  
4 that's what we're thinking that would be  
5 attributed to in that case.

6 The other piece of data behind this  
7 that we have is how does that split from  
8 residential and businesses? It's about a  
9 9 percent increase in residential customers  
10 who are eligible to be -- for a disconnect  
11 notice this May versus last year. But really  
12 the impact is businesses. And that, for  
13 businesses similar to markets at Unitil, it's  
14 about a 263 percent increase in commercial  
15 customers who are eligible for a disconnect  
16 notice this year versus last year. That's  
17 not surprising given the states of moratorium  
18 right now. But what's positive in New  
19 Hampshire is you have the lowest percentage  
20 overall of customers who are eligible for a  
21 notice compared to our three states. So  
22 really, the number there, it was at 674  
23 customer businesses last year who would have  
24 been eligible for a disconnect in May, and

1           now that's about 2400. And those customers  
2           are ones that we're working to -- as we come  
3           closer to understanding when the moratorium  
4           opens up, how we can best do live outreach  
5           that's effective in getting them engaged in  
6           these long payment arrangements that we've  
7           got.

8                         I'll pull us forward from here,  
9           Matt. Thank you.

10                        The other indicator, and similar to  
11           what we've seen with other utilities, and  
12           similar across the nation, double-digit  
13           reduction in payment arrangement engagements;  
14           specifically, 61 percent fewer customers are  
15           on payment arrangements since COVID-19.  
16           There's been really -- and we've heard  
17           customers call in to different -- our PC  
18           section in New Hampshire saying, "Why would I  
19           pay right now? There's no payments, no  
20           interest. There's no negative." And so when  
21           they're struggling with their bills, it's not  
22           rational. We do see this usually in the  
23           winter, as you can see with this chart, that  
24           during the moratorium we also have lower --

1 we normally have lower levels of payment  
2 arrangements absent the activity around  
3 disconnects. So that's a material reduction.

4 There was a question earlier about  
5 how many of those are new versus not. I  
6 don't have that specific number, but I know  
7 during normal times, 70 to 80 percent of  
8 customers break their payment arrangements.  
9 They don't go through completion with them.

10 Pull us forward to the next slide,  
11 and here we'll talk about, you know, over the  
12 last four months we've done a lot of  
13 communication. You know, we shifted to  
14 actually weekly e-mails to customers, letting  
15 them know that we're here to help. We are  
16 going to be shifting into targeted customer  
17 communications -- actually, we already have.  
18 But this first step -- and we've been  
19 mirroring and sharing this plan with our  
20 other utilities across the nation as well --  
21 a boosted level of awareness and education,  
22 because for months the industry has shared  
23 with customers there's no collections going  
24 on. So we need time to ramp them back up to

1 go to silence on not advertising that there's  
2 no disconnects and then communicate at a  
3 higher level than we normally would as  
4 disconnections and collection activities  
5 restart. But our focus has been we can help.

6 During this time period, as soon as  
7 we put out the initial communication and  
8 stopped all collections, we observed a  
9 70 percent decrease in credit call volume.

10 And we did adapt. That is an outsource  
11 function, and we reduced our staffing so that  
12 we weren't incurring costs for, you know, a  
13 business need that wasn't there at that time.

14 But we shifted as well with our  
15 non-credit call-handling folks in New  
16 Hampshire and said how can we help our  
17 customers. So we set up SWAT teams and  
18 studied the federal- and the state-level  
19 stimulus available and then did outreach to  
20 customers, business outreach and residential  
21 outreach, for LIHEAP. And then on the  
22 business side for New Hampshire would have  
23 been around the Capital Access Program, the  
24 Business Financial Authority, temporary

1 loans, the Manchester Small Business Recovery  
2 Loan programs. We pushed that out, and we  
3 trained some of our most experienced reps to  
4 be able to -- and set up special 800 numbers  
5 so that customers could call and we could  
6 help them navigate to find that stimulus  
7 funding. We did get very positive responses  
8 from customers who engaged with us in that  
9 way. I think many -- you know, we heard from  
10 in those first few weeks the dissatisfaction  
11 from a federal perspective of not getting the  
12 PPP funding initially. And then after that  
13 was refunded, you know, some customers were  
14 better taken care of.

15 So our initial focus was we've got  
16 ways to help. We've got special payment  
17 arrangements for businesses. Typical payment  
18 arrangement up until COVID had been three to  
19 four months for businesses; now it's at 12  
20 months. So that was unprecedented, this  
21 stimulus outreach. That said, that  
22 communication did not -- with us and across  
23 the industry, it's really not effective until  
24 you have some -- it can't be all carrot, no

1 stick. And so customers just don't engage  
2 without some sort of collections activity  
3 happening.

4 So now that shifts us to where we  
5 are now in working to communicate with those  
6 customers who have past due balances. Two  
7 weeks ago, after reviewing with our peer  
8 utilities in New Hampshire and then with PUC  
9 staff and then Rorie, we said we really do  
10 need to start getting out some notifications  
11 to those customers who are delinquent and let  
12 them know you're delinquent and we're here.  
13 We have payment arrangement options and  
14 protections. Specifically, we wanted to use  
15 the language, "If you're on a payment  
16 arrangement" -- and this is all the time, not  
17 during COVID -- "If you're on a payment  
18 arrangement, you are protected from shut-off,  
19 and you never incur late payment fees if  
20 you're on a payment arrangement." We're  
21 trying to give that -- make that relevant,  
22 even though there's no disconnects going on  
23 now, once disconnects do start, if you are on  
24 a payment arrangement, you are not going to

1 be disconnected if you're making your  
2 payment. So we pushed that out two weeks  
3 ago, and then we also pushed out e-mails this  
4 week to those customers who we had valid  
5 e-mail addresses for. We were initially  
6 excited as of yesterday afternoon, and we are  
7 following the data as it comes in, but we  
8 were very excited because we saw a 50 percent  
9 increase in inbound call volume. And it  
10 looked like from our speech analytics, about  
11 a quarter of those conversations were around  
12 these long payments plans. But it did  
13 translate into about a 1 percent engagement.  
14 So of the 42,000 letters that we sent out,  
15 yes, they caused phone calls coming in, but  
16 customers are asking questions and they're  
17 not yet taking the step to sign up for the  
18 plan. They want to study a little bit. But  
19 there's not that incentive for them to sign  
20 up for a payment arrangement yet. So maybe  
21 91 customers or so a day during that  
22 following week signed up for a payment plan.  
23 That was a significant increase from the  
24 prior weeks, but it's still extremely low.

1           And it does put into question whether it's  
2           worth it, how much do we invest in  
3           communication until there's some dates around  
4           disconnects because it is so ineffective to  
5           communicate right now across our industry.

6                        So shifting ahead to the next  
7           phase, what we've been working on -- oh,  
8           sorry, not the next page. The last chevron  
9           there, collections restart. So this  
10          targeted outreach, the next step would be  
11          early-warning shut-off notifications. So  
12          once the Governor in New Hampshire says we  
13          can start shutting off, what we're proposing  
14          and working on across our three states in the  
15          same way is saying, you know, starting with  
16          businesses who have never before gotten a  
17          moratorium on disconnects, and then  
18          residential, and then residential hardships,  
19          and followed behind those with additional,  
20          like, increased early-warning shut-off  
21          notifications, and then turn on the automated  
22          shut-off communication that would happen  
23          triggered by bills and then those  
24          disconnects.



1           I would share that in this  
2           awareness and education phase, similar to New  
3           Hampshire, where we're working with our  
4           regulatory stakeholders to strike the right  
5           balance between customer programs and  
6           extended payment plans, in Connecticut we  
7           have adopted a regulatory model to ensure the  
8           programs are embraced. So that's increased.  
9           They're going up to 24 months for their  
10          payment arrangements, not dropping customers  
11          off of some of the arrears forgiveness  
12          programs that we have in Connecticut and  
13          Massachusetts, for example. And they have,  
14          both in Connecticut and Massachusetts,  
15          mandated no deposits yet. And then in  
16          Massachusetts we do have a very active and  
17          great partnership with our low-income  
18          advocates in the attorney general's office  
19          and believe that that gets the best arrears  
20          management program for customers to encourage  
21          good payment behavior and then reduce our  
22          overall bad debt. So those partnerships have  
23          been helpful.

24                 Now moving us forward to the next

1 slide, which is my last slide. So, many  
2 states -- actually, 26 states and the  
3 District of Columbia -- have regulatory  
4 orders or staff proposals related to cost  
5 recovery that either allow for deferral of  
6 bad debt, creation of regulatory asset or the  
7 tracking costs in connection with COVID. And  
8 so we do believe that that is a valuable  
9 mechanism to consider, and we do -- we will  
10 be providing continued support for our  
11 customers and the best practice insight that  
12 we're getting from our peer utilities across  
13 the nation. And again, we're not competing  
14 with each other as utilities. So it's a  
15 great, you know, collaborative effort right  
16 now.

17 And that's all I have for our  
18 Eversource approach. We don't have a  
19 question slide, but I think we go to  
20 questions.

21 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Thank you.  
22 Thank you for that.

23 Commissioner Bailey.

24 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you.

1 Thank you for that presentation.

2 Ms. Cain, are you -- is the company  
3 tracking financial impacts from COVID-19  
4 right now in New Hampshire?

5 MS. CAIN: So, yeah. So we have  
6 developed a mechanism to estimate. So far  
7 the impact, looking at the AR and what we've  
8 seen for unemployment rates and other  
9 activities, the estimated impact we have  
10 right now, and it's not finalized and there's  
11 a lot of data behind it, but about a \$3- to  
12 \$6 million COVID bottom-line bad debt expense  
13 impact. And that's based on the slide --

14 Matt, if you don't mind just  
15 pulling back to that AR increase.

16 It's like 40 to 90 percent total AR  
17 increase that we expect to incur over this  
18 period.

19 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So is that  
20 the -- is \$3- to \$6 million the amount you  
21 project will become uncollectible or that  
22 it's just that much uncollectible?

23 MS. CAIN: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Do you know,

1 or does anybody know a ballpark of what the  
2 impact on other customers would be if you had  
3 to write \$6 million off?

4 MS. CAIN: I'm going from memory,  
5 so I might get it off. But I feel like  
6 there's a different number for residential  
7 versus electric. But we can follow up. I  
8 think it was like \$11 per customer per year.  
9 But we're trying to translate that now. We  
10 can follow up. We can respond to that.

11 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay.  
12 Thanks. That would be helpful.

13 MS. CAIN: And it depends what  
14 period of time you want to recover it from as  
15 well.

16 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Right. You  
17 also mentioned that Connecticut and Mass. had  
18 mandated no deposits. And could you go over  
19 that again. I didn't understand what you  
20 meant by that.

21 MS. CAIN: Yeah, okay. So in our  
22 regulatory proceedings in Connecticut and  
23 Massachusetts, they said during this period  
24 of time the utilities are not allowed to take

1 any deposits from customers. We voluntarily,  
2 based on that initial input, did stop taking  
3 deposits. I think all the utilities in New  
4 Hampshire stopped taking deposits at that  
5 time. And we still think that that's a good  
6 idea, given, you know, what was going on.

7 But New Hampshire has a different  
8 level of disconnects than the other two  
9 states we operate in. New Hampshire has, for  
10 brand new customers moving in, we've got for  
11 skip-tracing customers, if they've left you  
12 with a bad debt someplace else and are moving  
13 in, but they've been in New Hampshire, in  
14 that territory before. Those two things the  
15 other states have, other than Massachusetts  
16 doesn't have any residential deposits; they  
17 only have business.

18 But the third one that's unique to  
19 New Hampshire is mid-stream deposits. So if  
20 customers become delinquent and get  
21 notifications along the way, they get a  
22 deposit that's not related to them moving in.  
23 And so we've stood down on all deposits in  
24 New Hampshire, but we are having discussions

1           about the one that nearly certainly has a  
2           very, very high likelihood to write off  
3           again, which is the customer's left you with  
4           a bad debt at another premise and then moving  
5           in someplace else. That's the highest risk  
6           to write off again. So without a deposit  
7           there or any obligation to pay, those we  
8           think are important to start turning back on  
9           to protect the total cost for customers.

10                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And are you  
11           working with our Consumer Affairs Division to  
12           decide when to do that? Is that what you  
13           meant by --

14                        MS. CAIN: Yeah.

15                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Great.  
16           Does anybody have any estimate of  
17           what the amount of customer impact would be  
18           on the lag of the accounts receivable that  
19           you expect to ultimately be paid? You know,  
20           if you have \$6 million that you think may not  
21           be paid, how much do you expect will be paid  
22           late?

23                        MS. CAIN: So we don't have that  
24           breakout. We have a propensity-to-pay model

1 that looks at the aging and the amount. And  
2 so the higher the bill amount, the lower the  
3 likelihood to pay. For example, like a \$200  
4 bill, they might be 80 percent likely to pay,  
5 but a \$2,000 bill, they're about 10 percent  
6 likely to pay. So as those balances grow  
7 with no obligation to pay, it just becomes  
8 impossible for customers to get back on top  
9 of it, or very difficult. I shouldn't say  
10 impossible. So there's not -- like the  
11 portion of that that hasn't been paid, or the  
12 portion that's been late, from a bad debt  
13 perspective, the older the money is, if we  
14 have a hundred bucks that is three months  
15 late, that will reserve an amount of bad debt  
16 for that at a lower rate than if that same  
17 hundred bucks is a year old. So if they  
18 haven't paid for a year, we're probably going  
19 to reserve that at like 90 percent. I don't  
20 have the specific rates with us. But there  
21 is a different bad debt reserve rate based on  
22 the aging bucket of each -- each aging bucket  
23 of money.

24 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Thank

1           you. Can we -- are we on Slide 5? We are.  
2           Good. So this slide shows that 28-1/2  
3           percent of the bills that you sent out two  
4           months ago are unpaid? Is that what that's  
5           telling us?

6                       MS. CAIN: It's from a dollars  
7           perspective. So you made it -- if \$100 was  
8           billed in the month of March, \$28.50 of that  
9           has not been paid.

10                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Wow. And the  
11           usual amount is 20 percent, about?

12                      MS. CAIN: And it comes down, as  
13           you can see, as the moratorium ends. It  
14           starts to curve. But it usually takes this  
15           double-U curve in all of our three states as  
16           the moratorium ends.

17                      COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay.  
18           Interesting.

19                      All right. Now I'd like to maybe  
20           go to Mr. Purrington about operations and ask  
21           you to expand a little bit more on your  
22           testimony about the impact that the pandemic  
23           has had on operations. Do you see -- well,  
24           have you had problems -- not problems. Have



1           you had moratoriums from municipalities  
2           saying that you can't install new services?  
3           Is there a backlog for installation of new  
4           services?

5                       MR. PURRINGTON:  Commissioner  
6           Bailey, we really didn't see any impacts from  
7           that.  I mean, more of the impacts that we  
8           have seen are basically self-imposed.  You  
9           know, with everybody working from home, we  
10          delayed, you know, some of the planned  
11          outages that we would have for upgrades on  
12          the system.  And we'll catch back up through  
13          the remainder of the year on that, now that  
14          we have a safe-at-home order.

15                      For us also, our workforce has not  
16          been impacted negatively.  You know, we've  
17          had a very aggressive approach of, if  
18          somebody has been around somebody that may  
19          have tested positive, we send them home for a  
20          day or two until we get the results back to  
21          avoid any, you know, cross-contamination of  
22          employees.  You know, the list, I think  
23          overall in the last probably three or four  
24          months, we've had maybe 30 people total that

1 we've had to self-quarantine for some period  
2 of time. And then we do have about four  
3 people right now that are self-quarantining  
4 because of underlying conditions, health  
5 conditions not related to COVID-19 but as a  
6 precautionary measure. So our workforce,  
7 both internally and our contractor, the  
8 workforce has remained, you know, very  
9 healthy, and that's allowed us to continue to  
10 do our work. So municipalities and their  
11 requests really haven't had an impact on us.

12 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: As you start  
13 ramping up to catch up on some of your outage  
14 work and having your employees more active in  
15 the field, have you thought about doing  
16 routine asymptomatic testing? Is that  
17 something you do?

18 MR. PURRINGTON: Yeah, we have not  
19 thought about it. And, you know, the way we  
20 had viewed this early on, and I talked about  
21 this a little bit with our sequestration  
22 plan, you know, we didn't sequester anybody.  
23 We had some other control centers in New  
24 England and the New York ISO that

1 sequestered. But without a test at the time,  
2 you know, we weren't going to sequester. And  
3 then as we think about it as we move forward,  
4 you know, the test results only give you  
5 where you're at today. If you're not feeling  
6 any symptoms, it doesn't mean that tomorrow  
7 you won't be positive. So I think it's a  
8 fine line between testing somebody that's  
9 asymptomatic. You would really want to have  
10 a reason to do so. And our reason probably  
11 would be if we were going to go into  
12 sequestration of folks, make sure that the  
13 room was clean going in.

14 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: All right.  
15 Thank you for your presentation. I  
16 appreciate the information. I'll turn it  
17 over to Commissioner Giaimo.

18 MS. CAIN: Commissioner Bailey, I  
19 do have an answer to your question about the  
20 customer cost if you'd like that.

21 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Oh, that  
22 would be great.

23 MS. CAIN: Okay. So approximately,  
24 and again it's not final, total cost

1 incremental for customer, for a residential  
2 customer would be \$11 to \$26, and for  
3 commercial, \$2 to \$7. And then you'd figure  
4 out over what period. But that's just of the  
5 bad debt expense, not any other COVID-related  
6 expenses.

7 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you.  
8 That's helpful.

9 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
10 Commissioner Giaimo.

11 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: I'm mindful  
12 that I'm the first one that's going to say  
13 "good afternoon." So I'll make sure my  
14 questions are relatively quick.

15 I'm going to start with a comment.  
16 Mr. Purrington, thank you for your update,  
17 and specifically your update on the way you  
18 handled the control center and the BCC, the  
19 back-up control centers. It's great to hear  
20 that there's redundancy. I think you were  
21 answering my question that I had from earlier  
22 in the morning, and it's good to know there's  
23 redundancies. At a minimum, I guess the  
24 silver lining is you've exercised both the

1 BCC and the control center. So thank you for  
2 that update.

3 With respect to the slide about --  
4 or the comment -- I just want to make sure I  
5 heard it right. It's \$5 million total to  
6 date; is that correct, Ms. Cain?

7 MS. CAIN: Yes, Commissioner  
8 Giaimo. And that would be AR versus bad  
9 debt.

10 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Yes. Okay.  
11 Thank you. Any idea when the Company could  
12 perceive a return normalcy? Would you be  
13 forecasting October?

14 MS. CAIN: I mean, we are all eager  
15 to see what the Governor's order is for  
16 allowing disconnects. Right now I know  
17 that's a big question. I will share, you  
18 know, we do have dates for Connecticut and  
19 Massachusetts. And that's super helpful from  
20 a planning and customer communication  
21 perspective, because I think having no date,  
22 even if the date is further out a few months,  
23 I think that disengages customers. It's just  
24 one more thing they can defer on a bill. But

1 we're very dependent on that. So our plan  
2 would be Governor's order minus 45 days,  
3 let's start to do that enhanced additional  
4 communications we really already started.

5 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: So if you  
6 were able to send the message, would the  
7 message be -- so is it possible, or would it  
8 be consistent with 45 days from October?

9 MS. CAIN: So the message as far as  
10 like additional customer communication?

11 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: No. To the  
12 extent you can effectuate this and send the  
13 message to the Governor.

14 MS. CAIN: What I would share is  
15 Connecticut is starting. It's scheduled to  
16 start business disconnects on August 1st.  
17 They've just recently pushed that back a  
18 month. Massachusetts is starting business  
19 disconnects first, and that's September 1st.  
20 If you had asked me a few months ago, given  
21 how well New Hampshire manages the bottom  
22 line, I would have thought that New Hampshire  
23 would have been ahead of those two. But I  
24 think, you know, I think that August 1st for

1 business customers and then a lag before you  
2 hit -- you know, before getting to  
3 residential, because the residential --  
4 small businesses are the backbone of the  
5 community, so they need to open up, pay those  
6 employees, and then I think that feels  
7 reasonable. And then that gives us enough  
8 time, too, to make live outbound calls to the  
9 2400 or so businesses who are eligible for  
10 disconnect and try to encourage them to pay  
11 in ways that have not been effective yet.

12 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: So I do want  
13 to get to the communication aspect because  
14 I'm struggling. Ms. Cain, I heard you say a  
15 few things, which I struggled to see how they  
16 don't contradict themselves.

17 You said that the message that  
18 you've been trying to let people know is  
19 we've got ways to help. I think that's  
20 almost a direct quote. But then you also  
21 said that you're resistant to communicate  
22 because communication is ineffective. Have  
23 you done anything with respect to getting the  
24 word out?

1 MS. CAIN: Oh, yeah.

2 Actually, Matt, can you pull  
3 forward to the communications slide?

4 So for the last several months, I  
5 mean, we aren't alone in the industry. But  
6 customers are pretty rational, right.  
7 There's no incentive financially for them to  
8 pay. We've sent out, since March, weekly  
9 e-mails; updated the web site, the IVR; sent  
10 out customer bill inserts every month to let  
11 customers know what's going on. It's the  
12 stopping of the communication around anything  
13 that's collections-related. It's absent  
14 that, there isn't engagement. So we've been  
15 doing that. We did direct outreach to  
16 customers for businesses and residentials,  
17 letting them know about LIHEAP, 211, we can  
18 help with business stimulus funding.

19 So the ineffective part is what  
20 we're seeing, us and across the industry,  
21 about significant decreases in payment  
22 arrangements or, you know, payments. It's  
23 just 1 percent effectiveness is not  
24 unexpected because it would be what you'd see



1 in the winter if you tried to tell customers  
2 to pay. They're not going to do that.  
3 They're going to wait until the end of the  
4 moratorium. And that's why we always see,  
5 across the whole industry, any state that has  
6 a moratorium, you see a peak of phone calls.  
7 We try to do Early Bird Specials to get  
8 customers to call a little bit earlier. They  
9 wait until the -- like taxes. You wait until  
10 the last minute and then you're going to  
11 engage and pay.

12 So we are sharing -- and then as  
13 well with scamming. You know, we've gone  
14 digitally -- what we've learned early on and  
15 shared with utilities yesterday in New  
16 Hampshire is if you use a combination of  
17 words that are "COVID payment arrangement,"  
18 "late payment charges," those words coupled  
19 together, the scammers are all over it. So  
20 it's going scamming to black listing. And so  
21 we have to use fewer of those words. And  
22 we're sharing that information among us,  
23 because what we don't want to do is be too  
24 aggressive with our customers in ways that

1           then scammers can lump onto and make a very  
2           difficult time for businesses even more  
3           difficult.

4                        COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you.  
5           And I'm sorry. I didn't have this question,  
6           but somehow your question prompted it. Has  
7           the Company seen a significant amount of  
8           people come back to default service over the  
9           past three months, more so than normal? I  
10          don't know if that's a question people know  
11          or can answer.

12                      MS. CAIN: I don't have that  
13          insight. I'm not sure if...

14                      COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Anyone else  
15          in the Company maybe?

16                      MS. CAIN: I do know we have  
17          recently opened -- like the decision in  
18          Connecticut for all low-income customers, to  
19          push them, like to require them to go to  
20          standard offer, we just started implementing  
21          that somewhere in the last few months. In  
22          Massachusetts, there is that very large gap  
23          with what customers are paying on average to  
24          suppliers versus what they would in standard

1 offer just during normal times, let alone  
2 during COVID. But I don't have the numbers  
3 on that. We can follow up, Commissioner  
4 Giaimo.

5 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. And if  
6 the utilities collectively think about a  
7 reason why that information should be  
8 protected and maybe shouldn't be released,  
9 but if it's information that could be  
10 provided going forward, I think that would in  
11 fact be helpful. So we can throw that in the  
12 parking lot for now, but let's keep thinking  
13 about it.

14 Thank you, Chairwoman. I'm all  
15 set. Thanks so much.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
17 Thank you.

18 Ms. Cain, you mentioned  
19 reconnection. Can you describe in more  
20 detail the program related to reconnections?

21 MS. CAIN: Yup. So dating back to  
22 mid-March, if any customers were without  
23 power when the states of emergency went into  
24 effect, we reconnected them without them

1           having to pay. It was winter. In our other  
2           states we had been mandated to do so. I  
3           don't believe we were mandated to do that in  
4           New Hampshire. And I'm not sure how many  
5           would have. We have not done any disconnects  
6           since we stopped. But it would be those who  
7           didn't have power at the time the states of  
8           emergency began that we re-activated if they  
9           called and asked to be turned back on.

10                       CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
11           you.

12                       I think all my other questions have  
13           been answered, so that should help keep us  
14           moving. Unless the Commissioners have other  
15           questions, I think we are all set with  
16           Eversource. Thank you all for -- oh,  
17           Commissioner Bailey.

18                       COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I just have  
19           one follow-up for Ms. Cain.

20                       Ms. Cain, you mentioned that  
21           Connecticut and Massachusetts are resuming  
22           business disconnections in August and  
23           September. Does that mean that if people pay  
24           by August 1st, they can get disconnected on

1 August 1st?

2 MS. CAIN: That's what that would  
3 mean. So the actual disconnect date -- and  
4 those dates might push out again. They  
5 pushed out at least once in Connecticut. But  
6 that is what I mean by that.

7 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And that's if  
8 they don't have a payment arrangement and  
9 they don't maintain the payments.

10 MS. CAIN: Correct. And those  
11 states as well are seeing dramatic, like,  
12 reductions in the payment arrangement  
13 engagements, just like we showed for New  
14 Hampshire.

15 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Have they  
16 seen an increase in customer engagement now  
17 that they have disconnect dates?

18 MS. CAIN: So we haven't -- I think  
19 we're waiting there for the commissioners to  
20 allow us to communicate about that date. And  
21 I think they've been -- you know, it's one  
22 thing when the regulations are pushing out  
23 the order; it's different for them to say,  
24 yes, okay, for real, you can start these

1 customer communications. So we're in regular  
2 communication with them, our commissioners,  
3 to check and validate those dates before we  
4 start the automated, you know, last push of  
5 manual, like, additional ad hoc  
6 communication, plus the automated  
7 communication that would then come out every  
8 time a bill comes out. So we're awaiting  
9 that input. But similar to the last time it  
10 pushed out, we wouldn't want to start that  
11 and then it pushed out and you've got  
12 customers -- you know, you don't want to --  
13 you want your messaging to be on point for  
14 when we really do start disconnecting.

15 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Who's  
16 establishing those dates? Is it the  
17 Commission, the Governor, the legislature?

18 MS. CAIN: The Commission in  
19 Connecticut.

20 Kerry Berman, you might be able to  
21 help.

22 In Massachusetts, the governor had  
23 a few orders. But I think it's the  
24 Commission that determines the disconnect

1 dates because we just jointly filed with our  
2 peer utilities in Massachusetts two weeks ago  
3 and said here would be our plan for  
4 restarting the disconnect moratorium,  
5 including the communication, the expanded  
6 payment arrangements. So we are awaiting the  
7 Massachusetts DPU decision on that and  
8 probably will get that within a week or so.

9 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And have any  
10 dates been established for residential  
11 customers?

12 MS. CAIN: Yes. So, for  
13 Connecticut -- and they've changed a few  
14 times, so I'm going to go from my head.

15 But Dan Traynor, if you're in the  
16 chat box, you can help me here.

17 But for residential in Connecticut,  
18 it is October 1. And for residential in  
19 Massachusetts, it's November 15th. But right  
20 now there's some debate over is it November  
21 15th to start the disconnect notifications,  
22 which come out three weeks ahead of the  
23 disconnect, versus the actual disconnects.  
24 And that's for non-hardship residential.

1 Both states we're thinking that the hardship  
2 residential customers, which are about 6 to  
3 7 percent of total residentials, wouldn't be  
4 until April 2021.

5 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: What's a  
6 hardship residential?

7 MS. CAIN: Hardship, in New  
8 Hampshire, it would be the customers who are  
9 on the low-income discount rate. It's about  
10 six percent. In our other states, there are  
11 different means tests. But, you know, it can  
12 include medical customers. And then in  
13 Massachusetts it includes infants, elderly,  
14 medical and financial hardship. So that  
15 would be the hardship customers.

16 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Thank  
17 you.

18 Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
20 Thank you. Thank you to Eversource for that  
21 presentation -- (connectivity issue). We  
22 appreciate it.

23 All right. Ms. Robidas, are you --  
24 we have one more utility. Are we able to



1 continue or do you need a break?

2 COURT REPORTER: Do you mind taking  
3 a five-minute break?

4 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: That's fine.  
5 We can take a five-minute break.

6 COURT REPORTER: That would be  
7 great. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: So we'll be  
9 back at 12:22 or so.

10 (Brief recess was taken at 12:17 p.m.,  
11 and the hearing resumed at 12:25 p.m.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. All set  
13 then. Let's go on the record.

14 MR. DEAN: Thank you again. This  
15 is Mark Dean, representing New Hampshire  
16 Electric Co-Op. And so Mike Licata is going  
17 to present the PowerPoint presentation. But  
18 Mike Licata, Drew Dunagin and Jim Bakas from  
19 the Co-Op should be sworn in to be available  
20 to answer questions.

21 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
22 you.

23 Ms. Robidas.

24 (WHEREUPON, MICHAEL LICATA, DREW

1                   DUNAGIN, JAMES BAKAS were duly sworn  
2                   and cautioned by the Court Reporter.)

3                   MICHAEL LICATA, SWORN

4                   DREW DUNAGIN, SWORN,

5                   JAMES BAKAS, SWORN

6                   MR. DEAN: And so I would just turn  
7                   it over to Mike Licata, who's the  
8                   vice-president of Member Services And Public  
9                   Affairs.

10                  MR. LICATA: So, good afternoon.  
11                  Mark, hopefully you are able to see my  
12                  screen. Excellent. I'll just start the  
13                  slide show.

14                  So certainly being cognizant of  
15                  time, I'll try to move through these slides  
16                  fairly quickly. We don't want to be  
17                  redundant with what other utilities have  
18                  presented. We have had a similar approach  
19                  and put in similar protections to protect our  
20                  members in our communities, as well as our  
21                  employees. I'm happy to go into additional  
22                  detail if that's helpful.

23                  So, starting off, currently we do  
24                  not have any employees known with COVID-19

1 symptoms. We have not had any employees who  
2 have tested positive for COVID-19, and we  
3 don't have any employees for quarantine. And  
4 we have 140 employees with remote work  
5 capabilities. Starting back in February --  
6 and I'll just pause here. I'm happy to take  
7 questions as I move through these slides, or  
8 wait until the end, whatever the Commission's  
9 preference is.

10 Starting back in February, as we  
11 were certainly aware of the spread of  
12 COVID-19 in other countries and beginning in  
13 other states, we started to review our  
14 business continuity plan, and specifically  
15 pertaining to a pandemic response. We began  
16 to update that plan with guidance and  
17 information that we were able to gather from  
18 the World Health Organization, Center for  
19 Disease Control and other cooperatives, as  
20 well as other utilities. And we implemented  
21 that plan and activated starting in early  
22 March. Along with that, we also activated  
23 our pandemic response team, which is a multi-  
24 department team that had been meeting

1 multiple times per week. We have slowed down  
2 the rate of those meetings, but we can  
3 certainly ramp that back up if the situation  
4 dictates.

5 Our pandemic response plan really  
6 is built upon three pillars: One,  
7 transitioning to a remote workforce to the  
8 greatest extent possible; two, increasing  
9 facility sanitation and employee hygiene; and  
10 three, maximizing social distancing.

11 Our response to the pandemic  
12 continues to evolve. We've put into place a  
13 number of protections, and we continue to  
14 adjust that response. I won't go through all  
15 of these. There's a lot of them you've heard  
16 covered by the other utilities. But  
17 certainly it has been an extremely fluid  
18 situation, and we have seen the guidance from  
19 state and public health officials change and  
20 evolve, and so our response has evolved with  
21 it. We have engaged with numerous outside  
22 groups and other utilities. All the New  
23 Hampshire utilities have been meeting  
24 numerous times per week; again, the rate of

1           those meetings has slowed as well. We  
2           engaged with the State Emergency Operations  
3           Center, the Safety Division and Consumer  
4           Affairs Division here at the Public Utilities  
5           Commission, American Public Power  
6           Association, Northeast Public Power  
7           Association, National Rural Electric  
8           Cooperative Association, and Edison Electric  
9           Institute. And those connections and those  
10          meetings have been invaluable in terms of  
11          sharing best practices and allowing us to  
12          incorporate things that are working well in  
13          other utilities, as well as sharing our  
14          experiences and our plans with other  
15          utilities.

16                         Moving right into what we're seeing  
17          in terms of customer -- excuse me -- member  
18          load, so I'll just explain this chart briefly  
19          because I know sometimes it can be  
20          challenging to see on a small screen. So  
21          what we're showing here are daily metered  
22          load between March and June of this year.  
23          Upon the onset of the pandemic we began  
24          monitoring our daily member load using our

1 AMI data. And so what you are seeing here is  
2 the top purple line, the dark one, are  
3 heating degree days for this year; the  
4 lighter-shade purple is heating degree days  
5 for 2019. This is not weather-adjusted, but  
6 you can see the variations between the  
7 heating days between each year. The green  
8 lines are total member load. And then the  
9 blue show residential, and red show  
10 non-residential. Suspended member  
11 disconnects and late fees on March 16th,  
12 again, consistent with what other utilities  
13 have done.

14 Along with that we have, again,  
15 consistent with other utilities, really tried  
16 to ramp up our communications and outreach to  
17 our members. We, too, have seen a very  
18 precipitous drop in call center volumes and  
19 special payment arrangements. We're down  
20 about 70 percent from last year on the number  
21 of special payment arrangements that we've  
22 made with our members during this time frame.  
23 And so, again, consistent with what the other  
24 utilities are doing, it is very much targeted

1 at making sure our members know that we are  
2 here, that assistance is available, that we  
3 can enter into payment arrangements, that we  
4 can help them with assistance programs.

5 Along with that, we have a member assistance  
6 program, Project Care, which can provide up  
7 to \$500 in bill credit per year.

8 Traditionally you have to get a referral from  
9 either a municipal or CAP agency in order to  
10 be eligible for that. We have waived that  
11 requirement. But again, we are not seeing --  
12 as Eversource illustrated, we're just not  
13 seeing members really engaging and making  
14 those arrangements. So we continue those  
15 communications outreach, but it is a  
16 challenge.

17 Turning back to the graph, what  
18 you'll see here is overall our total member  
19 load is fairly consistent with this time last  
20 year in total. So we are about 3 percent off  
21 of our projections at the beginning of the  
22 year and pretty much on track at this point  
23 with where we were last year. But you'll see  
24 there is a significant variation between our

1 residential members and our non-residential  
2 members. Since the stay-at-home order, our  
3 residential member usage or member load is up  
4 20 percent and non-residential is down  
5 15 percent. And so, again, I think that is  
6 fairly consistent with what you heard from  
7 the other utilities earlier this morning.  
8 This chart is showing our accounts for  
9 receivable and aging. So the yellow line is  
10 30-day arrearage, the orange line is 60-day,  
11 and the red line is 90-day. And we also  
12 track the New Hampshire unemployment rate.  
13 And as you can see, this goes back to 2005.  
14 So it is helpful to see the trends over time,  
15 certainly the impact of the Great Recession.  
16 And what is particularly telling on this  
17 chart, and I think Commissioner Giaimo had  
18 pointed this out perhaps -- I forget which  
19 utility he was questioning -- but what we're  
20 seeing is the overall number of members and  
21 the overall amount of arrearage is staying  
22 somewhat constant at this point in time, but  
23 it is continuing to age. So the 30-day  
24 arrearages are not outside of the historic



1 norms, but we are seeing those age in  
2 out-of-historic norms into 60 and 90 days.  
3 So, again, the sort of pool of members that  
4 we're seeing in arrearage is somewhat  
5 constant at this point in time, but we are  
6 seeing historic aging of those arrearages.

7 And then finally, and this is my  
8 last slide, looking at the breakdown of those  
9 arrearages between our residential members  
10 and non-residential members, again you can  
11 see this transition across. Really, the  
12 takeaway for us on this slide is the high  
13 percentage of non-residential arrearages. So  
14 in 2019, non-residential made up 11 percent  
15 of the arrearage; now it's up to 15 percent  
16 for the 30-day; for the 60-day we're seeing  
17 non-residential make up 16 percent. And  
18 again, back last year, the arrearage for the  
19 60-day for non-residential was 9 percent.  
20 And now this year for the 90-day arrearage,  
21 we're up to 10 percent, when last year it was  
22 3 percent. So we're seeing this certainly  
23 hit non-residential members. Our business  
24 members are being hit to a much greater

1 extent than, you know, historic norms.

2 And so with that, I would be happy  
3 to turn it over and answer any questions that  
4 the Commission would have.

5 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
6 Thank you for that. And I appreciate your  
7 presentation and sticking to things that  
8 hadn't already been said.

9 Commissioner Bailey.

10 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Thank you.

11 Can you go over the \$500 member  
12 bill credit that you mentioned?

13 MR. LICATA: Absolutely,  
14 Commissioner. Project Care is a bit of a  
15 separate charitable organization that the  
16 Co-Op is affiliated with. The Co-Op is made  
17 up of Co-Op members. So obviously we don't  
18 have shareholders, so there isn't the ability  
19 to provide charitable giving in terms of  
20 shareholder money. So what we do have is the  
21 opportunity for our members to offer  
22 charitable giving and community giving  
23 through what we call a Round-Up Program. So  
24 each month members have the ability to round

1 up their bill to the nearest dollar, and all  
2 those nickels and dimes cumulatively end up  
3 to be millions of dollars. And so that goes  
4 to fund the NHEC Foundation. Project Care is  
5 separate from the foundation. It has its own  
6 board of directors. But it is largely funded  
7 by the Foundation, as well as donations from  
8 NHEC directly. So essentially it's its own  
9 body. It has its own board of directors.  
10 And in a traditional setting, that board of  
11 directors meets monthly. There's an  
12 application process that members go through.  
13 They get a referral from either a municipal  
14 organization or a CAP agency verifying that  
15 they are in need of the assistance. That  
16 board of directors reviews those  
17 applications, and then we apply the bill  
18 credits based upon need. Here we did waive  
19 that referral requirement, given, quite  
20 frankly, the scope of the need. That's going  
21 to be, you know, reviewed on a case by --  
22 excuse me -- on a month-by-month basis.  
23 Also, NHEC is very closely monitoring the  
24 balance of Project Care. Certainly if we see

1           that dropping down -- and that is the primary  
2           vehicle that we use to provide member  
3           assistance -- we will consider NHEC, you  
4           know, making further donations to that  
5           organization so we can continue to provide  
6           that assistance.

7                         COMMISSIONER BAILEY:  So basically  
8           what that does is it offers somebody who asks  
9           for it \$500 toward their bill?

10                        MR. LICATA:  Up to 500.  Correct.

11                        COMMISSIONER BAILEY:  And did you  
12           say that customers aren't really requesting  
13           it because of the moratorium on  
14           disconnections, or are customers taking  
15           advantage of it while they can?

16                        MR. LICATA:  No.  Our experience is  
17           very consistent with the other utilities  
18           because we are obviously not issuing  
19           disconnect notices.  We don't have members  
20           calling us.  We are not making payment  
21           arrangements.  We don't have them taking  
22           advantage of the assistance program.  So we  
23           certainly continue that outreach.  I think  
24           Eversource described it very accurately as a

1 "soft outreach." But we are very similar, in  
2 a very similar boat. That said, we are  
3 monitoring that balance of Project Care very  
4 closely because, you know, once people start  
5 receiving those notices, we presume that  
6 there will be tremendous need.

7 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay.

8 Thanks.

9 One of your slides showed that 140  
10 of your employees have the capability to work  
11 remotely. How many employees do you have in  
12 total?

13 MR. LICATA: Two hundred and ten.

14 So essentially that is any employee whose job  
15 function would allow for them to work  
16 remotely. So obviously not field personnel.  
17 Our control center is still coming in to  
18 work, our warehouse. And we've set up  
19 protocols for social distancing and  
20 protections for them. But anybody whose job  
21 function would allow them to work remotely is  
22 doing so at this time.

23 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. So the  
24 people that are field personnel are still

1 working. Have you experienced any delay in  
2 any of your operations as a result of the  
3 pandemic, or do you have a backlog of new  
4 installs or routine construction?

5 MR. LICATA: Sure. I'll turn it  
6 over perhaps to Jim, especially if I get it  
7 wrong, he can correct me. But I believe we  
8 are functioning pretty close to normal.  
9 Obviously when we're going out and, you know,  
10 doing an inspection or designing a line, you  
11 know, we are practicing social distancing.  
12 I've heard that we have some folks who are on  
13 cell phones and they're across the parking  
14 lot from the member who is requesting the  
15 work. Obviously some of our meter work, you  
16 know, we're just planning resumption of some  
17 of that. But for the most part, to the best  
18 of my knowledge, we are operating pretty  
19 close to normal, in terms of the field work.

20 Just to answer the question that I  
21 think was asked about the other utilities, we  
22 are seeing pretty busy, pretty good in-flow  
23 of new service requests and opening services.  
24 I think we're pretty much on track in total

1 with where we were in years past.

2 Jim, would you like to add anything  
3 on that?

4 MR. BAKUS: No, I think you got it  
5 correct, Mike.

6 One thing I will add is that we  
7 have seen a pretty good uptick in service  
8 upgrades. So it appears folks are either  
9 adding on to homes, doing things like that,  
10 that requires significant upgrades. So  
11 that's up about 10 percent this year from  
12 last year.

13 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And by  
14 upgrades, do you mean upgrades on their  
15 service?

16 MR. BAKUS: Yeah, their electric  
17 service. So, as an example, they might have  
18 a 200 amp, but they're going to put a really  
19 large addition on and they might have to go  
20 to 400 or 600. Yes, so that's been happening  
21 quite a bit so far this year.

22 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Oh, that's  
23 interesting.

24 Mr. Licata, has the Company applied

1 for any small business grants from the  
2 federal, or loans? Are you eligible for  
3 that?

4 MR. LICATA: The short answer is  
5 no. We did look at the Paycheck Protection  
6 Program. Other cooperatives had applied for  
7 that. We did not apply. And quite frankly,  
8 we are ineligible for it with the updated  
9 guidance that was provided by the Small  
10 Business -- by the Federal Government. So we  
11 have not applied for any assistance or  
12 grants.

13 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. Thank  
14 you. That's all I have.

15 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.  
16 Commissioner Giaimo.

17 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: I have only a  
18 few. So Mr. Licata, you had a slide that had  
19 a large green arrow on the left side. I  
20 think it might have been on the left side.  
21 Maybe like one or two, two quick things.

22 Is that the order in which those  
23 responses were implemented, or are those just  
24 both random?



1           MR. LICATA: I guess it's a little  
2 bit -- in terms of the order, I would just  
3 say, you know, encouraging remote work. You  
4 know, we sort of transitioned out into  
5 requiring remote work. So it's not the exact  
6 order. For example, the member assistance  
7 and outreach might have happened a little bit  
8 sooner. But generally speaking, it's fairly  
9 consistent I think with the order in which we  
10 began applying these response items.

11           COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you.  
12 What's the breakdown with respect to  
13 residential? And you use "residential" and  
14 "non-residential." So I'm assuming that  
15 "residential" is residential. And  
16 "non-residential" is small businesses and  
17 C&I? Or maybe you can clarify that and  
18 explain what the breakdown is with respect to  
19 load.

20           MR. LICATA: Sure. Non-residential  
21 would be our commercial industrial primary,  
22 large primary, municipal lighting and ski  
23 areas. And so those are our, you know,  
24 member classes. We could certainly provide

1 the Commission with a breakdown of each one  
2 of those classes and their loads.

3 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: That's not  
4 necessary. That's helpful.

5 So you mentioned that residential  
6 numbers are up. Residential load is up about  
7 20 percent, non-residential down 15 percent.  
8 At least that's what I thought I heard you  
9 say. Is that fairly accurate? Did I get  
10 that --

11 MR. LICATA: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: So here's a  
13 question which I think is unique to the  
14 Co-Op. Have you done an analysis with  
15 respect to second home not in use and whether  
16 or not second-home use increased as a result  
17 of people fleeing other areas of high COVID  
18 penetration and coming to New Hampshire and  
19 then quarantining for 14 days?

20 MR. LICATA: So we have not done  
21 that analysis. We don't have a sort of  
22 seasonal rate structure. I would say that  
23 anecdotally we have definitely experienced,  
24 or we have heard, you know, that they're much

1 more busy than in years past, and they were  
2 busier a lot earlier. So we have not  
3 performed that analysis, but anecdotally I  
4 believe we are experiencing that.

5 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: That's great.  
6 I apologize. We're having heating issues and  
7 cooling issues. I have my window open. Can  
8 you people hear me or --

9 MR. LICATA: Yeah.

10 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: The mower  
11 just moved. So okay. Sorry about that.

12 Mr. Licata, what's your metering  
13 situation? And I think it changed as of  
14 about 2009. Can you maybe touch on your  
15 metering and to the extent that the meters  
16 actually resulted in specific benefits as a  
17 result of COVID?

18 MR. LICATA: Sure. I'll do my  
19 best. I might get outside of my depth rather  
20 quickly, and I'm not sure if Jim and Drew can  
21 speak in detail. So we would be happy to  
22 follow up with a more detailed answer.

23 But our members, by and large, have  
24 AMI meters which allow us to get hourly

1 reads, hourly data from them. Again, we're  
2 monitoring this on a daily basis. They work  
3 off of a mesh network. Actually, come to  
4 think of it, Attorney Dean can probably speak  
5 much better to this than I can.

6 So Mark, would you like to cover  
7 anything here?

8 MR. DEAN: Only, you know, from a  
9 lawyer's skill level. But the Co-Op has  
10 essentially 100 percent coverage of AMI  
11 meters that are wireless in nature, and they  
12 report several times a day and take hourly  
13 readings. I guess I couldn't tell you, other  
14 than being able to have graphs like the one  
15 in front of you that have the daily  
16 information of significant COVID-19-related  
17 specifics for that. But as I say, I'm out of  
18 my depths already now.

19 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: That's good  
20 enough. I appreciate that.

21 And I think we're all set,  
22 Chairwoman Martin. I thank the witnesses,  
23 and I'm all set.

24 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right.

1 Thank you. And I don't have any additional  
2 questions. I appreciate you preemptively  
3 answering a lot of those that have already  
4 been asked. So thank you to you and Mr. Dean  
5 for the presentation. We appreciate it. And  
6 we will move on.

7 I think at this point we have the  
8 OCA and Staff present. I am not sure if OCA  
9 intended to make comments or present or was  
10 just observing. Mr. Kreis, if you could let  
11 me know.

12 MR. KREIS: Madam Chairwoman, the  
13 OCA would appreciate the opportunity to make  
14 a few comments whenever it's your pleasure  
15 for me to do that.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. And  
17 Staff, you were not planning to present, I  
18 assume? Mr. Dexter?

19 MR. DEXTER: I have two or three  
20 sentences of areas that I'd like the  
21 Commission to consider looking into as a  
22 result of what I heard this morning.

23 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay.

24 MR. DEXTER: Less than 30 seconds.

1 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Lastly,  
2 we had someone who wanted to make a public  
3 comment; right, Mr. Wind? And do you know if  
4 that relates to this morning's presentation  
5 or in general?

6 MR. WIND: Perhaps we can recognize  
7 him via audio at this time to see if it  
8 relates specifically to electric or if he  
9 wants to stay on the line for the whole  
10 presentation. But it is New Hampshire Legal  
11 Assistance.

12 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Mr. Burke.

13 MR. WIND: One minute for me to  
14 unmute him. Okay, Mr. Burke, you can now  
15 speak.

16 MR. BURKE: Hi, can you hear me?

17 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Yes.

18 MR. BURKE: Hi. Good afternoon.  
19 My comments do primarily relate to the  
20 electric and gas utilities. Most of our work  
21 involves customers of those utilities. You  
22 might find some of my comments relevant to  
23 the other utilities, but I think it's most  
24 relevant to this morning's presentation.

1 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Well,  
2 then, why don't we take Mr. Kreis, Mr.  
3 Dexter, and then we'll finish up with you,  
4 Mr. Burke.

5 MR. BURKE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: So Mr. Kreis.

7 MR. KREIS: Thank you, Chairwoman  
8 Martin, and thank you for this opportunity to  
9 address these quick questions that are before  
10 you today.

11 Yesterday, my counterpart from West  
12 Virginia, Jackie Roberts, had the opportunity  
13 to testify on behalf of the nation's  
14 ratepayer advocates before the Senate  
15 Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.  
16 What she said to them I'm now going to say to  
17 you because she said it very eloquently. "If  
18 I could give you two key takeaways today,  
19 they're that, one, affordable access to  
20 electricity, natural gas, clean water and  
21 wastewater and communications services are  
22 essential for modern life; and, two, that  
23 economic recovery of utility customers lags  
24 significantly behind the opening of the

1 economy. For many, the economic and  
2 unemployment crisis will continue far beyond  
3 the near term."

4 Jackie said that Congress has an  
5 important role. And I will say to you that  
6 you, the Public Utilities Commission, have an  
7 important role to play in providing the  
8 support that families, children, the elderly  
9 and other at-risk customers will need to  
10 afford and maintain these essential utility  
11 services. Ultimately choosing to help keep  
12 people in their homes will help avoid the  
13 potential for a much greater health and  
14 economic crisis. In light of that, I would  
15 like to say -- I'd like to thank the four  
16 utilities whose presentations preceded my  
17 comments, because what I heard today suggests  
18 that as a state and as a community of  
19 utilities, we have responded -- or I should  
20 say they have responded very proactively,  
21 very dynamically, and also very  
22 empathetically with respect to both their  
23 business and residential customers. That's  
24 very encouraging. And I think that I have



1           some suggestions to make to the Commission.  
2           But I think the most important one I can make  
3           is that what the Commission really ought to  
4           do with the insight that it's gathering today  
5           is to call out the best practices and assure  
6           that there is statewide uniformity in credit  
7           and collections practices. And they should  
8           be based on the best practices you've heard  
9           today, and that would avoid potential  
10          confusion and disruption.

11                         Some of the other things I think  
12          the Commission should impose on a statewide  
13          basis or adopt on a statewide basis -- and I  
14          understand that in some cases this would  
15          require explicit rules, waivers and maybe  
16          emergency rulemaking. I think there should  
17          be no late payment fees for 12 months after  
18          the Governor ends the State of Emergency.  
19          That is more generous I think than any of the  
20          utilities have proposed or are contemplating,  
21          but I think that that is what this dire  
22          situation for both business and residential  
23          customers suggests.

24                         I think that deferred payment

1 arrangements need to extend well beyond the  
2 six months required by the Governor; perhaps  
3 out to 18 months to the general population  
4 and 24 months for customers who are low  
5 income. And I think those customers should  
6 be allowed to self-certify as low income --  
7 in other words, if they are -- if they can  
8 attest to job or wage loss or they're  
9 enrolled in a means test in a public  
10 assistance program, they should be able to  
11 self-certify that directly to the utility,  
12 frankly, and qualify for deferred payment  
13 arrangements for a long time.

14 I think the Commission should  
15 mandate a second chance for customers who  
16 have made consecutive payments in the past  
17 but might be subject to disconnection once  
18 the moratorium is lifted.

19 I think the Commission should  
20 require a clear description of all of the  
21 available programs on bills and separate  
22 notices to customers. I think it's time for  
23 every utility in the state to have an  
24 arrearage management program. I think the

1 Commission needs to inquire and make sure  
2 that every customer in the state has adequate  
3 access to the community action agencies  
4 because they clearly play a critical role,  
5 and yet I believe most, if not all, of their  
6 physical offices are not open, or access to  
7 them is very limited.

8 I think that, to the extent this is  
9 not already happening, all disconnected  
10 customers should be reconnected. I hope  
11 that's already happening, given where we are.

12 I think there should be a waiver of  
13 new deposits for residential customers. I  
14 think utilities should be directed to apply  
15 existing deposits to outstanding balances.  
16 There should be no collection activity until  
17 the ban on disconnection is lifted.

18 And I have the following edgy  
19 suggestion: There were two references in the  
20 utilities' presentations to stands, and there  
21 weren't lot of details about what their  
22 stands are. But I think, based on what we  
23 have experienced in the past, that the PUC  
24 should consider a moratorium on migration

1 from default energy service into competitive  
2 supply because I think the record in other  
3 states -- meaning Massachusetts and  
4 Connecticut -- demonstrates that customers  
5 who migrate do not fair as well, especially  
6 in a low-income sector. And I have no reason  
7 to believe that the same phenomenon is not  
8 occurring here in New Hampshire. And  
9 residential customers are stressed,  
10 particularly low-income residential  
11 customers. I think it's time for the  
12 Commission to act.

13 Another initiative that the  
14 Commission could consider, and I realize I'm  
15 straying somewhat out of what the utilities  
16 have been talking about, is ramping up  
17 utility reliance or offering an on-bill  
18 financing opportunity to allow customers to  
19 deploy the kind of resources that they need  
20 to save money on energy, both natural gas and  
21 electricity and heating oil.

22 Yesterday I heard a representative  
23 of Eversource mention that there has been a  
24 significant uptick in demand for on-bill

1 financing opportunities for energy-efficiency  
2 measures in the small commercial sector.  
3 That's really encouraging, given how hard hit  
4 that sector is. And not just because it's  
5 part of our New Hampshire state's program,  
6 but because it is in the public interest in  
7 the current climate of crisis, the Commission  
8 should definitely nudge the utilities to move  
9 in that direction.

10 The elephant in the living room, I  
11 suppose, is going to be cost recovery. The  
12 Commission should make clear at the outset  
13 that it will allow recovery of reasonable  
14 costs that are prudently incurred. But any  
15 actual decisions on cost recovery should be  
16 after the fact so that costs can be audited  
17 and evaluated.

18 Nobody will be surprised to hear me  
19 mention data. And it is clear from looking  
20 at what's going on around the country,  
21 thinking about best practices in other  
22 states, that it is absolutely essential that  
23 the Commission vigorously collect data and  
24 require the utilities to vigorously collect

1 data about the impact of the pandemic on  
2 businesses and customers, residential  
3 customers, in their capacity as utility  
4 customers. And I have a list, and I'm  
5 indebted to New Hampshire Legal Assistance  
6 for creating that list.

7 At a minimum, by Zip code, the PUC  
8 should track, for both general residential  
9 customers and customers who are identified as  
10 low-income residential customers, the number  
11 of customers; the amount billed to those  
12 customers; the number of customers with an  
13 arrearage balance by 30 to 60 days, 60 to 90  
14 days, and 90-plus days; the dollar value of  
15 all those arrearages; the number of new  
16 deferred payment arrangements entered into;  
17 the average repayment terms of new deferred  
18 payment agreements; the successfully  
19 completed deferred payment agreements; the  
20 average repayment terms of payment  
21 agreements; the number of disconnection  
22 notices sent; the number of disconnection  
23 notices for nonpayment; the number of service  
24 restorations after disconnection for

1 nonpayment; the average duration of  
2 disconnections; the number of customers  
3 charged a late payment fee; the dollar value  
4 of late fees collected; the dollar value of  
5 the level of -- the dollar value of the  
6 security deposits collected, and the number  
7 of security deposits collected. And again,  
8 I'm indebted to my colleague and friend, Ray  
9 Burke, of New Hampshire Legal Assistance, for  
10 providing that list, which I believe is  
11 comprehensive.

12 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Mr. Kreis, can  
13 you submit that list?

14 MR. KREIS: I surely can.

15 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
16 you.

17 MR. KREIS: I would like to say  
18 that the Office of the Consumer Advocate has  
19 not been involved in the discussions that  
20 apparently have taken place among the  
21 utilities and the Commission's Consumer  
22 Services Division. And to the extent that  
23 those discussions are ongoing, we would  
24 request that we be included in those

1 discussions. Just for the record, this  
2 gathering that we're all participating in  
3 today was described in the Order of Notice as  
4 a "status conference," but you've sworn in  
5 witnesses and treated this a lot like an  
6 evidentiary hearing. We obviously haven't  
7 cross-examined the Company's witnesses.  
8 We're not seeking to do that today. We  
9 obviously haven't conducted discovery. And  
10 we reserve the right to object or raise other  
11 issues if the Commission plans to use the  
12 record today to make any actual decisions.

13 Strict and consumer-favorable  
14 standards applicable uniformly across the  
15 state are necessary if the utilities are to  
16 remain compliant with the basic obligations  
17 in RSA 374:1 to "furniture such service and  
18 facilities as shall be reasonably safe and  
19 adequate and in all other respects just and  
20 reasonable."

21 Thank you, Chairwoman Martin.

22 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: You are  
23 welcome.

24 Commissioners, do you have



1 questions of Mr. Kreis?

2 COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Not at this  
3 time.

4 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner  
5 Giaimo.

6 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: I have a  
7 couple of quick ones.

8 Mr. Kreis, I thought I heard you  
9 say that you'd be willing to provide the list  
10 that Mr. Burke provided you. Are you willing  
11 to provide -- I don't know if you read from a  
12 script or not, but would you be able to  
13 either provide the script or summarize what  
14 you said so that we can make that available,  
15 to the extent that we were making the  
16 presentations from the utilities also  
17 available?

18 MR. KREIS: Commissioner Giaimo, I  
19 would be happy to write the Commission a  
20 letter that probably isn't a complete  
21 transcript of what I said because I was  
22 working from pretty good notes and not a  
23 prepared peroration. But I think it would  
24 cover everything I said to you today, and it

1 would include the list that I got from Mr.  
2 Burke that I also read to you for the data  
3 that we think you should collect.

4 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you.  
5 That's helpful.

6 My second question is do you have  
7 any empirical evidence? And I think you said  
8 no, but it sounds like you believe that other  
9 states have validly shown that competition,  
10 specifically going to competitive suppliers,  
11 has adversely affected low-income residents.  
12 Is that your assertion? I want to make sure  
13 I understand you correctly.

14 MR. KREIS: That is my assertion.  
15 And my counterparts in Connecticut and  
16 Massachusetts who have vaster resources than  
17 I do because they work in bigger states than  
18 I do have commissioned detailed studies of  
19 that phenomenon in those states. I have seen  
20 some data from New Hampshire that is -- that  
21 suggests that some of the same trends are  
22 occurring here, but I'm not in a position to  
23 put that data on file with the Commission  
24 because I received it from another source.

1 But I do think that it is something that we  
2 really ought to study here in New Hampshire  
3 because I think it's a pretty significant  
4 public policy problem.

5 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Thank you. I  
6 think that's fair, and I certainly would like  
7 to make sure that there are safeguards in  
8 place, obviously. But we also want to be  
9 cognizant if the benefits outweigh the risks.

10 My final question is are you  
11 sympathetic to the utilities' argument that  
12 there's no stick here, and the longer that  
13 you go without a stick, the longer that you  
14 spread out the moratorium, the more  
15 ineffective you make them collecting --  
16 making their collection process?

17 MR. KREIS: I would never want to  
18 describe myself as unsympathetic to the needs  
19 of the utilities because we do try to work  
20 with them, and we do understand that the  
21 utilities are businesses. And like every  
22 business in the state and in the country,  
23 they are stressed and their cash flow  
24 problems are real.

1 I would point out that the  
2 households in New Hampshire that are  
3 currently reliant on unemployment benefits  
4 are going to experience a big loss of income  
5 after July unless our Congress acts to extend  
6 supplemental unemployment benefits created by  
7 the CARES Act. So we could see that impact  
8 on arrearages and payment patterns after  
9 July. And I think that is a significant  
10 counterweight to the concern that the  
11 utilities laid out about the lack of a  
12 so-called "stick" and the existence of a mere  
13 "carrot."

14 COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Madam Chair,  
15 I'd like the record to note that I asked if  
16 he was "sympathetic," not "unsympathetic."  
17 So I'm a glass half full sort of commissioner  
18 right now.

19 Madam Chair, that's the only  
20 question I have -- that's the only questions  
21 that I have. And I appreciate the input from  
22 the Consumer Advocate.

23 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
24 you.

1                   Mr. Dexter.

2                   MR. DEXTER: Thank you, Chairwoman  
3 Martin. Just two very quick points that I  
4 think the Commission might want to consider  
5 looking into further in the event that you  
6 seek further information from the utilities.

7                   First of all, Commissioner Bailey  
8 asked the New Hampshire Co-Op whether or not  
9 they had received any federal aid. And I  
10 think that's a question that should go to all  
11 the utilities. And I think to the extent  
12 that they have received any federal aid or  
13 state aid, that that ought to be tracked,  
14 along with the expenses that you've asked  
15 them to track.

16                   And then secondly, there's been a  
17 lot of discussion about utility distribution  
18 operations, but there were no questions about  
19 the impacts of the pandemic on the  
20 energy-efficiency programs that the utilities  
21 all operate under, the New Hampshire Saves  
22 Program. I know that that topic will be  
23 before the Commission starting September 1st.  
24 You'll probably hear a lot about the impacts

1           because that's when the next three-year  
2           energy-efficiency plan will be filed. But to  
3           the extent the Commission is interested in  
4           learning about the impacts of the pandemic on  
5           energy efficiency, that might be an area that  
6           you want to consider in any future requests  
7           for information. And with regard to energy  
8           efficiency, a lot of that does take place on  
9           the customer's premises.

10                        So those were the two things I  
11           wanted to point out as areas that the  
12           Commission might want further information on.  
13           Thank you.

14                        CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
15           you, Mr. Dexter.

16                        Anything from the other  
17           Commissioners on that?

18                        [No verbal response]

19                        CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right. Mr.  
20           Burke, can you hear me?

21                        MR. BURKE: Hi. Yes. I think I'm  
22           unmuted now. Can you hear me?

23                        CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Yes, we can  
24           hear you.

1 MR. BURKE: You might be able to  
2 see me. I tried to turn on my camera.

3 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Oh, there you  
4 are.

5 MR. BURKE: Thank you. Good  
6 afternoon, Commissioners. As you know, my  
7 name is Raymond Burke, and I'm an attorney  
8 with New Hampshire Legal Assistance. We  
9 appreciate the opportunity to provide some  
10 comments to you and offer preliminary  
11 statements in this important docket.

12 NHLA, as you know, is a statewide  
13 non-profit law firm. Our attorneys and  
14 paralegals represent low-income and elderly  
15 clients throughout the state, including in  
16 proceedings before the Commission.

17 Our comments will primarily address  
18 concerns related to low-income residential  
19 customers. As I mentioned a moment ago, most  
20 of our work relates to issues facing  
21 customers of the electric and gas utilities,  
22 but you might find some of our comments  
23 useful for the discussions later on. Given  
24 the serious economic consequences that have

1 already occurred and that we've been  
2 discussing today, and those to potentially  
3 come, we offer these comments on behalf of  
4 the low-income clients and communities that  
5 we serve.

6 We very much appreciate the  
7 presentation that the utilities gave today  
8 and the discussions that's taken place this  
9 morning. And we especially appreciate the  
10 efforts that the utilities have already  
11 pursued with regard to customer service  
12 changes that go beyond what was required of  
13 them in the Governor's Emergency Order. We  
14 appreciate their willingness to share more  
15 data going forward and to consider best  
16 practices from other jurisdictions so that we  
17 can potentially implement them here in New  
18 Hampshire to address impacts of the crisis.

19 As we've been discussing this  
20 morning, at NHLA we are also very concerned  
21 about the severe financial impacts as a  
22 result of the current State of Emergency and  
23 the public health crisis and that this will  
24 cause large numbers of residential customers



1 to be unable to remain current on their  
2 utility bills while they try to pay other  
3 essential household expenses going forward.

4 As you've already seen today, early  
5 indications paint a concerning financial  
6 picture. As you saw in the Co-Op's  
7 presentation, the unemployment rate here in  
8 New Hampshire has already hit a record high  
9 during this crisis, as did applications for  
10 unemployment compensation benefits. Both of  
11 these numbers have already far surpassed the  
12 numbers we saw during the Great Recession.  
13 And federal assistance, such as the one-time  
14 economic stimulus payments and the additional  
15 unemployment compensation benefits that the  
16 Consumer Advocate referenced a moment ago,  
17 they helped families in the short term, but,  
18 as the Consumer Advocate noted, some of the  
19 assistance will be expiring soon and are  
20 time-limited. We support much, if not all,  
21 of what the Consumer Advocate said.

22 In our comments today, we want to  
23 just emphasize that we support the need for  
24 specific data to be reported publicly so that

1 we can gain a clear data-driven understanding  
2 of the number of households that lose access  
3 to residential energy services or who are at  
4 risk of losing access once the moratorium is  
5 lifted. We believe that without publicly  
6 available data, home energy portability  
7 challenges and their often dire consequences  
8 will remain invisible, and the effectiveness  
9 of utilities' credit and collection practices  
10 won't be able to be properly evaluated by  
11 stakeholders and customers to determine if  
12 changes are necessary. We believe that  
13 making this data publicly available would  
14 help develop and implement effective programs  
15 and policy changes that might be needed to  
16 address accessing affordability challenges  
17 during the crisis and its longer-term  
18 impacts.

19 On this point we thought it might  
20 be helpful to get some clarification from the  
21 Commission. This might be -- this confusion  
22 on our part might be due to our lack of  
23 experience in these investigatory dockets.  
24 But when we read the Order of Notice, we were

1 a little confused because it mentions that  
2 docket filings will be posted to the virtual  
3 docket, but then in Footnote 3 it mentioned  
4 that the utilities don't have to send  
5 requested data to the service list. So we  
6 would just ask that the Commission consider,  
7 again, along the lines of what the Consumer  
8 Advocate said, posting non-confidential data  
9 to the docket, which I think is similar to  
10 what is done currently in the EERS dockets  
11 and in the Electric Assistance Program  
12 dockets.

13 We also urge the Commission to  
14 continue to work with stakeholders and offer  
15 further opportunities for input as the crisis  
16 progresses and as the State of Emergency is  
17 lifted. For example, we think it could be  
18 helpful at some point to hear directly from  
19 the community action agencies, and perhaps  
20 other members of the Electric Assistance  
21 Program Advisory Board, about what they are  
22 seeing with respect to low-income customer  
23 issues. And it might also even be beneficial  
24 to ask for an update from the EAP Advisory

1 Board as it continues to monitor the impact  
2 of this crisis on the Electric Assistance  
3 Program going forward.

4 Let me see here. Give me a moment.  
5 I was going to mention the data that the  
6 Consumer Advocate mentioned, but I'm glad  
7 that he did. I would just say, without  
8 repeating that list, there's a number of ways  
9 that the utilities could perhaps identify  
10 low-income customers in order to break that  
11 data down based on general residential  
12 customers and low-income customers. We could  
13 potentially consider looking at data reported  
14 based on recipients who receive the Electric  
15 Assistance Program discounts or those that  
16 receive fuel assistance, LIHEAP benefits,  
17 those who receive the residential gas  
18 discount programs, or other customers coded  
19 as financial hardship who may not be captured  
20 in those categories. But whatever the  
21 Commission decides with respect to reporting  
22 the data of low-income customers, we think it  
23 would be important for the Commission to ask  
24 for uniform data from similar utilities and

1           that it be reported in a uniform way. As  
2           we've seen in the presentations today, it can  
3           sometimes be a little challenging to compare  
4           the impact of the data that's being reported  
5           in different ways, and it's not an  
6           apples-to-apples comparison. We agree with  
7           the Consumer Advocate that the data should be  
8           broken down by Zip code. We think  
9           geographically granular data can be helpful  
10          to flag any disparities and could help  
11          potentially inform how to target effective  
12          responses, such as if we should be targeting  
13          energy-efficiency measures in a certain area  
14          or targeting other affordable programs, or  
15          even directing messaging to certain areas and  
16          customers. We also believe it would be  
17          helpful to compare the reference data from a  
18          time period prior to the crisis in order to  
19          understand the impact of the crisis. As  
20          discussed this morning, we just want to also  
21          echo that it would be helpful to monitor the  
22          data on a continued basis. You know, given  
23          what the Consumer Advocate said about the  
24          unemployment compensation program in

1 particular, we would recommend being cautious  
2 about drawing too many conclusions from the  
3 data in these early months. Commissioner  
4 Giaimo I think asked earlier about the  
5 differences between states. And I think one  
6 or maybe more utilities mentioned that  
7 perhaps New Hampshire is in a somewhat better  
8 position or hasn't been impacted as  
9 significantly. And I think Eversource noted  
10 some positive signs in the data when you look  
11 at differences from April to May that could  
12 in fact be due to more businesses opening up  
13 in May.

14 But I think there's another factor  
15 worth considering that could help explain  
16 some of this. I can't say for certain that  
17 this is the reason. But based on our work,  
18 our reports in the media, conversations we've  
19 had with advocates in other states, New  
20 Hampshire has done a fairly good job of  
21 getting unemployment assistance benefits out  
22 to people quickly during the start of this  
23 crisis as compared to other states, partly  
24 due to the Governor's Emergency Order about

1 the unemployment compensation program that  
2 was issued prior to the passage of the CARES  
3 Act which implemented a number of the changes  
4 nationally to the unemployment program. And  
5 New Hampshire Employment Security has really  
6 made a strong effort to issue these benefits  
7 to eligible individuals quickly. But there  
8 were still, nonetheless, delays in getting  
9 these payments. So many eligible households  
10 didn't receive their unemployment benefits  
11 until the end of April or the beginning of  
12 May. And in fact, at New Hampshire Legal  
13 Assistance, we're still being contacted  
14 weekly by clients who have not yet received  
15 any unemployment benefits, despite the fact  
16 that they're eligible. And again as the  
17 Consumer Advocate mentioned, a portion of  
18 these unemployment benefits, the extra \$600  
19 per week, will end July 31st. And I'll just  
20 note, I know I've been talking a lot, but  
21 I'll just note that when households lose  
22 potentially up to \$2400 per month in  
23 unemployment benefits, they might at that  
24 time become eligible for some other

1 assistance programs that are part of our  
2 social safety net, but those programs are not  
3 going to make up the difference in that lost  
4 income. And there is often limitations on  
5 those programs. So, for example, once a  
6 household or an individual loses that extra  
7 \$600 per week in unemployment, they will  
8 likely become eligible for food stamp  
9 benefits, depending on their other sources of  
10 income, but they can't use those food stamp  
11 benefits to pay their utility bills; they can  
12 only use it to pay for qualifying food. And  
13 this a key distinction. Unemployment  
14 benefits are paid in cash, and individuals  
15 can use that money as they see fit to pay for  
16 any of their basic needs. There's not really  
17 any restrictions.

18 So as a result of this, we  
19 anticipate seeing a significant increase in  
20 the number of households who are going to  
21 apply for the Electric Assistance Program's  
22 discount, the gas discount and other  
23 assistance programs after July when those  
24 benefits run out if Congress doesn't act to



1 extend them. So again, we just caution about  
2 drawing any conclusions based on this early  
3 data and would really think it's crucial to  
4 take a look at the data over time before we  
5 decide what that data is telling us about  
6 this crisis and any long-term impacts,  
7 especially if we see a second wave or  
8 seasonal fluctuations in the impact of the  
9 virus that some health experts are concerned  
10 about.

11 And I just quickly want to note  
12 that we also support more flexible payment  
13 plans and would -- even though we appreciate  
14 what the utilities have done, we definitely  
15 agree that there should be a look at whether  
16 more flexible payment plans make sense for  
17 low-income customers, perhaps up to as much  
18 as 24 months, as other states have done, and  
19 offering folks perhaps a second chance if  
20 their circumstances have changed or changed  
21 going forward, depending on how the crisis  
22 plays out.

23 It was mentioned earlier, notably,  
24 that other states are investigating whether

1 to expand their arrearage management  
2 programs. We talked about how New Hampshire  
3 doesn't currently have one. I just wanted to  
4 mention we did used to have an arrearage  
5 management program, or a pre-program arrears  
6 forgiveness component of the Electric  
7 Assistance Program. And just for some  
8 historical context, it was suspended in 2005  
9 because the program was not financially  
10 sustainable and we were having to put  
11 households on a wait list for just the  
12 regular EAP discount. So in Order No. 24,542  
13 the Commission approved the suspension of  
14 this arrears program and noted that the  
15 advisory board recommended that the issue be  
16 reviewed at a future date and time to  
17 determine if it would be financially viable  
18 down the road. The EAP Advisory Board has  
19 taken a look at the numbers. And  
20 unfortunately, given concerns about the  
21 increases in enrollment and decreases in  
22 sales and collections of the system benefit  
23 charge, the board -- I don't want to speak on  
24 behalf of the board, but I'll just mention

1           that NHLA's perspective is that an arrears  
2           program as part of EAP would not be  
3           financially feasible at this time. But we do  
4           think it is an appropriate time, as the  
5           Consumer Advocate mentioned, to explore  
6           whether a different arrears management  
7           program model, similar to what's done in  
8           Massachusetts and Connecticut, would be  
9           implemented statewide here in New Hampshire  
10          to address the impacts of this crisis on  
11          low-income households.

12                        So in closing, I just echo what  
13          others have said, that uninterrupted utility  
14          service will continue to be important to  
15          public health, at least until a vaccine or  
16          treatment is developed, since it's possible  
17          that we could see repeated or seasonal  
18          outbreaks down the road.

19                        And again, New Hampshire Legal  
20          Assistance is grateful for this opportunity  
21          to provide our comments to the Commission  
22          during this unprecedented crisis, and we look  
23          forward to further conversations down the  
24          road. Thank you. If you have any questions,

1 I'm happy to try to answer them.

2 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Thank you very  
3 much for that.

4 Commissioner Bailey, do you have  
5 any questions?

6 [No verbal response]

7 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner  
8 Giaimo?

9 [No verbal response]

10 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: I just have one  
11 question, Mr. Burke. You said that you need  
12 specific data reported publicly. Is that the  
13 data in the list that Mr. Kreis provided, or  
14 is there additional data you were  
15 referencing?

16 MR. BURKE: Yes, specifically I was  
17 referring to the data that the Consumer  
18 Advocate referenced in his testimony. There  
19 might be other things that the Commission  
20 would think appropriate, but we think at a  
21 minimum that data broken down ideally by  
22 low-income or non-low-income customer could  
23 be helpful. I think some of that data is, in  
24 general terms, available in some of the EAP

1 monthly reports in the EAP docket. I don't  
2 know if there's been a delay due to the  
3 crisis going on, but I don't think -- we  
4 don't yet have all of the data for April and  
5 May. And there might have been one of the  
6 reports for March. There might have been an  
7 issue with scanning. I think when I went to  
8 look, it was missing some pages. So I think  
9 some of that data is available. But we think  
10 to really understand the impact of whether  
11 changes are necessary, having more detailed  
12 data reported on the docket could be crucial.

13 CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank  
14 you for your presentation.

15 Thank you to everyone who  
16 participated in what was this morning's and  
17 now is this afternoon's presentation on gas  
18 and electric.

19 So we are supposed to start the  
20 next round of presentations at 1 p.m. It is  
21 now 1:25. I do need to make sure that some  
22 of the folks who have been working on these  
23 get a break. So I think what we will do is  
24 take a 15-minute break.

1                   Actually, let's go off the record,  
2                   Ms. Robidas.

3                   (Discussion off the record)

4                   (Brief recess taken at 1:25 p.m. and  
5                   concludes the Morning Session. The  
6                   hearing continues under separate cover  
7                   in the transcript noted as the  
8                   Afternoon Session.)

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