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MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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## **NorthWestern Energy requests \$10.9 million natural gas rate increase**

**HELENA, Mont. – October 3, 2016** – NorthWestern Energy filed with the Montana Public Service Commission last Friday a request for an approximately \$10.9 million rate increase for its natural gas customers. The filing is the company's first natural gas rate case since 2012.

NorthWestern Energy estimates that the bill impact for the average natural gas customer using 100 therms per month would be an approximately \$4.81 increase, or 6.77 percent.

"As an impartial body, the Commission will be thorough and judicious throughout the proceeding." said PSC Chairman Brad Johnson, R-East Helena. "We will carefully weigh all aspects of the filing before rendering a decision, which we first and foremost hope will protect the long term interest of Montana ratepayers, while at the same time being equitable to the utility."

"Commissioners must do their jobs, consistent with the requirements of law, so no one can predict the eventual outcome. But I cannot say I am not disappointed. This increase would be a bitter pill to swallow for many NorthWestern customers, especially those on low and fixed incomes," said Commissioner Roger Koopman, R-Bozeman.

The company's primary requests within the filing include:

- \$10.89 million rate increase for its natural gas customers.
- \$5.59 million of the rate increase be approved on an interim basis to allow the company to begin recovering costs prior to the conclusion of the full rate case.
- Inclusion of two gas production assets into the company's rate-base.
- An increase to the company's return on equity (ROE) for its natural gas consolidated utility from the current 9.8 percent, to 10.35 percent.

The Commission will also evaluate NorthWestern's request to recover a portion of costs related to the company's new, \$26 million headquarters building that opened earlier this year in Butte, to determine the investment's benefit to ratepayers.

The PSC has nine months to issue a final decision on NorthWestern Energy's request.

A copy of the filing is available for inspection at the PSC's business offices, 1701 Prospect Avenue, P.O. Box 202601, Helena, Montana 59620-2601; and the Montana Consumer Counsel (MCC), 111 North Last Chance Gulch Suite 1B, P.O. Box 201703, Helena, Montana 59620-1703, telephone (406) 444-2771. The MCC is available to represent the interests of the consuming public in this matter.

Any interested person that does not wish to formally intervene in this Docket may submit written public comments on the matter to the Commission at the above address, or through its web-based comment form at <http://psc.mt.gov> ("Comment on Proceedings").

To view the full rate filing, visit: <http://bit.ly/2dyjBGp>

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