

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**DOCKET NO. 4026**  
**Narragansett Bay Commission's**  
**Response to**  
**Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission's June 29, 2009**  
**Data Request**

1. Please explain in detail why the number of field investigations has increased 390% since FY 2005.

The number of field investigations has increased significantly due to:

1) NBC has undertaken a number of initiatives during the past few years to ensure timely and accurate billings of its customers. NBC's billing is unique in that a significant portion of its revenues are derived from consumption based meter readings from seven different water suppliers.

- NBC began what is called its "CIF" project which involves the investigation and meter readings of large users with multiple accounts. For example, this would include the cities and towns in NBC's service area, hotels, hospitals, Providence Housing, universities and colleges. One customer alone has more than 170 active consumption accounts. This project was initiated and will continue on an ongoing basis to ensure that we have actual readings and that meter readings obtained from other sources have the proper number of digits.
- Another initiative of NBC is the quarterly reading of accounts (primarily large usage accounts) so that NBC has current and accurate meter readings. This includes accounts with large meters, meters in confined spaces, output meters as well as other peculiar situations such as a premise address in East Providence (we send one bill to the City of East Providence) with water service from the Pawtucket Water Supply Board, and certain abatement customers. NBC was able to confirm the serial numbers, dial numbers, size changes and the number of digits through this project.
- Another NBC initiative was the dye-testing of accounts shown in NBC's system as non-sewered to verify that are or are not connected to NBC's system.
- Accounts that only had estimated meter readings on file were found through the generation of reports and these accounts were investigated to obtain actual reads.
- NBC now also regularly performs property "drive-bys" to confirm that accounts determined by the water boards to be closed are not being serviced.
- Investigation of accounts with new consumption that are shown on NBC's system as inactive.
- NBC also initiated site visits to properties with sewer connection permits that expired during the year to ensure that new accounts are added to NBC's system.

2) NBC's new CS application has given NBC additional tools to ensure accurate and timely billing. NBC performs quarterly research on accounts without current readings. NBC staff must determine why meter readings are not being loaded, obtain a current read, and update whatever is required in the system. NBC generates the no-reads reports regularly.

3) There has been a dramatic increase in the number of accounts selected for water shut-off. When customers receive notice, many dispute the charges which results in investigations and site visits. NBC staff must also post each property. NBC also checks properties selected for lien sale.

4) The field investigators also handle the returned mail including more than 4,500 pieces through May 2009. NBC can find that plat and lot on-line for some of NBC's service area but must then follow-up with research at the city or town hall to determine property ownership.

5) There have been a large number of meter replacements and when this occurs, the meter readings cannot be loaded onto NBC's system and NBC must investigate these accounts. The report attached to the previous data response is a sample of one such report for NBC customers served by Pawtucket Water.

2. Please clarify the sample reports attached to NBC's response.

The attachment to NBC's response is a sample of one editing report that was generated for customers serviced by the Pawtucket Water Supply Board. It reflects meter readings that can't load onto NBC's system for one reason or another. The first number is the water board account number (NBC cross reference number), the second number is the meter number, and the middle section contains the meter reading date and number as well as the address. NBC must research these accounts at the water board to see if NBC has the meter, or if not, NBC must add the new meter. Other reasons why an account may show up on this list is if the meter number does not match the meter number that NBC has on file, if the cross-reference number doesn't match, if the address is not on file or if the meter dial does not match. Sometimes this report reflects two meter reads on different dates at the same address. This could be the result of two scenarios. First, the meters were read on a monthly basis and NBC received both reads at the same time. In this case, NBC would bill the more current read. A second possible explanation for two reads at the same address would be if there were two dials on the same meter.