

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**IN RE: THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC        :**  
**COMPANY d/b/a NATIONAL GRID            :** **DOCKET NOS. 4251, 4252**  
**SOFT-OFF PROGRAM                         :**

**ORDER**

On August 31, 2016, the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (Division) filed an Agreement with the Public Utilities Commission (Commission or PUC) entered into between the Division and The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (National Grid or Company) regarding the Soft-Off Program<sup>1</sup>. The agreement provided for continuation of the Soft-Off Program.<sup>2</sup> It also provided for additional reporting, including a one-time cost-benefit analysis, a one-time performance report retroactive to June 4, 2013,<sup>3</sup> and continued annual performance reports thereafter. The agreement allowed for continued review of the “Leave on for Landlord” program which allows landlords to provide the Company with prior written authorization to continue service in a landlord’s name after a tenant terminates service and when there is no unbilled consumption. In addition to continuation of the existing program, the Company and the Division agreed to work toward proposing legislation to provide for a replevin process similar to that

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<sup>1</sup> A soft-off is defined by the Company as “[t]he termination of an account by the Company for billing purposes where there is no new customer of record and the actual flow of gas to the premises is not disconnected.” Pursuant to the Commission’s decision in these Dockets, Order No. 20570 (May 4, 2012), National Grid was authorized to conduct a one-year pilot program for soft-off closures during which time it would collect data regarding the cost effectiveness of such a program to be filed as a final report with the Commission and the Division. All filings in this docket are available at the PUC offices located at 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, Rhode Island or at <http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4251page.html> or <http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4252page.html>

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the agreement is attached as Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> National Grid filed its final report on the pilot program on June 4, 2013.

available to the Company's Massachusetts and New York companies. National Grid agreed to review the feasibility and costs associated with hard shut-off at high risk properties.<sup>4</sup> As part of its Gas Infrastructure, Safety, and Reliability Plan, the Company agreed to evaluate expanding its curb valve program in order to perform a hard shut off where appropriate.

At an Open Meeting on September 9, 2016, the Commission deliberated on the agreement. The Commission recognized the work done by the Company and the Division to create a program that will reduce waste resulting in ratepayer savings. The Commission found that continuing the pilot program and continued reporting is in the best interest of ratepayers. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the agreement and to extend the Soft-Off Program until such time as the Division or the Company determines that its costs outweigh its benefits and notifies the Commission of such.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(22712) ORDERED:

1. The agreement between National Grid and the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers is approved.
2. The Soft-Off Program shall continue until such time as the Commission finds otherwise.

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<sup>4</sup> Higher risk properties include those with access issues and properties with inside meters.

EFFECTIVE AT WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2016 PURSUANT  
TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED MARCH 9, 2017.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION



Margaret E. Curran, Chairperson

Herbert F. DeSimone, Jr., Commissioner

Marion S. Gold, Commissioner

**NOTICE OF RIGHT OF APPEAL:** Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-5-1, any person aggrieved by a decision or order of the PUC may, within seven days from the date of the order, petition the Supreme Court for a Writ of Certiorari to review the legality and reasonableness of the decision or order.

# APPENDIX A

## Docket Nos. 4251 & 4252 - Soft-Off Agreement

1. National Grid<sup>1</sup> will work with the Division to review and propose legislation to provide for a replevin process<sup>2</sup> in Rhode Island, similar to what is available in the Company's other jurisdictions (i.e. Massachusetts and New York).
2. National Grid has agreed to submit to the Division the following reports:
  - A one-time updated cost-benefit analysis in form and substance similar to that which the Company included in its June 4, 2013 final report that it filed with the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (PUC) following the conclusion of the one-year Soft-Off Pilot.<sup>3</sup>
  - A one-time updated Soft-Off performance report in form and substance similar to and utilizing the same criteria as that which is contained in the quarterly reports that the Company filed with the PUC during the one-year Soft-Off Pilot, retroactive to the date of the final report (June 4, 2013).
  - On an annual basis, a performance report in form and substance similar to and utilizing the same criteria as that which is contained in the quarterly reports that the Company filed with the PUC during the one-year Soft-Off Pilot. The Company will submit said annual report within 30 days following December 31 of each calendar year.
3. National Grid will continue to attempt to identify higher risk properties (i.e., single unit/family residential and commercial buildings with inside meters and a long history of access issues) for which a hard shut off may be appropriate. In so doing, the Company will continue to review the feasibility and costs associated with performing a hard shut off at such properties, including the incremental costs of additional field personnel. In addition, the Company and the Division will look at expanding the Company's curb valve program through the Gas Infrastructure, Safety and Reliability Plan for locations where inside meters and a history of access issues are present.
4. The Company will review its procedures to (i) ensure that when a tenant requests electric service in the tenant's name, the Company's customer service representatives

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<sup>1</sup> The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (referred to herein as National Grid or the Company).

<sup>2</sup> A replevin process would allow National Grid, upon issuance of a warrant and accompanied by a sheriff or other authorized law enforcement personnel, to enter a premises and access a gas meter to perform leak surveys and for other gas safety-related purposes where access had been previously denied.

<sup>3</sup> See June 4, 2013 Final Report, Docket Nos. 4251, 4252, at 3.

are also inquiring regarding the gas service, and (ii) provide that if a tenant does not accept gas service in its name, the gas service will be disconnected.

5. The Company and the Division are continuing to review the Leave On For Landlord program<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The Leave on for Landlord (LOFL) program is a service that the Company offers to owners, landlords, and rental agencies to provide the opportunity to have the gas and/or electric service activated in their own name when a tenant requests that services be disconnected, alleviating the need for the Company to go out to the premises and physically lock the service.