

Standards for Gas Utilities

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS REGULATION

DIVISION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

RULES AND REGULATIONS PRESCRIBING STANDARDS FOR GAS UTILITIES

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 1966

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS REGULATION
OFFICE OF
PUBLIC UTILITY ADMINISTRATOR

IN RE: PROMULGATION OF DIVISION'S
UNIFORM PRESCRIBED RULES AND REGU
LATIONS FOR GAS UTILITIES.
Docket No. 956

This proceeding was initiated by the Division of Public Utilities on the motion of the Public Utility Administrator pursuant to the provisions of Section 3, Chapter 35, Title 42, of the Public Laws of 1958.

Pursuant to the statutory provisions, the proposed rules and regulations applicable to persons and companies operating as gas companies were scheduled for hearing, and the interested gas companies were so notified. The hearing was held on Friday, May 27, 1966, in the Division's offices, 49 Westminister Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

APPEARANCES:

Robert J. Conley, Esq., for Valley Gas Company.

Richard A. Sullivan, Jr., Vice President of
the South County Gas Company and
Bristol and Warren Gas Company.

C. W. Provonchee, Executive Vice President
of the Providence Gas Company.

Manuel Nones, Superintendent of Operations,
Newport Gas Light Company.

The operation of electric companies has been under the regulation and supervision of the Division of Public Utilities since the passage of the first regulatory act in the year 1912. Until this time, the Division has not issued rules and regulations governing the operation of gas companies. The economic well- being of our Rhode Island industries and commercial concerns, as well as the welfare Rhode Island residents, has become increasingly dependent upon the efficient operation of the gas companies.

The rules and regulations which are appended hereto and made a part of this investigation and order were deemed necessary by the Public Utility Administrator in order to establish standards to apply to gas companies in their relationship between each company and its subscriber, as well as to clarify other practices relative to effecting compliance with the requirements of existing statutes.

In view of the fact that representatives of the gas companies, after notice and public hearing, concurred in the adoption of these proposed rules and regulations, it is the Administrator's judgement and finding that the appended rules and regulations, numbered 1 through 28, governing the practices of gas companies are just and reasonable and should be adopted by the Division of Public Utilities as a practical means of enforcing the provisions of Chapters 2 to 4 inclusive, of Title 39 of the Rhode Island General Laws of 1956.

Accordingly, it is (8122) ORDERED: That the rules and regulations, numbered 1 to 28, inclusively, relating to standards connected with the operation of gas companies as provided for in Title 39, Chapters 2, 3, and 4, respectively, be and the same are hereby adopted by the Public Utility Administrator of Rhode Island as the official rules and regulations of the Division of Public Utilities; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED: That any and all existing rules and regulations relating to standards for gas companies which may have been promulgated by the Division of Public Utilities heretofore are hereby repealed and vacated; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED: That said rules and regulations shall become effective July 1, 1966.

Dated at Providence, Rhode Island, this eight day of June A.D., 1966.

Frank L. Nunes
Administrator

RULES AND REGULATIONS PRESCRIBING STANDARDS FOR GAS UTILITIES

APPLICATION OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. These rules and regulations shall apply to all public utilities engaged in the business of manufacturing, distributing, selling or transmitting gas in the State of Rhode Island.
2. These rules shall be amended or repealed, and applications therefor shall be made, in accordance with Title 39, Chapter 3, Section 7, Regulatory Powers of Administrator, and the provisions of Title 42, Chapter 35, of the General Laws of 1956 entitled "Administrative Procedures." Application may be made to the Division for temporary or permanent exemption from any provision of these Rules for good reason shown.

DEFINITIONS

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words as used herein shall have the following meanings:

"Division" -- the Division of Public Utilities within the Department of Business Regulation of the State of Rhode Island.

"Utility" -- any public utility engaged in the manufacture, distribution, sale or transmission of gas in the State.

"Gas" -- any manufactured or natural gas or any combination thereof.

"Cubic Foot"

- i. The term cubic foot shall mean the volume of gas which occupies one (1) cubic foot of space at a temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit and an absolute pressure of 14.73 pounds per square inch (known as standard conditions) with deviation therefrom for varying pressure and temperature being in accordance with Boyles Law and Charles Law.
- ii. When gas is metered under the filed domestic rates of the utility at normal distribution pressures of approximately 6 inches of water column above the prevailing barometric pressure, a cubic foot shall be taken to mean the amount of gas which occupies one cubic foot under the conditions existing in the customer's meter as and where installed, except that outside meters may be of a temperature compensating type.

iii. When gas is metered in large volumes at pressures and temperatures other than standard, it may be measured by a meter equipped with devices which correct for pressure or temperature or both.

When orifice meters are used additional corrections may be made for the super compressibility and expansion effects.

"Total heating value" -- the number of British thermal units (Btu) produced by the combustion, at constant pressure, of the amount of gas which would occupy a volume of one (1) cubic foot at a temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit if saturated with water vapor and under a pressure equivalent to that of 30 inches of mercury at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and under standard gravitational force (acceleration 980.665 cm per second) with air of the same temperature and pressure as the gas, when the products of combustion are cooled to the initial temperature of the gas and air, and when the water formed by combustion is condensed to the liquid state, corrected to the initial saturation of the sampled gas.

"Therm" -- 100,000 British Thermal Units.

SERVICE PROVISIONS

1. Filing of Rate Schedules

All rates, tolls and charges by a public utility shall be filed and kept open to public inspection in accordance with the provisions of Title 39, Chapter 3, Section 10, of the General Laws of 1956.

2. Application for Service

a. An applicant desiring service under a utility's filed rate may be required to make application in writing, in accordance with the forms prescribed by the utility. The utility may make a reasonable charge for connection of service. Upon compliance by the applicant with all requirements, the utility will complete the service connection without undue delay. The utility may refuse to supply gas to an applicant who owes the company a past-due and unpaid account for gas furnished.

b. Service of a character for which there is no rate of general application may be rendered under a contract between the utility and the applicant, executed copies of such contracts to be filed with the Division within sixty (60) days of the date of execution.

3. Information to Customers

- a. Each utility shall upon request give its customers such information and reasonable assistance as will help them to select the best use of service at the most advantageous rate. However, the ultimate responsibility for the selection of an optional rate will rest with the customer.
- b. Each utility shall, upon request, explain to its customers the method of reading meters.

4. Deposits

A utility, to protect against loss, may require a satisfactory deposit before rendering service to any customer. This deposit shall not be less than \$5.00 nor more than two times the estimated maximum bill. Interest shall be paid on deposits held for six (6) months or more in accordance with applicable rate schedules or the terms and conditions of the utility. Deposits, plus accrued interest thereon, less any amount due the utility, will be refunded upon termination of service. When an account is terminated, or when a deposit is applied against an account which has been terminated, interest shall cease to be accumulated on the balance at the date of termination.

5. Measurement of Service

All gas sold by a utility shall be charged for on a metered basis except when sold under rates filed with the Division which provide otherwise.

6. Meter Reading and Bill Forms

- a. Each service meter of the displacement type shall indicate clearly the cubic feet of gas, or therms, registered. When gas is measured under high pressure or when the quantity is determined by calculation from recording devices, the utility shall upon request supply the customer with the basis and method of computation of the determined quantity.
- b. Insofar as practicable, all service meters will be read at regular intervals and on approximately the corresponding day of each meter reading period within regularly scheduled work days.
- c. Bills shall be rendered at regular intervals and shall show the date of the current meter reading and the amount or quantity of service for the billing period and shall also show any applicable discount date.
- d. Each utility shall keep an accurate account of all charges for service billed each customer and shall maintain records showing information from which each bill rendered may be readily computed.

7. Complaints by Customers

Each public utility shall make a full and prompt investigation of customer complaints made either directly, or through the Division. A record of complaints received, other than those of a minor or routine nature, shall be kept for at least two years, and shall show the name and address of the complainant, the date and character of the complaint and the disposition thereof.

8. Change in Character of Service

In case any substantial permanent change is made by the utility in the composition of the gas, the pressure, or other service conditions which would affect efficiency, or operation, or adjustment of appliances, the appliances of all customers in the district affected shall be inspected promptly, and, if necessary, shall be re-adjusted for the new conditions without undue delay by the utility and without charge to the customer.

9. Discontinuance of Service

a. By Customer

A customer may be required to give reasonable notice of his intention to discontinue service in accordance with the provisions of the applicable rate or terms and conditions of service and shall be responsible for all charges until expiration of such notice period.

b. By Company

i. Non-Payment of Bills

In accordance with the provisions of the applicable rate or terms and conditions of service, a utility may require that bills be paid within a specified time after presentation. On and after thirty (30) days from the date the bill is rendered, service may be discontinued for non-payment of bills provided the customer has been given written notice mailed or delivered at least five (5) days prior to the date of discontinuance. However, service may be discontinued for non-payment less than thirty (30) days from the date the bill is rendered provided such action is in accordance with stated company practice as filed with the Division requiring consistent treatment to all customers with unsatisfactory credit characteristics, and provided that the customer has been given written notice mailed or delivered at least five (5) days before discontinuance. In lieu of discontinuance, or upon reconnection, the utility may require payments at less than monthly intervals. If service is discontinued for non-payment, the utility may make a reasonable charge for reconnection.

ii. Non-Payment of Deposit or Connection Charge

Service may be discontinued for non-payment of a deposit as authorized by Rule 4, or for non-payment of a charge for connection of service as authorized by Rule 2 (a), provided the customer has been given written notice of the requirement for a deposit or a charge for connection mailed or delivered at least five (5) days prior to the date of discontinuance.

iii. For Violation of Rules

No utility shall discontinue service to a customer for violation of any rule without written notice mailed or delivered five (5) days in advance of discontinuance advising the customer in what particular such rule has been violated, except that service may be discontinued immediately when the violation of the rule is such, in the opinion of the utility, as to endanger life or property, or when ordered to do so by any governmental agency or official having jurisdiction. The utility may, with or without notice, shut off the supply of gas to premises, or make appliances inoperative, where in its opinion a hazardous condition exists.

iv. For Fraudulent Use of Service

A utility may discontinue service without notice whenever a fraudulent use of service by the customer is detected.

QUALITY OF GAS SERVICE

10. Heating Value Requirements

a. Standard of Heating Value

Every gas utility shall establish its own standard of heating value which shall be stated in its rate schedules. If the transmission company supplying the utility files a tariff with the Federal Power Commission in compliance with Part 154 of the Commission's "General Rules and Regulations" establishing a lower heating value for the gas it furnishes the utility, then the heating value thus established shall become the standard of the utility for the gas it furnishes its customers. Resulting decreases in the wholesale rates charged the utility by its supplier shall be reflected in the concomitant application of the utility's filed Purchased Gas Price Adjustment to the rates charged its customers.

b. Calorimeter Equipment

- i. Each utility, unless specifically directed otherwise by the Division, shall maintain a standard calorimeter outfit for the regular determination of the heating value of the gas sold.
- ii. Each utility shall establish the accuracy of all calorimeters in normal use by periodic check tests and shall maintain a record of such tests on file for a period of two years. If a utility uses calorimeters of the recording type, they shall be checked at least annually.

c. Heating Value Tests

- i. The total heating value of the gas shall be determined at least once daily and as more often as is necessary to obtain an accurate record of the average heating value and of any fluctuation in the heating value.
- ii. To obtain the monthly average heating value, the results of all tests of heating value made on any day during the calendar month shall be averaged, and the average of all daily averages shall be taken as the monthly average. If a utility's calorimeter is of the recording type, its record shall be the basis for determining the weighted average heating value, providing that the recording calorimeter is checked at least annually.
- iii. Records of monthly average heating value, as determined under Paragraph (ii) of this Rule shall be retained by the utility for at least two years and shall be readily available to the Division for inspection.

d. Purity Requirements

- i. All gas supplied to customers shall be substantially free of impurities which may cause corrosion of mains or piping or form corrosive or harmful fumes when burned in a properly designed and adjusted burner. No such gas shall contain more than 1 grain of hydrogen sulphide, nor more than 20 grains of total sulphur, per 100 cubic feet.
- ii. The provisions of Paragraph (i), above, notwithstanding, gas delivered by the utility shall be odorized by the addition of a malodorant agent in conformance with the applicable provisions of the most recent edition of American Standards Association Code for "Gas Transmission and Distribution Piping Systems" (ASA B 31.8).

11. Pressure Requirements

a. Pressure Variations

The pressure at the outlet of any customer's service meter shall not normally be less than one-half of the normal pressure at the outlet. The maximum pressure shall not be greater than 12" of water column except by agreement with the customer.

b. Pressure Surveys and Records

i. Each utility shall maintain in continuous operation at least one recording (chart type) pressure device in each area where the utility maintains a district or division office, either in said office or at some customer's premises.

ii. Each utility shall make a sufficient number of pressure tests in the areas served to indicate compliance with pressure requirements contained herein.

iii. All pressure charts obtained under (i) or (ii) shall be retained by the utility for at least two years and shall be available for inspection by the Division or its representative. Reports of pressure complaints affecting the entire distribution system serving a single community or a major division of a community shall be made to the Division on Form E-4 monthly, if they occur.

12. Interruption of Service (excluding customers purchasing gas on an interruptible basis)

a. Each utility shall use all reasonable means to avoid accidental interruptions to service but should such interruptions occur service shall be reestablished within the shortest time practicable, consistent with safety.

b. Each utility shall keep a record of all interruptions to service affecting the entire distribution system serving a single community or a major division of a community and shall include in such record the date and time of such interruption, the approximate number of such customers affected, the date and time of service restoration, the cause of such interruption when known, and steps taken to prevent its recurrence. Reports of such service interruptions shall be made to the Division on Form E-6 once a month if they occur.

c. When service is interrupted to perform work on lines or equipment, such work shall be done at a time causing minimum inconvenience to customers consistent with the circumstances. Customers seriously affected by such interruption shall be notified in advance if practicable.

13. Abnormal Conditions

These Rules shall not apply to temporary conditions due to "Acts of God", fire, strikes, riots, construction, maintenance, interruption of gas supply from the utility's wholesale supplier, or other disruptions of service beyond the control of the utility; provided, however, that all utilities shall initiate immediate action and proceed without delay and perform all necessary work to restore its system to normal operating conditions.

METER ACCURACY AND TESTING

14. Meter Installations

Unless otherwise authorized by the Division, each utility shall provide and install at its own expense, and shall continue to own, maintain and operate, all equipment necessary for the regulation and measuring of gas to its customers. A charge may be made for additional meters and regulators furnished by the utility for the convenience of the customer.

15. Testing and Calibration of Meters

a. Gas Meter Accuracy

Every gas-service meter, whether new or repaired, which has been removed for any cause, shall be tested and shall be correct to within two (2) percent plus or minus zero error as determined in Section (b) before being reinstalled.

b. Method of Testing

For the purpose of determining compliance with this rule, the proof of registration of a displacement meter shall be determined by one test, known as the "Check-Rate" test, at a rate of flow approximately 20% of the rated capacity of the meter and by one test at approximately the rated capacity of the meter. The tests at the two rates shall agree within one (1) percent. The accuracy of the meter at the check-rate of flow shall be considered as its accuracy in determining compliance with Section (a) of this Rule and for the purpose of adjustment of gas bills.

All tests to determine the accuracy of any gas service meter shall be made with a stationary meter prover except that, for large capacity meters or those of unusual construction, a portable critical flow prover may be used. The testing of orifice meters shall include the inspection and checking of the diameter of the orifice, the testing of the accuracy of the differential recorder by comparison with a water column and the testing of the static pressure recorder with a mercury column or an approved dead weight gauge tester or a calibrated spring-type inspector's gauge.

c. Testing Facilities and Equipment

Each utility shall maintain the equipment and facilities necessary for accurately testing all sizes and types of meters used for the measuring of gas delivered to its customers, unless arrangements approved by the Division shall have been made to have the testing done elsewhere. Each utility shall provide and maintain a stationary meter prover of an approved type of a capacity not less than two (2) cubic feet for the testing of the most numerous class of customers' meters. Each meter prover shall be supplied with all accessories needed for accurate meter testing and shall be located in a room suitable for the work to be done. The utility shall maintain this equipment in good condition and correct adjustment so that it can determine the accuracy of any service meter to within 1/2 of 1%.

16. Test Schedules

a. New Meters

All new gas meters shall be tested and calibrated before being installed on a customer's premises. Such tests and calibration may be made by the manufacturer or the utility and a record thereof shall be kept on file by the utility. These tests shall not be considered as periodic tests of meters in service.

b. Meters Removed and Re-Installed

All meters removed from service which are to be reinstalled shall be proof tested at the standard rated capacity of the meter and at a check rate which shall be 20% of the standard rated capacity in accordance with Rule 15 (b). In addition, worn or damaged parts shall be replaced.

c. Periodic Tests of Meters in Service

All gas meters in service shall be tested in accordance with the following schedule and, if necessary, shall be adjusted to register within the tolerance prescribed in Rule 15 (a).

- i. All meters rated by the manufacturer up to and including three hundred (300) cubic feet per hour, based on one-half inch (1/2") water pressure differential shall be proof tested not less than once each fifteen (15) year service period.
- ii. Meters normally rated by the manufacturer in excess of three hundred (300) cubic feet per hour, based on one-half inch (1/2") water pressure differential, shall be proof tested not less than once in each ten (10) year service period.
- iii. Each meter so tested shall have affixed the seal prescribed by the Public Utilities Administrator. (See Appendix C).

17. Request Tests

When requested by a customer or by the Division, each gas utility shall test the accuracy of the customer's meter within fifteen (15) days from the time the request is made. If the meter has been tested during the preceding twelve (12) months, a utility may require the deposit of a fee of five dollars (\$5.00) for such a test. If, on testing, the meter is found to be fast by more than 2%, the deposit shall be promptly refunded. If the meter is not found to be fast by as much as 2%, the utility shall retain the amount deposited for the test. A customer or the Division may be represented in person or by an agent when the utility conducts the test on his meter. A report giving the name of the customer requesting the test, the date of the request, the location, the type, make, size, the serial number of the meter, the date tested, and the result of the test shall be supplied to each customer within a reasonable time after completion of the test. The utility shall retain copies of the above reports for at least two years.

18. Customer's Bill Adjustments

a. Calculation of Error

In meter tests made at the request of a customer or the Division, the correctness of the meter and its performance and service shall be judged in accordance with Rule 15 (a).

b. Adjustments

i. Fast Meters

Whenever, as the result of a test made by the utility at the request of a customer or the Division, a gas meter is found to be fast in excess of 2% of the correct amount, the company shall refund to the customer an amount equal to the charge for gas billed in excess of 2% of the correct amount for the previous six (6) months, or for a period equal to one-half of the time elapsed since the last previous test if made within twelve (12) months.

However, if the time when the error first developed or occurred can be definitely fixed, the amount to be refunded is to be based thereon. Under no circumstance will an adjustment of a customer's bill be made if there is evidence that the meter has been tampered with.

Slow Meters

Whenever, as a result of a test made by the utility at the request of a customer or the Division, a gas meter is found to have a negative average error in excess of 2%, the company may make a charge to the customer for the unbilled gas in excess of the 2% negative error supplied for the previous six (6) months or since the last test, whichever is the shorter period.

iii. Non-Registration

If a meter is found which does not register, the bill for the period of non-registration shall be based upon information recorded prior or subsequent to the period of non-registration and by any other pertinent information supplied by the customer or known to the utility.

19. Records of Meters and Tests

Each utility shall keep, numerically arranged and properly classified, records giving, for each meter used and owned by the utility for any purpose, the identification number, date of purchase, name of manufacturer, serial number, type and rating. A complete record of the latest test made on a meter shall be retained in the company's files in a manner that it be readily available. A record of the last test of any meter removed from service and permanently retired shall be maintained on file for a period of one (1) year.

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

20. Standard Practice

The gas plant of the utility shall be constructed, installed, maintained and operated in accordance with accepted good engineering practice in the gas industry to assure, as far as reasonably possible, continuity of service, uniformity in the quality of service furnished and the safety of persons and property. In determining standard practice, the Division will be guided by, and the utility shall use, the applicable provisions of the most recent editions of the American Standards Association Code for "Gas Transmission and Distribution Piping Systems" (ASA B31.8), the American Standards Association Code for "Installations of Gas Appliances and Gas Piping" (ASA Z21.30) and the National Board of Fire Underwriters Standard, No. 49. "The Storage and Handling of Liquefied Petroleum Gases at Utility Plants", except as any of the foregoing may in any particular case be modified by statute, ordinance, orders, rules or regulations by governmental bodies or agencies having jurisdiction.

21. Constructions and Maintenance

Each utility shall construct, install, operate and maintain its plant, structures, equipment and gas pipelines in accordance with standard practice, as defined in Rule 20, above, and in such manner as to best accommodate the public and to prevent interference with service provided by other public utilities.

RECORDS AND REPORTS

22. Station Records

Each utility shall keep sufficient records of the operation of its plant to show the characteristics and performance of each unit.

23. Gas Supply Measurement

a. Measuring Devices

Each utility shall install a suitable measuring device, or otherwise determine production, at each source of supply in order that a record may be maintained of the quantity of gas produced at each source. Unless sufficient information is furnished by the transmission company supplying the gas, each utility purchasing gas shall maintain adequate instruments and meters to obtain complete information as to such purchases.

b. Records

At least once each month, the quantity produced or purchased from each source of supply shall be determined. twelve-month totals by sources shall be recorded and transmitted to the Division in the utility's annual report to the Division.

24. System Maps

Each utility shall have on file, located within the State, a suitable map, maps or drawings showing the following:

a. Size, character and location of all mains, including valves.

b. Size and location of each service connection, where practicable. In lieu of showing service locations on maps, a card record or other suitable means may be used.

c. Layout of all principal metering and regulator stations, holders and generating plants to show size, location and character of all major equipment, pipelines, connections, valves and other equipment used.

25. Preservation of Records

All records required by these Rules shall be preserved by the utility for a period of two (2) years unless otherwise designated herein or by the latest edition of the Division's "Regulations To Govern The Preservation Of Records Of Electric, Gas And Water Utilities". Such records shall be kept within the State of Rhode Island at the office or offices of the utility and shall be open at all reasonable hours for examination by the Division or its representative.

26. Reports to Division

a. The utility shall furnish to the Division, at such times and in such form as the Division may require, the results of any required tests and summaries of any required records. The utility shall also furnish the Division with any information concerning the utility's facilities or operations which the Division may request and need for determining rates or judging the practices of the utility.

b. Each utility shall file periodic reports with the Division on the following forms which will be furnished by the Division upon request:

Form No.	Title	Period
E-4	Pressure Complaint Report	Monthly, if they occur
E-6	Interruption of Service Report	Monthly, if they occur
E-3	Utility Accident Report	As occurring

GENERAL

27. Safety Instructions

Each utility shall adopt comprehensive instructions for the safety of employees in regard to the operation, construction or maintenance of its plant and facilities, and shall be satisfied that such employees have been properly informed of safe practices and are cognizant of all hazards involved.

28. Accidents

Each utility shall report to the Division as soon as possible after each accident occurring in connection with the operation of its property, facilities, or service, wherein any person shall have been killed or seriously injured or whereby any substantial property damage shall have been caused. The first report may be preliminary, but, if so, shall be followed later by as full a statement as possible of the cause and details of the accident and the precautions taken, if any, to prevent recurrence. Accidents to employees resulting in slight injuries which do not incapacitate the persons injured from active work for more than six (6) days in the aggregate during the ten (10) days immediately following injury need not be reported.

APPENDIX C

METER LABELING

1. There shall be provided and affixed to the front of each customer's gas meter a waterproof decalcomania having a bright yellow background enclosed by black border lines not less than 1/16" in width.
2. Within the border lines there shall be printed on the label with black ink in characters not less than 3/16" high arranged in three lines with a blank space following the third line reserved for stamping with waterproof indelible black ink characters not less than 1/4" high indicating the month and year the meter was last proof tested in accordance with the following label arrangement:

TESTED AND ADJUSTED

TO R.I.D.P.U.

STANDARDS

3. Each "Decal" label shall not be less than 2 1/4" in length by 7/8" in width in size and shall, after dating and affixing to the meter case, receive one coat of clear air-drying lacquer of a type that will not act as a solvent or otherwise affect the label coloring or printing.