



Avista Corp.

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March 3, 2021

Public Utility Commission of Oregon
Attn: Filing Center
201 High Street SE, Suite 100
Salem, OR 97301-3612

RE: Advice No. 21-01-G – Avista Utilities Schedule 473, Residential Debt Relief Program

Filing Center:

On February 3, 2021, Avista Corporation, dba Avista Utilities (Avista or “the Company”), filed proposed revisions to its natural gas tariff P.U.C. OR No. 5, to introduce its new Schedule 473, “Residential Debt Relief Program” (Debt Relief Program), in compliance with Order No. 20-401 in Docket No. UM 2114. On February 25, 2021, following conversations with Commission Staff, the Company requested to extend the effective date of the proposed tariff filing to March 25, 2021, to provide adequate time for a comprehensive review of the requested tariff incorporations.

The Company has continued to discuss its Debt Relief Program with Commission Staff, and based on those conversations, proposes to make two significant changes to its proposal. First, the Company has eliminated the Hardship Grant from the Debt Relief Program in recognition that due to the current levels of arrearages, program funding should be dedicated to those customers that are already past due on their energy bill, rather than provide grants to customers that are facing hardship but are not yet past due. Second, the Company has reduced the amount of the Forgiveness Grant from a maximum of \$1,500 down to \$1,000. According to the Company’s data regarding customer arrearage balances owing at the end of December 2020, approximately 99% of customers in arrears had balances owing that were lower than \$1,000. With this in mind, the Company supports lowering the maximum grant amount as this change will not only allow the funds to be

available to a greater number of customers that may need assistance, but the Forgiveness Grant will still be able to fully resolve the arrearage balances of nearly all customers that seek assistance.

The Company respectfully requests the proposed tariff filing be allowed to take effect on March 25, 2021. If you have any questions regarding this filing, please contact Jaime Majure at (509) 495-7839 or jaime.majure@avistacorp.com.

Sincerely,

/s/ Shawn Bonfield

Shawn Bonfield
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AVISTA CORPORATION
dba Avista Utilities

SCHEDULE 473

RESIDENTIAL DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this schedule is to implement the Residential Debt Relief Program consistent with Commission Order No. 20-401. The Order directs Utilities to establish a program to identify and manage residential customer arrearages associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to proactively assist residential customers prior to resuming disconnections and to prevent bad debt from accumulating on utility accounts.

The program may identify and waive residential arrearages at an initial total amount of \$889,890. This amount represents one percent of the Company's 2019 Oregon retail revenues, not to be increased without prior Commission approval.

AVAILABLE:

To all residential customers in the State of Oregon where the Company has natural gas service available, subject to the specifications contained herein.

APPLICABLE:

This Residential Debt Relief Program is applicable to all residential Avista customers taking service under Schedule 410.

DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM:

With this Program, the Company intends to provide financial relief to customers who have experienced economic hardship due to COVID-19, and who have accumulated pandemic-related arrears or are at risk of such accumulation. Each eligible customer will receive funding up to the maximum amounts stated herein, with no resulting account credits. All programs will be available for a limited time based on funding availability. The Company will help customers manage their arrearage debt utilizing the program components described below:

- 1) Automatic Grant - one-time grant intended to forgive arrearage balances, not to exceed \$1,500, for customers with proven history of low-income program eligibility, as determined by customer receipt of Energy Assistance (EA) within the previous 24 months. The Company will review all residential customer accounts on April 1, 2021, and administer these grants automatically.

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Effective For Service On & After
March 25, 2021

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By

Patrick Ehrbar, Director of Regulatory Affairs



AVISTA CORPORATION
dba Avista Utilities

SCHEDULE 473 (continued)

RESIDENTIAL DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM

- 2) Arrearage Forgiveness Grant - one-time grant intended to forgive arrearage balances, not to exceed \$1,000, for customers that have not received EA within the previous 24 months yet are expressing a financial hardship due to COVID-19. The customer is expected to make any possible payments to decrease account balance, or to set up suitable payment arrangements if able, prior to the offering of this grant.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

1. In accordance with Commission Order No. 20-378, the Company will defer and seek recovery of all associated program costs not otherwise included in rates.
2. Additional programs or adjustments to the programs listed above may occur as the Company develops experience in operating these programs.
3. In addition to the reporting requirements outlined in Commission Order No. 20-401, the Company will provide quarterly reporting on the amount of assistance that has been provided and the number of customers enrolled by program, including cost to operate the program. Additional reporting may be provided as determined by the Commission.
4. Because the funding of the Debt Relief Program is limited, customers will be served on a first-come basis and are only entitled to a single grant as outlined above.

TERM:

The duration of this program is through September 30, 2022, or until the Company reaches the spending limit, or until the Commission closes the program.

RULES AND REGULATIONS:

Service under this schedule is subject to the General Rules and Regulations contained in the tariff of which this schedule is a part, and to those prescribed by regulatory authorities.

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