



EL96-018

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July 16, 1996

Mr. William Bullard, Executive Director
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
State Capitol Building
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-5070

Dear Mr. Bullard

Re: Request for approval of a new customer information brochure.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission approved a new billing format for NSP in Docket EL95-028 ordered approved on November 21, 1995. NSP implemented this new billing format in early 1996. As a result of this change and the fact that our new customer information brochure stock is about to run out, NSP proposes to republish our customer information brochure with some appropriate modifications.

Enclosed for your consideration, following the guidelines of SDPUC Administrative Rule 20 10 16 02, is an original and ten copies of our proposed new format for a customer information brochure. NSP respectfully requests the Commission approve a design of a customer information brochure.

If anyone has any questions, please call me at 339-8350.

Sincerely,

Jim Wilcox

c Mike Hanson

RECEIVED
JUL 17 1996
SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

Welcome



*We're here
to give you
convenience,
comfort,
reliable energy
and responsive
service.*

NSP

Welcome to NSP

It's our pleasure to serve you as an NSP customer, and we look forward to providing you with **The energy to make things better**®. We've been providing energy services for our customers for more than 80 years.

If you've been an NSP customer before, you might be familiar with some of the information in this booklet. But there's plenty of new information that will help you take advantage of NSP's programs and services for businesses, homeowners and apartment dwellers.

We've designed many of these programs to show you how to be more comfortable in your home for fewer dollars. Others help businesses save energy and money with a variety of energy services that include cash rebates, special electric rates and expert advice.

We can help you reduce your up-front capital costs and save on future energy bills by offering rebates for energy-efficient equipment. Call your nearest NSP office for information about rooftop air conditioning, chiller, lighting and motor rebates.

This pamphlet also talks about safety, it has information to help you understand and pay your bill. It also explains how to read your bill and meter.

We're glad you've made your home in NSP territory, or are in business here. If you still have questions after reading this booklet, call us. The last page lists phone numbers to assist you.

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Paying Your Electric Bill

The name printed on the envelope is the one NSP will bill for utility service. If it is incorrect, please call your local NSP business office.

You can pay your bill by mail, using the return envelope enclosed with your bill and including the top portion of the bill. Or, you can pay at drop boxes located at the Sioux Falls Service Center, Sioux Falls Hy-Vee and Sunshine stores, and district office drop boxes located throughout our service area. You can also pay your bill at Lewis Drug Stores. Please give us five working days to receive the payment and credit your account.

NSP's Automatic Pay Plan is available for your convenience. You can authorize your financial institution to pay your NSP bill automatically every month. If you're interested, check with your financial institution or call your customer business office.

Budget Helper smooths out your energy bills and makes them predictable, so you can plan for them. It helps you avoid high seasonal bills by spreading your payments over 12 months.

Getting on Budget Helper is simple. You can sign up on the cards we send periodically with your bills or you can call your customer business office.

If You're Having Trouble Paying Your Bill

If paying your NSP bill is extremely difficult, call your NSP customer business office right away. We want to work with you to make sure you receive every possible assistance.

HeatShare-This program, administered by the Salvation Army, helps those in need to stay warm in winter through cash grants. NSP and its customers, employees and shareholders support HeatShare with personal donations and annual grants to cover expenses. If you or someone you know needs help, please call your customer business office.

Community Church Crisis Fund-This community cooperative works to help customers retain their service when paying energy bills is difficult.

South Dakota Winter Rule-Under South Dakota's winter rule, from Nov. 1 to March 31, a residential customer is allowed an additional 30 days beyond the normal disconnection date to pay a past due bill. If you do get a disconnection notice, call your customer business office as soon as possible to make arrangements on your bill.

Med-Defer-If loss of power will aggravate an existing medical condition, customers can extend the date of disconnection for 30 days from the date

of a physician's certificate or notice from a public health or social official stating that a medical emergency exists.

Electric Prices

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regulates investor owned electric utilities—such as NSP—and determines the prices we charge our customers. A folder explaining the rates that apply to you accompanies this customer information booklet. We will send you a new rate schedule if these prices change.

Reading Your Meter

Normally, an NSP meter reader will read your meter each month, as close as possible to 30-day intervals. If the reader cannot read your meter, we will leave a form with instructions so you can read your own meter and call in your reading. If you choose not to read your meter, or if the reading reaches us too late, we will estimate your bill based on your past use.

By learning to read your meter, you can track how much electricity you're using and estimate your use.

You can easily read an electric meter. Simply read from left to right on the dials, and record the number that each dial pointer has **just passed**. If the pointer is between two numbers, record the smaller one.

HOW TO READ YOUR METER



On the dials above, the reading is 69251. We determine the amount of energy you have used by subtracting the previous reading from the current one.

An electric meter registers your energy use in kilowatt-hours (KWH).

NSP must read your meter at least once a year. If you wish, we can send you an 11-month supply of the meter-reading forms. Or, you can provide us with a key so we can enter and read your meter when you aren't home. We maintain tight security on all keys in our possession.

Meter Testing

NSP conducts a regular program of periodic meter testing, and you are entitled to one free meter test a year. Additional testing may require you to pay a deposit, which we will refund if we find the meter is in error.

To Start or Stop Service

You can start or stop service with a simple phone call to your local customer business office. NSP charges the first time service is established or when it's reestablished. There is only one charge for any combination of electric service that NSP connects or reconnects at one time.

Conserving Electricity

There are steps you can take to save energy and help reduce your electric bill. They include caulking and weatherstripping around doors and windows, lowering the setting on your thermostat in the winter and raising it in the summer, using cold or warm water for washing and installing energy-efficient lighting.



NSP has programs to help both residential and business customers cut back on energy use—rebates on energy efficient appliances, a discount for using

equipment to control your energy use, attic insulation loans, energy-saving lighting and free energy audits.

We invite you to call ASK NSP, a free phone information service with more than 200 messages on energy topics. For access to these messages, call toll-free 1-800-432-7677.

What To Do When The Lights Go Out

If your lights go out, first check with your neighbors or nearby businesses to see if they have electricity.

If you are the only one without power, the cause might be a blown fuse or circuit breaker, and you might be able to take care of the problem yourself. Keep extra fuses on hand. NSP will replace fuses and reset circuit breakers, but there is a charge for the service call.

If your entire neighborhood is without service, the problem is probably on NSP lines. Please let us know immediately by calling the NSP emergency number in your telephone directory. We will send a repair crew as soon as possible to find the problem and repair it.

Power outages are not frequent, but they do happen, and you can be ready for them with a supply of candles and matches and a flashlight. A camping light might come in handy.

Call ASK NSP and listen to message 201 for more information on coping with summer outages, or 204 for winter outages.

Remember to stay away from downed wires

NSP employees are on duty around the clock, seven days a week to keep your electricity on. Outages aren't usually lengthy. However, major storms can result in thousands of customers losing their service and hundreds of employees working to restore service.

Repair work is often difficult and must be done under adverse field conditions. It also is very complex receiving literally thousands of telephone calls, sorting them, determining probable causes and dispatching crews. After a severe storm, it might take days to restore service.

If it appears we won't be able to restore your service for an extended time, here are some ways you can help:

- ▼ Don't open refrigerators or freezers more often than necessary.
- ▼ Wrap refrigerators and freezers in heavy blankets to delay thawing.



- ▼ Turn off or unplug major appliances to help avoid a sudden surge of power when service is restored.
- ▼ Unplug appliances with transistors.
- ▼ Leave a light on so you'll know when your power is restored.
- ▼ **If you see a downed electric wire, stay away from it and call NSP to let us know where it is.** It will help us restore your electricity more quickly.

Working Safely Around Power Lines

Don't take power lines for granted. Be very careful when you work near or around them. Never allow a ladder, antenna, aluminum siding, rain gutters or other objects to touch electric wires. Don't ever try to remove dead branches or pull trees or limbs away from power lines. Be safe. Call NSP.

When you're digging, call first to find out exactly where underground electric lines are located. Striking or severing lines with a shovel or other tool is dangerous. It could injure or even kill you. You also could interrupt service to your home. Damages caused by customers who do not call before digging are paid for by the customer.

In South Dakota, you can call one central number to locate underground utility lines: 1-800-781-7474.

Additional Important Information for NSP Customers

- ▼ Your NSP Bill
- ▼ Deposit and Guarantee Requirements
- ▼ City Taxes
- ▼ Late Payment Charge
- ▼ Returned Check Charge
- ▼ Collection and Notice Procedures and Reconnect Charge
- ▼ Notices of Disconnection
- ▼ Disputed Bills
- ▼ Emergencies, Inquiries and Complaints

Each bill contains the following information:

1. Your personal 10-digit account number.
2. Date bill is due.
3. Amount due.
4. The NSP telephone number and mailing address if you have questions about your bill.
5. Kind of service.
6. Amount of previous month's balance.
7. Amount paid on previous month's balance.
8. Balance as of current billing date.
9. The cost of NSP electricity you used this month.
10. Amount of other authorized charges, such as a HeatShare pledge.
11. The current bill plus any balance remaining from previous bills.
12. Location of special messages.
13. Comparison of energy use and weather.
14. Your meter number.
15. Present and previous meter-reading dates, number of days between the two dates and present and previous readings. Difference between the meter readings is the amount of electricity you used during the billing period.
16. The reason we were unable to obtain a meter reading and had to estimate the current reading.
17. When we must estimate bills, we base them on past use.

18. Fixed monthly fee to help pay the cost of bringing service to you.
19. Amount of electricity you used.
20. The price we charge per kilowatt-hour (KWH).
21. State and city taxes (where applicable).
22. Amount of current electric bill.
23. The approximate date we plan to read your meter.
24. Explanation of NSP's late payment charge.
25. The date we prepared your bill.

Deposit and Guarantee Requirements



NSP might request a deposit from:

1. A former customer whose service we disconnected for non-payment in the last year of service.
2. A customer to whom NSP has mailed or delivered three or more disconnection notices in the last year of service.
3. A customer who has a delinquent NSP account that is not in dispute.
4. A new customer with unknown credit history.

If NSP requires a customer deposit, it shall not exceed one sixth of the estimated annual bill. NSP will give the customer a receipt for the deposit.

Interest earned on the deposit, from the date of deposit, is applied to the customer's account in December of each year. A customer can establish satisfactory credit after 12 consecutive months of satisfactory payments. At that time, NSP will refund the deposit, plus accrued interest. If service is terminated before credit is established, NSP will apply the deposit, plus interest, to the final bill and will refund any balance.

NSP may accept a written guarantee of payment from another party in place of a deposit.

Residential and Commercial customers may choose an early payment schedule in lieu of a deposit. Under this schedule, the customer pays each monthly bill within a maximum of five working days from the date of receipt. NSP may require customers to stay on this schedule until they establish satisfactory payment records. Upon evidence of unsatisfactory credit, the method of establishing credit becomes the company's choice.

City Taxes

Certain cities in NSP's service area require a city tax. It is a percentage of your monthly bill and we show it as a separate item. NSP collects the tax and pays it to the city.

Late Payment Charge

NSP assesses a late payment charge if we do not receive full payment by the date due. We will charge 1 percent of the unpaid portion and add the charge to the next month's bill.

Returned Check Charge

NSP charges for any payment by check or draft not honored or returned by a financial institution.



Collection and Notice Procedures and Reconnect Charge

The current portion of your utility bill is due no later than the payment date shown on the bill. If the amount due is not paid by the next billing date, your next bill could contain a late payment charge and an

Important Notice. It would advise you that your account is past due and that NSP may shut off your utility service unless the total amount of the bill is paid by the due date shown on the bill. If you have received an **Important Notice** and do not make a payment or arrangements for payment by the due date, we will send a **Disconnection Notice**. This is the final notice NSP sends before disconnecting your service for nonpayment. If it becomes necessary to disconnect your service for nonpayment, there is a reconnection charge.

Disconnection Notice

If you receive a **Disconnection Notice**, to avoid the possibility of having your service shut off, you must pay it before the date it is due or make satisfactory arrangements with NSP. You have the right to pay a delinquent bill at any time prior to disconnection. The due date of a **Disconnection Notice** is 10 working days after NSP mails it to you.

NSP may waive the bill's due date and **Disconnection Notice** in cases of fraud or illegal use, or when there are clear indications that the customer is preparing to move. Then the bill becomes due and payable immediately.

The due date of a **Disconnection Notice** takes priority and should not be

ignored, even if a bill is received later. If paying by mail, use the return envelope we provide for that purpose and include the top portion of the notice and your check or money order. Mail it at least four days before the due date. We prefer to have you pay **Disconnection Notice** bills by dropping off your payment at one of our customer business offices.

Conditions Necessary for Disconnection of Service:

The following conditions must also occur before disconnection:

- ▼ NSP will disconnect only the class of service that is delinquent.
- ▼ Written notice will note the customer's right to appeal and where to appeal.
- ▼ The customer is unwilling to enter into a reasonable arrangement to pay a delinquent account.
- ▼ No bona fide or just dispute exists concerning the account. A dispute shall not be defined as bona fide and just if a customer does not pay the undisputed portion of the account and does not, after notice of the right to do so, contact the PUC with the unresolved dispute within 10 working days after the disconnection notice transmittal date.

Notices of Disconnection

Disconnection notices contain the date on or after which disconnection will occur, the reason for disconnection, how to avoid disconnection, a notice of the customer's right to appeal to the PUC, and if the reason for disconnection is nonpayment of bills, a notice that credit arrangements can be made. NSP prints disconnection notices on customer bills.

Disconnection Procedures

NSP will not disconnect service on any Friday, Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, or at any time when its business offices or the South Dakota PUC offices are not open.

If there is a landlord/tenant relationship and the meter is in the landlord's name, NSP will offer the tenant the opportunity to apply for service prior to disconnection. NSP will not attempt to recover payment from a tenant for bills or charges the landlord owes, nor will it condition service to a tenant on the basis of bills or charges the landlord owes.

NSP will not disconnect service between Nov. 1 and March 31 without adding another 30 days to the normal disconnection date. We will notify the customer, before the normal disconnection date, of the additional 30 days.

Reasons for Disconnection or Refusal of Service

NSP is reluctant to disconnect or refuse service, but there are situations that require it. They include:

1. Nonpayment of a delinquent account.
2. Failure to meet NSP credit requirements or to pay a deposit.
3. Failure to make proper application for service.
4. Failure to allow NSP access to its equipment located on the customer's premises for inspection, meter reading, maintenance or replacement of equipment.
5. Violation of NSP rules on file with the PUC. These rules are available for inspection at NSP's Sioux Falls office and the PUC office in Pierre.
6. Breach of service contract or failure to furnish information or equipment necessary to obtain service.
7. Unauthorized diversion of utility service and unauthorized use of, or tampering with, NSP service equipment.
8. A condition hazardous to the customer, to other NSP customers, to NSP's equipment or to the public.

You Cannot be Refused Service:

1. Because of indebtedness to another utility or a debt for another class of service.
2. For nonpayment of a bill for which you are a guarantor.

3. Because the former occupant was delinquent.
4. If you are living with someone indebted to the utility, in an attempt to force payment of that indebtedness, except in the same "indebted household" situation.

You Cannot be Disconnected For:

1. Failure to pay for merchandise or special services purchased from NSP.
2. Failure to pay for a different class of service received at a different location.

Disputed Bills

A dispute concerning your bill or service might occur. If it does, you should immediately call the NSP customer business office. In most cases, we can resolve the dispute at that time. If not, NSP will investigate the dispute, tell you what we discover and try to reach a solution. If we cannot resolve the dispute, NSP will not disconnect your service if you pay the undisputed portion of the bill and appeal to the PUC for resolution of the dispute within 10 working days after we send you a disconnection notice.

Home

Emergencies, Inquiries and Complaints

To report an emergency or make an inquiry or complaint to NSP, please call the appropriate number listed below. Normal office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Sioux Falls Customer Business Office
339-8300

Sioux Falls Emergency/Lights Out
339-8220

Rural South Dakota Toll Free
1-800-952-3972

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission regulates NSP. The Commission is available for mediation and appeal.

**South Dakota Public
Utilities Commission**

500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501-5070
(605) 773-3201 or 1-800-332-1782



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