

From: Martha Trees [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2026 12:07 PM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Public Comment: Docket EL26-003 - Black Hills Energy Rate Increase

Martha A Trees
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Hot Springs, SD 57747
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Email: [REDACTED]

September 9, 2026

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501-5070

RE: Formal Customer Objection to Proposed Rate Increases – Docket EL26-003
Utility Company: Black Hills Power, Inc. dba Black Hills Energy

Dear Public Utilities Commissioners,

I am writing as a resident of Hot Springs, South Dakota, to register my formal objection to the requested rate hikes submitted by Black Hills Energy under Docket EL26-003.

Black Hills Energy holds a strict electric monopoly in my area. As a captive customer, I have no option to choose another provider, leaving me entirely dependent on the Commission to protect my household from unjust and unreasonable utility costs.

I am particularly concerned by the compounding nature of Black Hills Energy's concurrent financial demands. The combination of the general base rate increase (filed February 2026) and the phase-in natural gas plant surcharge for the Lange II facility (filed August 2026) forces an astronomical, cumulative 45% increase on the average residential bill. For fixed-income individuals, families, and seniors in our community, an increase from roughly \$98.96 to \$143.70 per month is unsustainable.

Furthermore, a significant portion of my bill consists of fixed delivery charges. On months when my household successfully reduces energy consumption, the delivery and customer fees frequently exceed the actual cost of the energy used. It feels highly unfair to be penalized with exorbitant infrastructure charges that decouple the utility's profits from our actual usage conservation efforts.

While I understand the utility's argument regarding infrastructure updates and wildfire mitigation, the burden of these multi-million-dollar capital investments should not be

balanced aggressively on the backs of everyday consumers—especially during periods of severe macroeconomic inflation.

I respectfully urge the Public Utilities Commission to rigorously audit Black Hills Energy's "proof of need" documents. Please demand strict accountability for past earnings, reject the full 45% cumulative increase, and protect vulnerable South Dakotans from paying more for basic delivery infrastructure than the power itself.

Thank you for your time, transparency, and consideration of my public comment.

Sincerely,

Martha A Trees