

TITLE 17 PUBLIC UTILITIES AND UTILITY SERVICES
CHAPTER 10 GAS SERVICES
PART 650 SERVICE STANDARDS FOR GAS UTILITIES

17.10.650.1 ISSUING AGENCY: New Mexico Public Regulation Commission.
[17.10.650.1 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.1 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.2 SCOPE: 17.10.650 NMAC shall apply to any gas utility operating within the state of New Mexico under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico public regulation commission.
[17.10.650.2 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.2 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Section 8-8-15 NMSA 1978.
[17.10.650.3 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.3 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.4 DURATION: Permanent.
[17.10.650.4 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.4 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.5 EFFECTIVE DATE: November 10, 2020 unless a later date is cited at the end of a section.
[17.10.650.5 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.5 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.6 OBJECTIVE:

A. Intentions: 17.10.650 NMAC is intended to promote safe and adequate service to the public, to provide standards for uniform and reasonable practices by utilities, and to establish a basis for determining the reasonableness of such demands as may be made by the public upon the utilities.

B. Modifications: If unreasonable hardship to a utility or to a customer results from the application of any provision herein prescribed, application may be made to the commission for the modification of the provision or for temporary or permanent exemption from its requirements.

C. Rule revisions: 17.10.650 NMAC establishes standards to be followed by every gas utility in providing service to customers who are not residential customers as defined in Subsection J of 17.5.410.7 NMAC and in providing service to residential customers except to the extent inconsistent with 17.5.410 NMAC provided, however, that any electric utility may file rules inconsistent with the provisions established herein when permitted by the commission under the provisions of Subsection A of 17.9.560.9 NMAC, or, for residential customers, to conform with 17.5.410 NMAC. When so filed and approved by the commission such utility rules shall take precedence over the provisions established herein.

D. Adoption: The adoption of 17.10.650 NMAC shall not preclude the commission from altering or amending it or from making such modifications with respect to its application as may be found necessary to meet exceptional conditions.

E. Duties: These regulations shall not relieve any utility from its duties under the laws of this state.
[17.10.650.6 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.6 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.7 DEFINITIONS: When used in 17.10.650 NMAC unless otherwise specified the following definitions will apply:

A. "BTU means" British thermal unit;

B. "check flow means" a flow between twenty percent and fifty percent of the meter's rated capacity;

C. "commission means" the New Mexico public regulation commission;

D. "cubic foot of gas shall have the following meanings":

(1) when gas is supplied and metered to customers at the pressure (as defined in Subsection B of 17.10.650.14 NMAC) normally used for domestic customers' appliances and no other basis of measurement is provided for by special contract or in the utility's rules on file with the commission, a cubic foot of gas shall be that quantity of gas which at the temperature and pressure existing in the meter occupies one cubic foot;

(2) when gas is supplied to customers at other than the pressure in Paragraph (1) above, the utility shall specify in its rules or special contract the base for measurement of a cubic foot of gas (see Paragraph (2)

of Subsection C of 17.10.650.9 NMAC); unless otherwise stated a cubic foot of gas shall be that quantity of gas which at temperature of 60 degrees F. and a pressure of 14.73 psia occupies one cubic foot; and

(3) the standard cubic foot of gas for testing the gas itself for heating value shall be that quantity of gas saturated with water vapor which at a temperature of 60 degrees F. and a pressure of 30 inches of mercury occupies one cubic foot; (temperature of mercury = 60 degrees F.; acceleration due to gravity = 32.17 ft. per second; density = 13.595 grams per cubic centimeter;) other bases may be used by the utility and customer when provided for by special contract;

E. “customer means” any person, firm, association, corporation, or any agency of the federal, state, or local government being supplied with and responsible for payment for gas service by a gas utility;

F. “delivery point means” that point at which the system of the seller connects into the system of the buyer regardless of the location of the meter unless otherwise specified by written contract;

G. “filed rule means” rules and regulations filed by a utility with the commission in compliance with 17.1.210 NMAC which have been made effective either through commission approval thereof or by operation of law;

H. “final notice means” personal communication with a non-residential customer by telephone, hand delivery or other electronic communications at least two days prior to the specific date of discontinuance of service or if by mail, at least four days prior to the specific date of discontinuance of service, excluding Sundays and holidays observed by the utility, to: remind the non-residential customer of the pending date of discontinuance of service.

I. “full rated flow means” a flow of one hundred percent of the rated capacity of a meter;

J. “gas plant means” all facilities owned by a gas utility for the production, storage, transmission, and distribution of gas;

K. “LP-gas means” liquefied petroleum gas;

L. “main means” a gas pipe owned, operated, or maintained by a utility which is used for the transmission or distribution of gas, but does not include "service pipe;"

M. “meter, without other qualification, means” any device or instrument which a utility uses to measure a quantity of gas;

N. “premises means” a piece of land or real estate, including buildings and other appurtenances thereon;

O. “psia means” pounds per square inch, absolute;

P. “psig means” pounds per square inch, gauge;

Q. “service pipe means” the pipe that runs between a main or a transmission line and a customer's property line;

R. “special contract means” a written agreement between a utility and a customer to establish a rate or conditions of utility service, or both, that due to size or load characteristics, or both, differ from those established for general classes of service;

S. “system emergency means” an unplanned situation in which a utility's system or a segment of its system is in imminent danger of failure and implementation of normal curtailment or interruption procedures would not rectify the condition;

T. “therm means” the unit of heat that is equal to 100,000 British thermal units;

U. “utility and gas utility” shall have the meaning given for "public utility" or "utility" in the New Mexico Public Utility Act, Section 62-3-3 NMSA 1978;

V. “W.C. means” water column;

W. “yard line means” the pipe that runs across a customer's property from the property line to the point of consumption;

X. “final notice means” personal communication with a non-residential customer by telephone, hand delivery or other electronic communications at least two days prior to the specific date of discontinuance of service or if by mail, at least four days prior to the specific date of discontinuance of service, excluding Sundays and holidays observed by the utility, to: remind the non-residential customer of the pending date of discontinuance of service.

[17.10.650.7 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.7 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.8 [RESERVED]

[17.10.650.8 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.8 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.9 RECORDS AND REPORTS:

A. Location of records: Records shall be located as provided in Section 62-6-17 NMSA 1978.

B. Retention of records: Records shall be retained as provided in 17.3.310 NMAC.

C. Data to be filed with the commission: The utility shall maintain the following documents and information on a current basis and upon commission request, the utility shall provide the information to the commission within 10 working days:

(1) a statement of the standard heating value in BTU's per cubic foot of the gas supplied by the utility in each district, division, or community served;

(2) a statement indicating the volumetric measurement base to which all sales of gas at other than standard delivery pressure except where made under special contract are corrected (see Paragraph (2) of Subsection K of 17.10.650 NMAC and Subsection B of 17.10.650.14 NMAC);

(3) a map or series of maps showing the utility's operating area (the map shall be revised annually unless such revision is unnecessary, in which event the utility shall notify the commission that the map on file is current); the map should show:

- (a) gas production plant,
- (b) principal storage holders,
- (c) principal transmission mains by size,
- (d) system metering (supply) points,
- (e) state boundary crossings,
- (f) franchise area, and
- (g) names of all incorporated communities served;

(4) the name, title, address, and telephone number of the person who should be contacted in connection with:

- (a) general management duties,
- (b) customer relations (complaints),
- (c) engineering operations,
- (d) meter tests and repairs, and
- (e) emergencies during non-office hours;

(5) notice of accidents, explosions, and leaks:

(a) prompt notice of fatal accidents shall be given to the commission by telephone or telegraph,

(b) prompt notice of any explosion involving any of the utility's system or products shall be given to the commission by telephone or telegraph,

(c) the utility shall maintain information regarding leaks that occur in a transmission or distribution line owned by the company or in a customer's line for at least three years from the date the leak is discovered by the utility, and

(d) the utility shall file a report with the commission within 48 hours after exercising its option to discontinue service under Paragraph (1) of Subsection F of 17.10.650.11 NMAC;

(6) reports of heating value:

(a) each utility shall file reports showing the results of its determinations of the heating value of the gas made in accordance with Subsection F of 17.10.650.14 NMAC,

(b) when the utility obtains its gas supply from another utility which is required to supply BTU reports to the commission under this section, copies of the supplier's reports may be submitted in lieu of compliance with the other requirements of this section, and

(c) these reports shall be provided to the commission within 10 working days of a request for such a report by the commission;

(7) the location at which the utility keeps the various classes of records required by these rules; and

(8) a report detailing the results of all meters (excluding new meters and all orifice meters) tested during the year showing:

- (a) total number of meters tested;
- (b) percentage breakdown of reasons for tests;
- (c) number of meters found to be more than two percent fast; and
- (d) number of meters found to be more than two percent slow.

[17.10.650.9 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.9 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.10 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

A. Disposition of gas:

(1) Unless otherwise authorized by the commission all gas sold by a utility shall be on the basis of meter measurement except where the usage is constant and the consumption may be readily computed.

(2) Wherever practicable and exclusive of field usages, consumption of gas within the utility itself or by administrative units associated with it shall be metered.

B. Meter reading sheets, cards, or records: The meter reading sheets, cards, or records from which the customer's bills are prepared shall show:

- (1) customer's name, address, and rate schedule;
- (2) identification number or description of the meter(s);
- (3) meter readings;
- (4) if the reading has been estimated; and
- (5) any applicable multiplier or constant.

C. Meter reading interval: Meters shall be read monthly except that authority may be obtained from the commission for reading the meters at other than monthly intervals. Commission approval need not be obtained where deviation from monthly meter reading schedules occurs because of changes in meter reading routes. As nearly as practicable utilities shall avoid sending a customer two successive estimated bills.

D. Condition of meter: No meter shall be installed which is mechanically defective, has an erroneous correction factor, or has not been tested and adjusted if necessary in accordance with Subsection B of 17.10.650.13 NMAC. However, meters being transferred from one service location to another need not be so tested if the time period prescribed in Paragraph (5) of Subsection A of 17.10.650.13 NMAC has not yet expired unless the utility has reasonable grounds for believing that some particular meter may be registering improperly. The capacity of the meter and the index mechanism should be consistent with the gas requirements of the customer.

E. Prepayment meters: Prepayment meters shall not be geared or set so as to result in the charge of a rate or amount higher than would be paid if a standard meter were used except under such special rate schedule as may be filed under 17.1.210 NMAC.

F. Temporary service: When the utility renders temporary service to a customer it may require that the customer bear all the costs of installing and removing the service in excess of any salvage realized.

G. Extension plan: Each utility shall develop a plan acceptable to the commission for the installation of extensions of mains and service lines where such facilities are in excess of those included in the regular rates for service and for which the customer shall be required to pay all or part of the cost. This plan must be related to the investment that can be made prudently for the probable revenue and expenses to be incurred.

[17.10.650.10 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.10 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.11 CUSTOMER RELATIONS:

A. Customer information: Each utility shall:

(1) maintain up-to-date maps, plans, or records of its entire transmission and distribution systems with such other information as may be necessary to enable the utility to advise prospective customers and others entitled to the information as to the facilities for serving any locality;

(2) assist the customer or prospective customer in selecting the most economical rate schedule appropriate for their class of service;

(3) notify customers affected by a change in rates or schedule classification;

(4) post a notice in a conspicuous place in each office of the utility where applications for service are received informing the public that copies of the rate schedules and rules relating to the service of the utility as filed with the commission are available for inspection;

(5) upon request inform its customers as to the method of reading meters; and

(6) furnish such additional information as the customer may reasonably request.

B. Customer deposits: Each utility may require from any customer or prospective customer a deposit intended to guarantee payment of bills for service.

(1) A utility may not require a security deposit or other guarantee of payment as a condition of new or continued service to a customer except in the case of service:

(a) to a customer that has not previously had utility service with the utility and that has not established an acceptable credit rating;

(b) to a customer that has on three or more occasions, within a 12-month period, received a final notice;

- (c) as a condition for reconnection of service following discontinuance of service by the utility; or
- (d) to a customer that in an unauthorized manner has interfered with or diverted the service of the utility situated on or about or delivered to the customer's premises.
- (2) In determining whether a customer who has not previously had utility service with the utility has an acceptable credit rating, a utility shall consider the following:
 - (a) documentation that the customer has an adequate credit reference from a utility where the customer had prior utility service;
 - (b) documentation obtained by the utility from a commercial credit source; or
 - (c) any other reasonable documentation.
- (3) A utility may give special consideration to a prospective or existing customer in determining if payment by an installment agreements is appropriate.
- (4) If a utility requires a deposit, it shall have on file with the commission an approved rule setting forth the minimum and maximum deposit that may reasonably be required by the utility in cases involving all types of service. That rule shall conform to the following provisions:
 - (a) a deposit for a customer shall not exceed an amount equivalent to one-sixth of that non-residential customer's estimated annual billings; a utility shall base its deposit criteria upon the most recent available prior 12-month corresponding period at the same service location; or, if there is not a comparable period of service at the same service location, the deposit shall be based upon consumption of similar units in the same area;
 - (b) simple interest on deposits at a rate not less than the rate required by Section 62-13-13 NMSA 1978 shall accrue annually to the customer's credit for the time the deposit is held by the utility; by January 15 of each year the commission shall post on its website the minimum rate to be paid on any deposits required of a customer by any public utility; the deposit shall cease to draw interest on the date it is returned, on the date service is terminated or on the date the refund is sent to the customer's last known address.
- (5) Each customer that posts a security deposit shall receive in writing at the time of tender of deposit or with the first bill a receipt as evidence thereof. A utility shall provide the means whereby a depositor may establish its claim if its receipt is lost. The receipt shall contain the following minimum information:
 - (a) name of customer;
 - (b) date of payment;
 - (c) amount of payment; and
 - (d) statement of the terms and conditions governing the payment, retention, interest and return of deposits.
- (6) Refunds: Any non-residential customer that has not received a final notice for the 12-month period from the date of deposit or guarantee for the 12-month period from the date of deposit or guarantee shall promptly receive a credit or refund in the amount of the deposit together with accrued interest due or shall be permitted to terminate any guarantee. If the amount of the deposit exceeds the amount of the current bill, the customer may request a refund in the amount of the excess if such excess exceeds \$25.00. If the customer fails to qualify for a refund of the deposit on the one year anniversary date of the deposit, that account shall be reviewed at least annually, and the amount of the deposit shall be credited if the customer has not received a final notice during the preceding 12 months. A customer may request a refund at any time after 12- months of payment history, which refund shall promptly be paid if the customer has not received a final notice during the prior 12-month period or a utility may pay such refund in the absence of a request within a reasonable period of time.
- (7) Each utility shall maintain records to show:
 - (a) the name and address of each depositor;
 - (b) the amount and the date of the deposit; and
 - (c) each transaction concerning the deposit.
- (8) A record of each unclaimed deposit shall be maintained for at least three years during which time the utility shall mail a check or a letter to the customer at its last known address in an effort to return the deposit.
- (9) Unclaimed deposits together with accrued interest shall be credited to the appropriate account and shall be handled as required by the Uniform Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act of the state of New Mexico.

C. Customer bill forms: The utility shall bill each customer as promptly as possible following the reading of their meter. The bill shall show:

- (1) the reading of the meter at the end of the period for which the bill is rendered;
- (2) the nominal date on which the meter was read;

- (3) the number and kind of units metered;
- (4) the applicable rate schedule or identification of the applicable rate schedule;
- (5) the gross or net amount of the bill;
- (6) the date by which the customer must pay the bill in order to benefit from any discount or to avoid any penalty;
- (7) a distinct marking to identify an estimated bill;
- (8) any conversions from meter reading units to billing units from recording or other devices or any other factors such as fuel clause adjustments, power factor adjustments, applicable primary discounts for a customer-owned transformer, or billing unit additions for secondary metering of primary services used in determining the bill; and
- (9) a multiplier constant when used to determine billing, whenever applicable;
- (10) In lieu of information required by Paragraphs (4), (8), and (9) of this subsection, the utility may incorporate on the bill form a statement advising the customer that any additional information desired relative to the application of the rate schedule can be obtained by contacting one of the utility's offices.

D. Customer records: The utility shall retain records as may be necessary to effect compliance with 17.3.310 NMAC and with Subsection E of 17.10.650.11 NMAC, and Subsections D and E of 17.10.650.13 NMAC, and shall show, where applicable, the following:

- (1) MCF meter reading;
- (2) MCF consumption;
- (3) demand charges;
- (4) penalties; and
- (5) total amount of bill.

E. Adjustment of bills: Bills which are incorrect due to meter or billing errors are to be adjusted as follows.

(1) **Fast meters:** Whenever a meter in service is tested and found to have over-registered more than two percent, the utility shall recalculate the bills for service for the period as determined below.

(a) The bills for service shall be recalculated from the time the error first developed or occurred if that time can be determined.

(b) If the time the error first developed or occurred cannot be determined, it shall be assumed that the over-registration existed for a period equal to one-half the time since the meter was last tested, not to exceed six months, and the bills for service shall be recalculated for that period.

(c) If the recalculated bills indicate that a refund is due an existing customer or a person no longer a customer of the utility, the full amount of the calculated difference between the amount paid and the recalculated amount shall be refunded. The utility shall make refunds to the existing customer and to the next previous customer served through the same meter if the period of refund determined in accordance with this section extends into the period when the said next previous customer was served through the same meter. The refund to an existing customer may be in cash or as a credit on their bill if a refund is due a person no longer a customer of the utility, a notice shall be mailed to the last known address, and the utility shall upon request made within three months thereafter refund the amount due.

(2) **Non-registering meters:** Whenever a meter in service is found not to register the utility may render an estimated bill.

(3) **Slow meters:** Whenever a meter is found to be more than two percent slow the utility may bill the customer for one-half of the undercharge caused by the error indicated by the test for a period of 12 months unless the meter has been tested within the twelve-month period, in which event the customer may be billed for the undercharge caused by the error indicated by the test for the period since the meter was last tested. No back-billing will be sanctioned if the customer has called to the company's attention their doubts as to the meter's accuracy and the company has failed to check it within a reasonable time.

(4) Billing adjustments due to fast or slow meters shall be calculated on the basis that the meter should be one hundred percent accurate. For the purpose of billing adjustments the meter error shall be one-half of the algebraic sum of the error at full-rated flow plus the error at check flow.

(5) When a customer has been overcharged as a result of incorrect reading of the meter, incorrect application of the rate schedule, incorrect connection of the meter, or other similar reasons, the amount of the overcharge shall be adjusted, refunded, or credited to the customer. The utility will assist the customer in selecting the rate schedule under which the customer is eligible to be billed. However, the utility will not be held responsible to refund any overcharge caused by the customer's failure to select the appropriate rate schedule or to notify the utility of a change in their operations.

(6) When a customer has been undercharged as a result of an incorrect meter reading, incorrect application of the rate schedule, or other similar reasons, the amount of the undercharge may be billed to the customer.

(7) A utility and its special contract customers may make their own agreements with respect to adjustments for errors in measurement.

F. Reasons for denying or discontinuing service: Service may be denied or discontinued for any of the reasons listed below unless prohibited under Paragraph (3) of Subsection G of 17.10.650.11 NMAC. Unless otherwise stated the customer shall be allowed a reasonable time in which to comply with the rule before service is discontinued, except as provided in Paragraphs (1), (2), (3), and (4) of this subsection:

(1) without notice in the event of a condition determined by the utility to be hazardous;
(2) without notice in the event of customer use of equipment in such manner as to adversely affect the utility's equipment or the utility's service to others;

(3) without notice in the event of customer's tampering with, damaging, or deliberately destroying the equipment furnished and owned by the utility;

(4) without notice in the event of unauthorized use;

(5) for violation of, or non-compliance with, the utility's rules on file with and approved by the commission;

(6) for failure of the customer to fulfill its contractual obligations for service or facilities subject to the regulation by the commission;

(7) for failure of the customer to permit the utility reasonable access to equipment;

(8) for non-payment of bill, provided the utility has given the customer final notice;

(9) for failure of the customer to provide the utility with a deposit as authorized by Subsection B of 17.10.650.11 NMAC, except that a utility may not discontinue service to an existing customer solely for failure to pay a deposit;

(10) for failure of the customer to furnish such service, equipment, permits, certificates, or rights-of-way as shall have been specified by the utility as a condition to obtaining service, or in the event such equipment or permissions are withdrawn or terminated; or

(11) for failure to pay for service of the same class at a previous metering point or points.

G. Reasons insufficient for denying or discontinuing service:

(1) The following shall not constitute sufficient cause for denial of or discontinuance of service to a present customer:

(a) failure to pay for merchandise purchased from the utility;

(b) failure to pay for a different type or class of public utility service;

(c) failure to pay the bill of another customer as guarantor thereof; or

(d) failure to pay for concurrent service of whatever class at a different metering point.

(2) The following shall not constitute sufficient cause for denying service to a prospective customer:

(a) delinquency in payment for service by a previous occupant unless the previous occupant still resides at the premises;

(b) failure to pay for merchandise purchased from the utility; or

(c) failure to pay the bill of another customer as guarantor thereof.

(3) Irrespective of any conflict with 17.5.410 NMAC, the following rules regarding disconnection of residential utility service may be implemented on a temporary basis by order of the commission for a period of time, up to and including, the duration of any emergency executive order issued by the governor of New Mexico pertaining to a public health or other emergency condition under either the Public Health Emergency Response Act, Section 12-10A-1 NMSA 1978, and the All Hazards Emergency Management Act, Section 12-10-1 NMSA 1978:

(a) all utilities may be prohibited from discontinuing residential utility service for non-payment during the time period the emergency executive orders are in effect;

(b) any late fees on residential accounts that would be incurred during the time period of the effectiveness of the emergency executive orders may be required to be waived;

(c) utilities may be permitted to temporarily close in-person bill payment locations provided the utility provides notice to residential customers of such closures and identifies in such notice how payment made be made, including electronically or by mail. In the event of the closure of in-person bill payment locations, utilities shall be permitted to continue to collect credit card or bank fees in accordance with their own

commission approved and filed tariffs;

(d) medical certificates set to expire shall not expire for the duration of the effectiveness of any emergency executive order and may be automatically be extended for 90 days from the end of any emergency executive order; and

(e) irrespective of this rule, public utilities are not prohibited from disconnecting service to residential customers due to:

(i) an emergency;

(ii) safety;

(iii) a request to disconnect from the residential customer.

H. Material changes in character of service: If under the control of the utility and after adequate notice to customers, material changes in the character of gas service rendered shall be made only with the approval of the commission. Whenever required by any such change the utility shall make any necessary adjustments to the customers' appliances without charge and shall conduct such adjustment program with a minimum of inconvenience to customers.

I. Customer complaints: Complaints concerning the charges, practices, facilities, or service of the utility shall be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The utility shall maintain such records of customer complaints as will enable the utility to review and analyze its procedures and actions. The utility shall make such information available to the commission upon request.

[17.10.650.11 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.11 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.12 ENGINEERING:

A. Requirements for good engineering practices:

(1) 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.

(2) In certain instances the commission may authorize the use of pipe other than steel for low pressure transmission and distribution systems. In no case shall a utility deviate from the use of steel pipe without first obtaining authorization from the commission.

B. Acceptable standards: Unless otherwise specified by the commission the utility shall use the applicable provisions in the publications listed below as standards of accepted good practice for construction initiated and operations and testing procedures conducted after the effective date of Second Revised General Order No. 6, codified by 17.10.650 NMAC.

(1) American standard code for "gas transmission and distribution piping system," ASA B31.8-1968.

(2) National board of fire underwriters standard no. 59, July 1962, "the storage and handling of liquefied petroleum gases at utility gas plants".

(3) "Standard methods of gas testing," circular no. 48, national bureau of standards, 1916 (the applicable portions of the circular have been substantially reproduced in the American meter co. handbook E-4 covering the testing of positive displacement gas meters).

(4) "Testing large capacity rotary gas meters," research paper no. 1741, national bureau of standards journal of research, September 1946.

(5) "Standard method of test for caloric value of gaseous fuels by the waterflow calorimeter," American society for testing materials, standard D 900-55, 1955.

C. Acceptable references: The following publications have not been designated as standards but may be used as guides to acceptable practice.

(1) "Accuracy of the recording gas calorimeter when used with gases of high BTU content," by John H. Eiseman, national bureau of standards, and Elwin A. Potter, gas inspection bureau of the District of Columbia, AGA publication no. CEP-55-13.

(2) "Orifice metering of natural gas," report No. 3 of the AGA gas measurement committee.

D. Adequacy of supply: The production and storage capacity of the utility's plant supplemented by the gas supply regularly available from other sources must be sufficiently large to meet all reasonably expectable demands for firm service.

E. Inspection of gas plant: Each utility shall adopt a program of inspection of its gas plant in order to determine the necessity for replacement and repair. The frequency of various inspections shall be based on the utility's experience and accepted good practice. Each utility shall maintain sufficient records to give evidence of compliance with its inspection program.

17.10.650.13 INSPECTIONS AND TESTS:

A. Utility inspections and tests: Each utility shall make inspections and tests of meters and associated metering devices as follows:

(1) Pre-installation inspections and tests: Every meter and associated metering device shall be inspected and tested in the utility's meter shop before being placed in service, and the accuracy of each meter shall be within the tolerances permitted by Subsection B of 17.10.650.13 NMAC.

(2) As-found tests: All meters and associated metering devices shall be tested before they are adjusted or repaired, after they are removed from service, except when transferred from one service location to another without testing, as permitted by Subsection D of 17.10.650.10 NMAC. Excepted are those meters which are damaged beyond testing. Such tests shall be made before the meters and associated metering devices are adjusted, repaired, or retired. It will not be mandatory to test meters scheduled for retirement unless there is cause to suspect the accuracy of the meter.

(3) Leak tests: Repaired meters and meters that have been removed from service shall be leak tested prior to installation except when a meter is moved from one location to another without testing in cases permitted by Subsection D of 17.10.650.10 NMAC, unless the utility has reasonable grounds for believing that some particular meter may be leaking. New meters shall be leak tested, but testing may be conducted in accordance with a sampling method acceptable to the commission. Each meter tested shall be subjected to an internal pressure of at least 20" W.C. and checked for the presence of leaks by one of the following tests:

- (a) immersion test;
- (b) soap test; or
- (c) pressure drop test of a type acceptable to the commission.

(4) Request tests: Upon request by a customer the utility shall test the meter serving them. If the meter has been tested within the last 18 months or within a shorter applicable periodic testing interval specified in Paragraph (5) of Subsection A of 17.10.650.13 NMAC, the utility may charge the customer the applicable amount provided for in its filed rules, such charge to be refunded to the customer whenever the meter proves to be in excess of two percent in error.

(a) The customer shall be advised that the customer or their representative may be present when the meter is tested.

(b) A complete record of each test shall be kept on file by the utility.

(5) Periodic tests: Unless otherwise authorized by the commission each utility shall make periodic tests of meters, associated devices, and instruments to assure their accuracy. Such tests shall be scheduled within the calendar year or earlier when the interval is stated in years; or within the calendar month or earlier when the interval is stated in months. The basic periodic test interval shall not be longer than provided for in the following schedule. (Note: maintenance programs suggested by manufacturers of the following meters and devices should be followed carefully.)

- (a) Positive displacement meters.
 - (i) Up to 250 CF/hr. 10 yrs.
 - (ii) 250 to 1500 CF/hr. seven yrs.
 - (iii) 1500 to 3000 CF/hr. five yrs.
 - (iv) 3000 to 5000 CF/hr. two yrs.
 - (v) Over 5000 CF/hr. one yr.
- (b) Orifice meters six mos.
- (c) Base pressure correcting devices 24 mos.
- (d) Base volume correcting devices 24 mos.
- (e) Secondary standards.
 - (i) Test bottle, one cubic ft. 10 yrs.
 - (ii) Dead weight testers 10 yrs.
- (f) Working standards.
 - (i) Bell provers three yrs.
 - (ii) Rotary displacement test meters five yrs.
 - (iii) Flow provers five yrs.
 - (iv) Laboratory quality indicating pressure gauges six mos.

(6) The basic periodic test interval for positive displacement meters may be extended under the following circumstances:

- (a) The utility must submit a written application requesting such extension.
- (b) Such application must show the results of testing meters at the periodic test intervals for several years, and the test results must show that the meters are maintaining a high degree of accuracy.
- (c) The extended interval for meter tests shall be determined by the commission, and the utility shall report annually, or as may be required, the accuracy status of such meters during the extended interval.
- (d) Any authorized extension of the basic periodic test interval is subject to cancellation at any time; upon such cancellation the test interval shall be determined by the commission, but such interval shall not be less than the requirements of Paragraph (5) of this subsection.

B. Test procedures and accuracies: Meters and associated metering devices shall be tested at the points and adjusted to the tolerances prescribed below. The test of any unit of metering equipment shall consist of a comparison of its accuracy with the accuracy of a standard. The commission will use the applicable provisions of the standard listed in Subsection B of 17.10.650.12 NMAC as criteria of accepted good practice in testing meters.

- (1) Positive displacement meters.
 - (a) Accuracy at test points.
 - (i) Flow Adjusted to within.
 - (ii) Check flow one and one-half percent
 - (iii) Not less than full rated flow one and one-half percent
 - (b) Overall accuracy: The overall accuracy at check flow and the accuracy at not less than full rated flow shall agree within one percent.
- (2) Orifice meters: Accuracy at test points must be within two percent plus or minus.
- (3) Timing devices: All recording type meters and associated instruments which have a timing element that serves to record the time at which measurements take place must be adjusted so that the timing element is not in error more than plus or minus four minutes in 24 hours.
- (4) General:
 - (a) All meters and associated metering devices when tested shall be adjusted as closely as practicable to the condition of zero error.
 - (b) All tolerances are to be interpreted as maximum permissible variations from the condition of zero error. In making adjustments no advantages of the prescribed tolerance limits shall be taken.

C. Facilities and equipment for meter testing: Each utility shall maintain or designate a meter shop for the purpose of inspecting, testing, and repairing meters. The shop shall be open for inspection by authorized representatives of the commission at all reasonable times, and the facilities and equipment as well as the methods of measurement and testing employed shall be subject to the approval of the commission.

- (1) The area within the meter shop used for testing meters shall be designed so that the meters and meter testing equipment are protected from drafts and excessive changes in temperature. Meters to be tested shall be stored in such manner that the temperature of the meters is substantially the same as the temperature of the prover.
- (2) Working standards: Each utility shall own and maintain or have access to at least one approved bell type prover of adequate capacity, and all other equipment necessary to test meters shall be installed in the meter room.
 - (a) Means shall be provided to maintain the temperature of the liquid in the meter prover at substantially the same level as the ambient temperature in the prover room.
 - (b) The meter prover shall be maintained in good condition and correct adjustment so that it is capable of determining the accuracy of any service meter to within one half of one percent.
 - (c) Each utility which has meters too large for testing on a five cubic foot bell prover may use a properly calibrated test meter or a properly designed flow prover for testing the large meters.
- (3) Working standards must be checked periodically (see Paragraph (5) of Subsection A of 17.10.650.13 NMAC) by comparison with a secondary standard.
 - (a) Bell provers must be checked with a one cubic foot bottle which has been calibrated by the national bureau of standards or by the strapping method.
 - (b) Rotary displacement test meters must be checked with a bell prover of adequate capacity which has been checked as provided in Subparagraph (a) of this paragraph.
- (4) Extreme care must be exercised in the use and handling of standards to assure that their accuracy is not disturbed.
- (5) Each standard shall be accompanied at all times by a certificate or calibration card, duly signed and dated, on which are recorded the corrections required to compensate for errors found at the customary

test points at the time of the last previous test.

(6) Each utility must have such properly calibrated orifices as may be necessary to achieve the rates of flow required to test the meters on its system.

D. Records of meters and associated metering devices: Each utility shall maintain records of the following data, where applicable, for each meter and associated metering devices according to 17.3.310 NMAC:

(1) the complete identification--manufacturer, number, type, capacity, multiplier, constants, and pressure rating; and

(2) the dates of installation and removal from service together with the location.

E. Meter test records: Each utility shall maintain records of meter tests for the duration set forth in 17.3.310 NMAC. The records shall include the following:

(1) the date and reason for test;

(2) the reading of the meter before making any test;

(3) the accuracy "as found" at check and full rated flow;

(4) the accuracy "as left" at check and full rated flow; and

(5) in the event the test of the meter is made by using a standard meter or prover, the

utility shall retain all data taken at the time of the test in sufficiently complete forms to permit convenient checking of the test methods and calculations.

[17.10.650.13 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.13 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.14 STANDARDS OF QUALITY SERVICE:

A. Purity requirements: All gas supplied to customers shall be substantially free from impurities which may cause corrosion of mains or piping or form corrosive or harmful fumes when burned in a properly designed and adjusted burner.

B. Pressure limits: The standard pressure of gas supplied by any gas utility to domestic or commercial customers as measured on the customer's side of any such customer's meter shall not be less than four inches nor more than 14 inches of water pressure. In the case of customers who require higher pressure than the standard established for domestic and commercial service, the utility may supply gas at the desired pressure, and the volume of such gas shall be computed on the basis of a filed rule or special contract covering gas supplied to customers at other than standard pressure. (See Paragraph (2) of Subsection K of 17.10.650.7 NMAC).

C. Pressure surveys and records:

(1) Each utility shall make a sufficient number of pressure measurements on its mains and at the customer's meter so that it will have substantially accurate knowledge of the pressure in the low, intermediate, and high pressure system in each district, division, or community served by its distribution mains.

(2) All pressure records obtained under this section shall be retained in accordance with 17.3.310 NMAC and shall be available for inspection by the commission's representatives. Notations on each record shall indicate the following:

(a) the location where the pressure check was made, and

(b) the time and date of the check.

D. Standards for pressure measurements:

(1) Secondary standards: Each utility shall own or have access to a dead weight tester, which must be maintained in an accurate condition.

(2) Working standards: Each utility must own or have access to water manometers, mercury manometers, laboratory quality indicating pressure gauges, and field type dead weight pressure gauges as necessary for the proper testing of the indicating and recording pressure gauges used in determining the pressure on the utility's system.

(3) Working standards must be checked periodically (see Paragraph (3) of Subsection C of 17.10.650.13 NMAC) by comparison with a secondary standard.

E. Heating value:

(1) Manufactured and mixed gas: The average heating value on any one day of manufactured gas and mixed gas including liquefied petroleum gas mixed with air but excluding natural gas when mixed with manufactured or liquefied petroleum gas for peak shaving or emergency purposes shall not exceed or fall below the standard heating value specified by the utility (see Paragraph (1) of Subsection C of 17.10.650.9 NMAC) by more than five percent.

(2) Natural and liquefied petroleum gas: The heating value of natural gas and undiluted, commercially pure liquefied petroleum gas as determined in accordance with Subsection F of 17.10.650.14 NMAC shall not exceed or fall below the standard heating value (see Paragraph (1) of Subsection C of 17.10.650.9 NMAC)

by more than five percent.

(3) Adjustment of customers' appliances: Necessary adjustments of customers' appliances must be made by the utility without charge whenever the monthly average heating value of manufactured or mixed gas or natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas sold subject to thermal adjustment is more than five percent above or below the standard heating value for two successive months or whenever the heating value of natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas not sold subject to thermal adjustment is shown by two successive tests made in accordance with Paragraph (3) of Subsection F of 17.10.650.14 NMAC to be more than five percent above or below the standard heating value.

F. Heating value determination and records:

(1) Calorimeters used for the determination of the heating value of the gas sold shall be of a type acceptable to the commission.

(a) The calorimetric equipment shall be installed in a suitably located testing station acceptable to the commission and subject to its inspection.

(b) The accuracy of all calorimeters as well as the method of making heating value tests shall be acceptable to the commission. Recording calorimeters shall be tested with a standard gas at least once a year.

(c) Heating value test records shall be preserved in accordance with 17.3.310 NMAC.

(2) The utility shall determine the heating value of manufactured and mixed gas at least once daily and shall make the test during the period of the highest daily peak demands.

(3) Except for gas sold subject to thermal adjustment (to which the provisions of (2) above shall be applicable), the utility shall determine the heating value of natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas at least quarterly, provided that whenever any such quarterly test or subsequent test provided for herein indicates a heating value which is above or below the standard heating value by more than five percent, another determination of the heating value shall be made no more than 30 days thereafter.

(4) Whenever a special contract between a utility and a customer makes specific provisions for the time and manner of determination of the heating value of the gas delivered to such customer, no additional or other determinations of the heating value of such gas need be made pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section.

G. Interruptions of service:

(1) Each utility shall keep records of interruptions of service to 50 or more of its customers on any of its distribution systems and shall make an analysis of the records for the purpose of determining steps to be taken to prevent recurrence of such interruptions. Such records should include the following information concerning the interruptions:

- (a) cause;
- (b) date and time; and
- (c) duration.

(2) Planned interruptions shall be made at a time that will not cause unreasonable inconvenience to customers and shall be preceded by adequate notice to those who will be affected.

(3) Each utility shall notify the utility division of the commission by facsimile or e-mail and confirm by letter to the records division of the commission of any interruption to the service of a major portion of any single distribution system. Each utility shall provide to commission staff all information requested by staff that is reasonably needed to assess the situation.

(4) Each utility shall identify critical customers, including facilities that require natural gas to perform essential life-health-safety services, including other utility services such as electrical generating stations, to establish priority of service and to minimize curtailments to these customers.

(5) Each utility shall identify an emergency coordinator to act as a single point of contact between designated emergency personnel in each community served by the utility in the event of a system emergency.

H. Curtailment of service plan: Each utility shall have in place a plan for curtailment of service for system emergencies. Each plan shall be consistent with applicable national and other reliability and safety standards. The plan shall identify various levels of curtailment and conditions that a gas utility must experience for each level as well as specifying the type of actions the utility must undertake to contain or reverse a potential emergency. Each plan must also prescribe the minimum documentation required at each level. The plan must also include information dissemination to customers, the public and governmental entities. Each utility will periodically review and update the plan and will submit a copy of the most current plan version to the records division of the

commission as a company rule pursuant to 17.9.210 NMAC.
[17.10.650.14 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.14 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

17.10.650.15 SAFETY:

A. Protective measures:

(1) Each utility shall exercise reasonable care to protect its employees, its customers, and the general public from hazards to which they may be subjected.

(2) Each utility shall maintain a summary of each accident arising from its operations and make such summaries available to the commission upon request.

B. Safety program: Each utility shall adopt and execute a safety program fitted to the size and type of its operations. At a minimum the safety program should:

(1) require employees to use suitable tools and equipment in order to perform their work in a safe manner;

(2) instruct employees in safe methods of performing their work; and

(3) instruct employees who in the course of their work are subject to the hazards of electrical shock, asphyxiation, or drowning in accepted methods of artificial respiration.

C. Customer piping: Each customer's piping system shall be tested for leaks before original service is provided.

(1) Pressure test: If local authorities do not require a pressure test of a customer's piping as set forth in American standard installation of gas appliances and gas piping, ASA Z21.30-1964, the utility shall advise the customer of the desirability of having their plumber conduct such a test.

(2) Leakage test: Before permitting the use of gas at any location the piping system shall be tested for leaks by a method at least equal to that described in section "leakage check after gas turn on" in the American standard installation of gas appliances and gas piping, ASA Z21.30-1964.

D. Gas leaks:

(1) A report of a gas leak shall be given priority over all other service calls and shall promptly be investigated by the utility at no charge to the customer. Repair work done by the utility on the customer's side of the delivery point may be charged to the customer at the utility's regular rate.

(2) The customer shall be advised of the charges involved prior to the commencement of repair work on their side of the delivery point.

E. Odorization: Any gas which is distributed to customers through gas mains or gas services or used for domestic purposes in compressor plants and which does not naturally possess a distinctive odor, to the extent that its presence in the atmosphere is readily detectable at all gas concentrations of one-fifth of the lower explosive limits and above, shall have an odorant added to it to make it so detectable. However, odorization is not necessary for such gas as is delivered for further processing or use where the odorant would serve no useful purpose as a warning agent. Suitable tests must be made to determine whether the odor meets the aforementioned standards.

[17.10.650.15 NMAC - Rp, 17.10.650.15 NMAC, 11/10/2020]

HISTORY OF 17.10.650 NMAC:

Pre-NMAC History. The material in this part was derived from that previously filed with the commission of public records-state records center and archives.

That applicable portion of PSC 77-1, (Case No. 1350) Amendments to Second Revised General Order No. 5 and Second Revised General Order No. 6: Applicability of Amendments to Water Utilities, filed 4/4/1977.

NMPSC Rule 650, Service Standards For Gas Utilities, filed 6/30/1988.

History of Repealed Material.

NMPSC Rule 650, Service Standards For Gas Utilities (filed 6/30/1988) repealed 6/15/2005.

17.10.650 NMAC – Service Standards For Gas Utilities (filed 3/8/2013) repealed 11/10/2020.

Other History.

NMPSC Rule 650, Service Standards For Gas Utilities (filed 6/30/1988) replaced by 17.10.650 NMAC, Service Standards For Gas Utilities, effective 6/15/2005.

17.10.650 NMAC - Service Standards For Gas Utilities (filed 3/8/2013) replaced by 17.10.650 NMAC - Service Standards For Gas Utilities, effective 11/10/2020.