

# National Grid Seeking Billions in Future Natural Gas Rate Adjustments in Massachusetts

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National Grid in Massachusetts, filed for new rates from its Massachusetts natural gas customers. The rate filing dated April 16, 2010, proposes billions of dollars in infrastructure replacement programs with an estimated completion timeframe of over 20 years.

The rate increase National Grid is seeking is actually three years prior to the deadline of the current 10 year rate case approved by Massachusetts state utility regulatory agency the Department of Public Utilities, or the "DPU" in 2003 under DPU docket 03-40.

The New England Gas Workers Association (NEGWA) opposes the rate proposal as planned, stating the rate plan as filed is certainly not in the best interest of ratepayers and their families, as well as their members who most are ratepayers as well.

NEGWA's president, Mark McDonald, had this to say regarding NEGWA's opposition to the company's plans;

The infrastructure replacement program, the key component in this rate plan in our opinion, is not good for anyone other than their shareholders.

"The companies plan is to have Massachusetts ratepayers build National Grid a "new" gas company and reduce staffing and services for its customers, while generating valuable gains for National Grid in terms of increased throughput designed to allow the ability to add thousands of ratepayers, as well as relieving the burden of gaining access to hundreds of thousands of homes to perform regular mandated maintenance, by moving gas meters outside the home at their current customers expense."

McDonald is clear in adding, NEGWA is not supporting leaving leak ridden, hazardous piping in the ground". "What we would like to see is a fiscal approach to updating, and maintaining our infrastructure".

This could easily be established with necessary replacement plans, as well as a maintain plan, designed to control aging leaks with repair and increased efforts in monitoring gas leaks that are not repaired immediately.

McDonald also points to pending legislation sponsored by State Representative Lori Ehrlich (Dem) from Marblehead, designed to require gas companies in the state, perform efficient and safe leak repairs within 36 months from detection. There are also several triggers designed to protect trees and vegetation from damage due to oxygen displacement caused by gas leaks. "If this legislation reaches the approval of Beacon Hill, it would mandate all gas company's in the state, including National Grid take aggressive steps in maintaining OUR gas distribution system and negate the debate over questionable infrastructure replacement programs costing billions of dollars more out of our pockets each winter!"

To add insult to injury NEGWA notes, the company is planning on bringing out of state workers in excess of 400 into Massachusetts (National Grid has even held discussions with their United Kingdom sub-contractors on this subject), to perform this questionable work, and then take the money from Massachusetts ratepayers and return home to boost their state or countries economy!

McDonald mentions in closing, "we would like to see National Grid do the right thing here in Massachusetts, and agree to a reasonable approach to infrastructure replacement and leak management, as well as promoting the future of its employees and their families, which in turn will help support the Massachusetts economy instead of sending large sums of money back to England".

Does this sound familiar to Massachusetts residents??

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