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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 24, 2023

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MPSC approves larger power outage credits, other steps to improve electric reliability, protect utility customers

The Michigan Public Service Commission today gave final approval to a series of significant changes that will increase power outage credits for customers and strengthen rules and technical standards for regulated utilities as the MPSC continues its work to improve the reliability of Michigan's electric grid.

The MPSC's order today in [Case No. U-20629](#) increases power outage credits to \$35 for eligible customers plus \$35 more each additional day the power's out, and makes the credits automatic. Until today, the credit had been a total of \$25 per qualifying outage and required customers to apply with their utility.

Though the increased power outage credits weren't in place for recent ice and snow storms that pummeled the southern Lower Peninsula, MPSC Chair Dan Scripps said the increased outage credits will provide Michiganders more relief if they endure long-duration outages. Information about the new outage credits is available at the [MPSC's tip sheet](#) on outage credits and power outage safety.

"The credits may not cover all of the losses electric customers face when they lose power, but this is a major step forward," Scripps said. "Not only is the outage credit more, it's also no longer a one-time credit per incident, and customers will no longer have to request the credits from utilities."

The power outage credit kicks in after 96 hours during catastrophic conditions, defined as a utility having 10% or more of its customers without power; after 48 hours during gray sky conditions affecting between 1% and 10% of a utility's customers, and after 16 hours during normal conditions. The outage credits now also will be indexed to the rate of inflation.

In other consumer-oriented steps, the MPSC today launched new webpages that provide reliability and safety information for customers:

- A [Distribution System Reliability Metrics webpage](#) with information on outages among Michigan's regulated utilities based on three widely used metrics that measure reliability of utilities' distribution systems: System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI), System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI)

and Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI). This page launched today, but the first utility data is due to the Commission on May 15, 2023. As data comes in and the display is developed and refined, a clearer picture of reliability metrics, trends and trouble spots should become visible to anyone who accesses the public webpage. The page also includes [reliability rules and reports](#) as well as [historical major outage data dating to 2019](#) for DTE Electric Co., Consumers Energy Co. and other investor-owned electric utilities regulated by the MPSC.

- A [Preparing for and Responding to Power Outages](#) webpage that includes links to checklists created by the MPSC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross on being prepared for an outage and staying safe when the power goes out. It features information on how to locate and contact your utility, where to find utility outage maps, and information on warming and cooling centers, updated seasonally.

“We know we have a lot more work to do, and we’re grateful to have heard from Michiganders during the MPSC’s recent town halls about their frustrations with unreliable service and their ideas for improving reliability, utility response to outages, and customer service,” Commissioner Katherine Peretick said. “We’ve heard you loud and clear, and we are committed to taking concrete actions to improve the power grid.”

In that vein, the Commission’s order today in U-20629 also shortens the required times for utilities to restore long-duration outages; reduces the amount of time first responders must guard downed wires until they’re relieved by a utility lineworker; updates reliability standards to ensure Michigan’s performance indicators match industry guidelines; and establishes annual reporting requirements for rural electric cooperatives and all investor-owned utilities to ensure they’re reporting service quality and reliability performance to the Commission.

In [Case No. U-20630](#), the Commission approved updated technical standards governing matters including new requirements for electric utility and cooperative reporting on outages; additional requirements for utility line clearing programs; updates to electric metering, metering equipment inspections and tests, and requirements for cybersecurity programs.

In [Case No. U-21150](#), the Commission approved updates to ensure customers’ service isn’t shut off without proper notice, that customers aren’t billed for electricity they didn’t consume because of incorrect meter registration or other billing issues, and to help utility customers more easily access information about their rights to a hearing on billing disputes.

“Today’s approval of updated and improved rules governing utility service quality and reliability, technical standards and billing practices are critical to ensuring that residents throughout the state of Michigan have access to the safe and reliable electric services that they expect and deserve,” said Commissioner Tremaine Phillips.

To look up cases from today’s meeting, access the [MPSC’s E-Dockets filing system](#).

Watch recordings of the MPSC's meetings on the [MPSC's YouTube channel](#).

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