

September 30, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND HAND DELIVERY

Stephanie De La Rosa, Commission Clerk
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02888

**RE: Docket No. 3476 – Gas Service Quality Plan
The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a Rhode Island Energy
Request for Relief from Penalty – Blizzard of 2026**

Dear Ms. De La Rosa:

On behalf of The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a Rhode Island Energy (the “Company”), enclosed, please find the testimony and schedules of Mr. Jeffrey M. O’Brien which serves as the Company’s request for relief of penalty due to an exogenous event. This filing is being made in accordance with Order No. 17605 issued by the Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”).¹

The Company is seeking relief of a gas service quality penalty totaling \$143,859.90. The basis for the relief is that the Blizzard of 2026 qualifies as an exogenous event under the Gas Service Quality Plan.

Thank you for your attention to this filing. If you have any questions, please contact me at 401-784-4263.

Sincerely,



Andrew S. Marcaccio

Enclosure

cc: Docket No. 3476 Service List

¹ See Section VI of Order No. 17605 issued by the PUC on November 21, 2003, in Docket No. 3476 which, in relevant part, provides that if the Company contends that an exogenous event or a force majeure occurred, it must seek relief from the PUC, and the burden of proof will be on the Company.

**THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC COMPANY
d/b/a RHODE ISLAND ENERGY
RIPUC DOCKET NO. 3476
IN RE: GAS SERVICE QUALITY PLAN
WITNESS: O'BRIEN**

PRE-FILED DIRECT TESTIMONY

OF

JEFFREY M. O'BRIEN

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1 **I. Introduction and Qualifications**

2 **Jeffrey M. O'Brien**

3 **Q. Please state your full name and business address.**

4 A. My name is Jeffrey M. O'Brien. My business address is 477 Dexter Street, Providence,
5 RI 02907.

6
7 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

8 A. I am employed by The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a Rhode Island Energy
9 ("Rhode Island Energy" or the "Company") as Director of Work Management, Rhode
10 Island Gas and Electric.

11
12 In my current role, I work closely with Operations, Investment Planning and
13 Management, and Asset Management. My team develops and manages the Company's
14 annual work plans.

15
16 Specific to this filing, under my team is Dispatch and Scheduling which is responsible for
17 receiving and dispatching emergency gas work orders, including gas odor calls, to field
18 personnel for timely response and execution. Dispatch and Scheduling is also responsible
19 for tracking and reporting on the Company's performance related to odor call response.

20 My team also works closely with the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and
21 Carriers ("Division") on gas regulatory compliance matters.

1 **Q. Please describe your educational background and professional experience.**

2 A. In 2007, I joined National Grid USA ("National Grid") as a Work Scheduler in the
3 Dispatch and Scheduling Department. During my tenure with National Grid, I held
4 several operational leadership positions within the gas organization, including Supervisor
5 and Manager of Damage Prevention, Manager of Gas Field Operations, Director of Gas
6 Field Operations, and Director of Pipeline Safety. On May 25, 2022, PPL Rhode Island
7 Holdings, LLC, a wholly owned indirect subsidiary of PPL Corporation, acquired
8 100 percent of the outstanding shares of common stock of the Company from National
9 Grid, at which time I began working in my current position. Prior to joining National
10 Grid, I spent twelve years in the utility industry, serving in roles of increasing
11 responsibility from Field Technician to Regional Operations Manager for the Northeast
12 Region. I also served as Vice-Chair on the Executive Committee of Dig Safe System, Inc.
13 from 2010 through 2015. I am currently pursuing a degree in Business Administration at
14 Bristol Community College, located in Fall River, MA.

15
16 **Q. Have you previously testified before the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission**
17 **(“PUC”)?**

18 A. No.

1 **II. Purpose and Organization of Testimony**

2 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

3 A. The purpose of my testimony is to support the Company's request for relief of a gas
4 service quality penalty totaling \$143,859.90.¹ The Company incurred the penalty during
5 the third quarter of Fiscal Year ("FY") 2026 for failing to meet the established service
6 metrics for leak-call response during normal business hours. The basis for the requested
7 relief is that the Blizzard of 2026 (as defined herein) qualifies as an exogenous event
8 under the Gas Service Quality Plan ("SQP").
9

10 **Q. How is your testimony organized?**

11 A. Section I of my testimony provides an introduction and my qualifications. Section II
12 states the purpose of my testimony and how it is organized. Section III provides an
13 overview of the Gas SQP. Section IV sets forth the criteria that the PUC has examined
14 when determining whether relief from a penalty is appropriate. Section V describes the
15 Blizzard of 2026 and why it qualifies as an exogenous event. Section VI presents the
16 challenges the Company encountered and why the Company could not reasonably
17 overcome those challenges. Section VII describes the calculations supporting the
18 requested penalty amount relief. Section VIII are the requested rulings, and Section IX is
19 the conclusion.
20

¹ For additional details on the calculation of the \$143,859.90 penalty, please see the Company's Gas Service Quality Plan Third Quarter Report for Fiscal Year 2026 submitted to the PUC in this docket on May 1, 2026.

1 **Q. Please describe the schedules accompanying your testimony.**

2 A. I have prepared two schedules:

- 3 • Schedule JOB-1 Company's Fiscal Year 2026 Third Quarter Performance for Leak
- 4 Call Response During Normal Business Hours
- 5 • Schedule JOB-2 Fiscal Year 2027 Penalty Threshold for Leak Call Response
- 6 During Normal Business Hours

7

8 **III. Overview of Gas Service Quality Plan**

9 **Q. What is the purpose of the Gas Service Quality Plan ("SQP")?**

10 A. The Gas SQP is designed to ensure that the Company's gas customers receive a

11 reasonable level of service.

12

13 **Q. How is the Company's gas service quality measured?**

14 A. Under the Gas SQP, the Company's performance is measured through eight (8) service

15 metrics: (i) percentage of abandoned calls; (ii) percentage of calls answered within sixty

16 (60) seconds; (iii) percentage of on-cycle meter reads; (iv) meter testing; (v) percentage

17 of customer requested meter tests completed within fifteen (15) days; (vi) percentage of

18 service appointments met; (vii) leak-call response for normal business hours; and (viii)

19 and leak-call response for after business hours.

20

1 **Q. What happens if the Company's performance does not meet the established service**
2 **metrics?**

3 A. If the Company fails to meet the established service metrics, it is assessed a penalty.
4 Penalties are determined on an annual basis except for the two leak-call response service
5 measures for which penalties are determined on a quarterly basis. All of the service
6 measures are measured on a FY ending June 30th basis except for meter testing which is
7 based on a calendar year ("CY").
8

9 **Q. If a penalty is assessed against the Company, who receives the money?**

10 A. The total amount of penalties is credited to gas customers through the Service Quality
11 Performance Factor as part of the Company's annual Distribution Adjustment Charge
12 ("DAC") filing for rates effective November 1st.
13

14 **Q. Under the Gas SQP, can the Company request relief of a penalty?**

15 A. Yes. If an exogenous event occurs, the Company may seek relief of a penalty from the
16 PUC. The burden of proof is on the Company to demonstrate an exogenous event
17 occurred.
18

1 **IV. Standard for Exogenous Event**

2 **Q. What standard has the PUC applied when evaluating whether an event impacting**
3 **gas service quality qualifies as an exogenous event?**

4 A. In Docket No. 3476, Order No. 23962, the PUC applied the following three criteria when
5 determining whether an event qualified as an exogenous event under the Gas Service
6 Quality Plan. The PUC stated that all three criteria must be met.

7 (1) Whether there was an event or occurrence impeding performance that was out of the
8 Company's reasonable control;

9 (2) Whether such an event was reasonably unforeseeable in the context of the duties and
10 circumstances to which the metric applies; and

11 (3) When the first two criteria are met, whether the Company could have avoided the
12 non-compliance by responding in a reasonable manner under the given circumstances.
13

14 **V. Exogenous Event – Blizzard of 2026**

15 **Q. What is the event that the Company believes qualifies as exogenous event under the**
16 **Gas SQP?**

17 A. The Company believes the Blizzard of 2026, also known as Winter Storm Hernando,
18 which occurred February 22-24, 2026, qualifies as an exogenous event. The Blizzard of
19 2026 was a historic winter storm. During this multi-day event, the State experienced high
20 wind gusts (reaching hurricane-force at times), limited visibility, and a record 37.9 inches
21

1 of snow at Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport. On February 22, 2026, a State
2 of Emergency was declared by Rhode Island Governor Daniel J. McKee.²
3

4 **Q. In general, how did the Blizzard of 2026 have an impact on the Company's**
5 **operations?**

6 A. Although Rhode Island Energy personnel, which are considered emergency personnel,
7 were initially authorized to be on the roadways, when necessary, the roadway conditions
8 across the State became so severe that all vehicles, including Rhode Island Energy
9 vehicles, along with State and municipal plows were advised to stay off the roadways.
10 This was due to very limited visibility and high rates of snowfall leading to vehicles
11 getting stuck on the roadways which were creating additional hazards.
12

13 **Q. Which Gas SQP metric is the Company seeking relief from because of the Blizzard**
14 **of 2026?**

15 A. The Company is seeking relief from the penalty associated with the leak-call response
16 metric for normal business hours. Although other Gas SQP metrics may have been
17 affected by the storm, this request for relief is limited to that metric.
18

² Executive Order 26-02: <https://governor.ri.gov/executive-orders/executive-order-26-02>

1 **Q. What is the amount of the penalty that the Company incurred for failing to meet the**
2 **leak-call response metric for normal business hours?**

3 A. The total penalty incurred by the Company for failing to meet the leak-call response
4 metric for normal business hours is \$143,859.90. The Company is seeking relief for the
5 full amount.
6

7 **Q. What were the normal business hours that were impacted by the Blizzard of 2026?**

8 A. Normal business hours³ or the 8.5-hour period starting on February 23, 2026 at 8:00 AM
9 and ending on February 23, 2026 at 4:30 PM is the impacted period.
10

11 Although snowfall and storm conditions continued throughout the night on February 23,
12 2026, and throughout the day on February 24, 2026, and substantial clearing of snow
13 from the roadways continued for days, with thoughtful planning and operational
14 execution, the Company was able to return to near normal operations on February 24,
15 2026.
16

17 The Company did not include the period of after business hours spanning from 4:30 PM
18 on February 23, 2026 through 8:00 AM on February 24, 2026 because the Company did
19 not incur a penalty for the after-business hours metric.
20

³ Normal business hours are defined as Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM (excluding holidays).

1 **Q. How many leak-calls were received by the Company during normal business hours**
2 **on February 23, 2026?**

3 A. The Company received 35 leak-calls.
4

5 **Q. How many of those leak calls satisfied the metric, i.e. how many of those leak calls**
6 **were responded to by the Company in 30 minutes or less?**

7 A. The Company responded to 7 of the 35 leak-calls in 30 minutes or less, meaning that 28
8 leak-calls were recorded as not meeting the 30-minute response time requirement.
9

10 **Q. Is it typical for the Company to fail to meet the 30-minute response time**
11 **requirement?**

12 A. No. Please see the attached Schedule JOB-1 which shows how unique February 23, 2026,
13 was in comparison to every other normal business day in February. The schedule has
14 February 23, 2026, highlighted to show how abnormal 28 delayed responses in a single
15 business day was for the Company. It also shows the Company's performance on
16 February 24th and the several days after the storm during which the Company returned to
17 near normal performance although roadways throughout the State were still being cleared
18 of snow.
19

1 **VI. Company's Actions During the Blizzard of 2026**

2 **Q. In regard to leak-call response, how did the Company plan for the Blizzard of 2026?**

3 A. On a 'blue sky' day, the Company has Customer Meter Services ("CMS") technicians
4 staffed to handle scheduled CMS work and available to respond to emergency and leak-
5 calls. Due to anticipated severe weather conditions, the Company postponed scheduled
6 CMS work for February 23, 2026, and customer appointments were rescheduled. As
7 such, the CMS technicians who would normally handle the scheduled CMS work were all
8 positioned to handle emergency and leak-calls. In addition, shifts were extended beyond a
9 normal day's work to further enhance resource availability. In total, on February 23,
10 2026, the Company had 24 CMS technicians ready and available to respond to leak-calls.

11
12 **Q. What prevented the 24 CMS technicians from timely responding to the 35 leak-calls**
13 **received by the Company during normal business hours on February 23, 2026?**

14 A. The challenge the Company, its personnel, and its vehicles faced on February 23, 2026
15 was the inability to physically travel to most of the addresses where leaks were reported.
16 During normal business hours on February 23, 2026, road travel was not reasonably
17 possible in numerous instances due to blizzard conditions.

18
19 **Q. Given the circumstances, was there anything the Company could have reasonably**
20 **done to get to the leak-call addresses within 30 minutes or less?**

21 A. No. As Rhode Islanders witnessed firsthand or saw on various news outlets, road travel

1 was nearly impossible throughout the day on February 23, 2026. The Company attempted
2 to reach several locations when leak-calls were reported. In some instances, the
3 Company's CMS personnel were able to reach the leak-call addresses. However, in most
4 cases, attempts were unsuccessful within 30 minutes or less. In some cases, Company
5 employees had to exit their vehicle and walk some distance through an unplowed street(s)
6 and/or sidewalk(s) to get to the leak-call location. Other times CMS Company vehicles
7 got stuck in the snow and the Company needed to request help from Rhode Island
8 Department of Transportation ("RIDOT"), municipal Department of Public Works
9 ("DPW") personnel (such as Providence DPW) or send out additional Company
10 personnel and equipment to free the Company vehicle. Providence DPW was able to
11 assist the Company in one instance and RIDOT was able to assist in another. But
12 RIDOT's ability to continue assisting the Company was understandably limited by their
13 need to prioritize clearing snow, general proximity of their equipment compared to where
14 a Company vehicle was stuck, lack of visibility on the roadways, and RIDOT's own
15 vehicles also getting stuck in the snow. In approximately eight cases, the Company used
16 its Company (backhoe) equipment to help free Company CMS vehicles that were stuck in
17 the snow and in at least one instance, Company backhoes were utilized to help free stuck
18 first responder vehicles from the snow. Given the extreme conditions, it was also
19 important not to tie up Company resources that could assist the community. At the height
20 of the storm, a tracking mechanism needed to be implemented to keep track of the name
21 and location of each Company employee attempting to traverse the roadways. Given

1 these circumstances, the Company decided not to dispatch any CMS technicians out of its
2 Providence facilities between 2:01 PM and 4:15 PM. Please note, for all leak calls
3 received on February 23, 2026, the Company did eventually dispatch and arrive on site to
4 investigate each leak.

5
6 **VII. Calculation of Relief**

7 **Q. Including February 23, 2026, what was the Company's third quarter performance**
8 **for leak-call response during normal business hours?**

9 A. As seen in Schedule JOB-1, including the performance for February 23, 2026, the
10 Company's FY 2026 third quarter performance for leak-call response was 96.50%, which
11 was the result of 1,314 total calls and 1,268 responses in 30 minutes or less. The penalty
12 threshold was 96.95%, which resulted in a penalty of \$143,859.90.

13
14 **Q. If the data for normal business hours on February 23, 2026, is excluded due to an**
15 **exogenous event, what would be the impact on the Company's third quarter**
16 **performance for leak-call response during normal business hours?**

17 A. All of the performance data for that period would be excluded from the quarterly
18 performance results. Specifically, the 35 leak-calls received by the Company during
19 normal business hours on February 23, 2026 would be excluded. This includes both the 7
20 responses made in 30 minutes or less and the 28 delayed responses. As a result, the
21 Company's FY 2026 third quarter performance for leak-call response during normal

1 business hours would be 98.59% (instead of 96.50%). The Company would have had
2 1,279 total calls (instead of 1,314 total calls) and 1,261 responses in 30 minutes or less
3 (instead of 1,268 responses in 30 minutes or less). Since the penalty threshold was
4 96.95%, there would be no penalty assessed for this metric.

5
6 **Q. Are there any additional impacts if the data for February 23, 2026, is excluded from**
7 **the Company's Gas SQP performance results?**

8 A. Yes. For FY 2027 (the current FY), the penalty threshold for leak-call response during
9 normal business hours is currently calculated as 96.45%. If the data for normal business
10 hours on February 23, 2026, is excluded from the performance results, it will also be
11 excluded from the 3-year benchmark data that is used to calculate the FY 2027
12 benchmark, standard deviation, and penalty threshold. Excluding the data would result in
13 a FY 2027 penalty threshold of 97.08%, which is a higher performance level that the
14 Company will need to meet than the currently calculated 96.45% penalty threshold.
15 Please see schedule JOB-2 for additional details.

16
17 **VIII. Requested Rulings**

18 **Q. What is the Company requesting in this case?**

19 A. The Company is respectfully requesting that the PUC make the following rulings:

- 20 (1) The PUC finds that the Blizzard of 2026 qualifies as an exogenous event under
21 the Gas SQP.
22

1 (2) The PUC grants the Company's request to exclude the Company's Gas SQP
2 performance data for normal business hours on February 23, 2026, which results
3 in the following:
4

5 (i) That the Company is relieved of its obligation to pay a penalty of
6 \$143,859.90 stemming from its Fiscal Year 2026 third quarter performance
7 for leak-call response during normal business hours; and
8

9 (ii) That the Fiscal Year 2027 penalty threshold for leak-call response during
10 normal business hours is increased from 96.45% to 97.08%.
11

12 **IX. Conclusion**

13 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

14 **A. Yes.**

**Third Quarter Fiscal Year 2026
Daily Summary of
Leak Call Response
During Normal Business Hours**

**Rhode Island Energy - Gas
RIPUC Docket No. 3476
Request for Relief
Schedule JOB-1
Page 1 of 3**

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Line No.	Date	Total Calls	Response in 30 Minutes or Less	Response Delayed
1	1/2/26	17	17	0
2	1/5/26	25	24	1
3	1/6/26	23	23	0
4	1/7/26	25	25	0
5	1/8/26	21	20	1
6	1/9/26	21	20	1
7	1/12/26	18	18	0
8	1/13/26	10	10	0
9	1/14/26	12	11	1
10	1/15/26	12	12	0
11	1/16/26	19	19	0
12	1/19/26	17	17	0
13	1/20/26	22	22	0
14	1/21/26	24	24	0
15	1/22/26	24	24	0
16	1/23/26	20	20	0
17	1/26/26	29	29	0
18	1/27/26	36	35	1
19	1/28/26	22	22	0
20	1/29/26	30	29	1
21	1/30/26	16	16	0

**Third Quarter Fiscal Year 2026
Daily Summary of
Leak Call Response
During Normal Business Hours**

**Rhode Island Energy - Gas
RIPUC Docket No. 3476
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Schedule JOB-1
Page 2 of 3**

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Line No.	Date	Total Calls	Response in 30 Minutes or Less	Response Delayed
22	2/2/26	21	21	0
23	2/3/26	39	36	3
24	2/4/26	19	19	0
25	2/5/26	19	19	0
26	2/6/26	20	20	0
27	2/9/26	22	22	0
28	2/10/26	21	20	1
29	2/11/26	17	17	0
30	2/12/26	20	20	0
31	2/13/26	15	15	0
32	2/16/26	0	0	0
33	2/17/26	16	16	0
34	2/18/26	20	20	0
35	2/19/26	22	22	0
36	2/20/26	20	20	0
37	2/23/26	35	7	28
38	2/24/26	37	33	4
39	2/25/26	33	33	0
40	2/26/26	21	21	0
41	2/27/26	25	25	0

**Third Quarter Fiscal Year 2026
Daily Summary of
Leak Call Response
During Normal Business Hours**

**Rhode Island Energy - Gas
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Schedule JOB-1
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	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Line No.	Date	Total Calls	Response in 30 Minutes or Less	Response Delayed
42	3/2/26	42	41	1
43	3/3/26	29	29	0
44	3/4/26	25	25	0
45	3/5/26	16	16	0
46	3/6/26	20	19	1
47	3/9/26	25	25	0
48	3/10/26	21	21	0
49	3/11/26	24	23	1
50	3/12/26	19	19	0
51	3/13/26	9	9	0
52	3/16/26	20	20	0
53	3/17/26	15	15	0
54	3/18/26	19	19	0
55	3/19/26	19	19	0
56	3/20/26	19	18	1
57	3/23/26	6	6	0
58	3/24/26	11	11	0
59	3/25/26	20	20	0
60	3/26/26	27	27	0
61	3/27/26	11	11	0
62	3/30/26	13	13	0
63	3/31/26	19	19	0
64	Performance Including Feb 23, 2026			
65	Totals	1,314	1,268	46
66	% in 30 Minutes or Less		96.50%	
67				
68	Performance Excluding Feb 23, 2026			
69	Totals	1,279	1,261	18
70	% in 30 Minutes or Less		98.59%	
71	Feb 23, 2026 data excluded, which removes 35 Total Calls and 7 Responses in 30 Minutes or Less.			

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Schedule JOB-2
Page 2 of 3**

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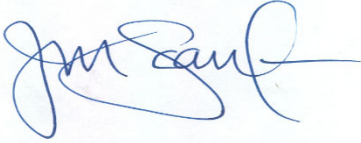
**Rhode Island Energy - Gas
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Page 3 of 3**

	(a)	(z)	(aa)	(ab)	(ac)	(ad)	(ae)	(af)	(ag)	(ah)	(ai)	(aj)	(ak)	(al)	(am)	(an)	(ao)
Line No.	SERVICE QUALITY MEASURES	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	36 Month Average	Standard Deviation	Penalty Threshold	Maximum Penalty
	SAFETY																
	3-Year Benchmark Includes Feb 23, 2026																
	Leak-Call Response:																
	Normal Business Hours:																
	M-F 8:00-16:30 (excluding holidays)																
	- Total Calls	267	280	395	491	369	436	443	442	429	404	384	361	385			
	- Response in 30 Minutes or Less	258	272	390	484	361	432	437	406	425	400	378	356	377			
	% in 30 Minutes or Less	96.63%	97.14%	98.73%	98.57%	97.83%	99.08%	98.65%	91.86%	99.07%	99.01%	98.44%	98.61%	97.89%	1.44%	96.45%	95.01%
3-Year Benchmark Excludes Feb 23, 2026																	
Leak-Call Response:																	
Normal Business Hours:																	
M-F 8:00-16:30 (excluding holidays)																	
- Total Calls	267	280	395	491	369	436	443	407	429	404	384	361	385				
- Response in 30 Minutes or Less	258	272	390	484	361	432	437	399	425	400	378	356	377				
% in 30 Minutes or Less	96.63%	97.14%	98.73%	98.57%	97.83%	99.08%	98.65%	98.03%	99.07%	99.01%	98.44%	98.61%	97.89%	1.00%	96.89%	95.89%	
	Feb 23, 2026 data excluded from February 2026, which removes 35 Total Calls and 7 Responses in 30 Minutes or Less.																

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a copy of the cover letter and any materials accompanying this certificate were electronically transmitted to the individuals listed below.

The paper copies of this filing are being hand delivered to the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission and to the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers.



Joanne M. Scanlon

September 30, 2026

Date

**Docket No. 3476 – Rhode Island Energy Gas - Service Quality Plan
Service list updated on 9/30/2026**

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