

§ 62-133.16. Performance-based regulation authorized.

(a) Definitions. – For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "Cost causation principle" means establishment of a causal link between a specific customer class, how that class uses the electric system, and costs incurred by the electric public utility for the provision of electric service.
- (2) "Decoupling rate-making mechanism" means a rate-making mechanism intended to break the link between an electric public utility's revenue and the level of consumption of electricity on a per customer basis by its residential customers.
- (3) "Distributed energy resource" or "DER" means a device or measure that produces electricity or reduces electricity consumption and is connected to the electric distribution system, either on the customer's premises or on the electric public utility's primary distribution system. A DER may include any of the following: energy efficiency, distributed generation, demand response, microgrids, energy storage, energy management systems, and electric vehicles.
- (4) "Earnings sharing mechanism" means an annual rate-making mechanism that shares surplus earnings between the electric public utility and customers over the period of time covered by a MYRP.
- (5) "Multiyear rate plan" or "MYRP" means a rate-making mechanism under which the Commission sets base rates for a multiyear period that includes authorized periodic changes in base rates without the need for the electric public utility to file a subsequent general rate application pursuant to G.S. 62-133, along with an earnings sharing mechanism.
- (6) "Performance incentive mechanism" or "PIM" means a rate-making mechanism that links electric public utility revenue or earnings to electric public utility performance in targeted areas consistent with policy goals, as that term is defined by this section, approved by the Commission, and includes specific performance metrics and targets against which electric public utility performance is measured.
- (7) "Performance-based regulation" or "PBR" means an alternative rate-making approach that includes decoupling, one or more performance incentive mechanisms, and a multiyear rate plan, including an earnings sharing mechanism, or such other alternative regulatory mechanisms as may be proposed by an electric public utility.
- (8) "Policy goal" means the expected or anticipated achievement of operational efficiency, cost-savings, or reliability of electric service that is greater than that which already is required by State or federal law or regulation, including standards the Commission has established by order prior to and independent of a PBR application, provided that, with respect to environmental standards, the Commission may not approve a policy goal that is more stringent than is established by (i) State law, (ii) federal law, (iii) the Environmental Management Commission pursuant to G.S. 143B-282, or (iv) the United States Environmental Protection Agency.
- (9) "Rate year" means the year of the MYRP for which base rates are effective.
- (10) "Tracking metric" means a methodology for tracking and quantitatively measuring and monitoring outcomes or electric public utility performance.

(b) Performance-Based Regulation Authorized. – In addition to the method for fixing base rates established under G.S. 62-133, the Commission is authorized to approve performance-based regulation upon application of an electric public utility pursuant to the G.S. 62-133.16

process and requirements of this section, so long as the Commission allocates the electric public utility's total revenue requirement among customer classes based upon the cost causation principle, including the use of minimum system methodology by an electric public utility for the purpose of allocating distribution costs between customer classes, and interclass subsidization of ratepayers is minimized to the greatest extent practicable by the conclusion of the MYRP period. This section shall not be construed to require the Commission to use the minimum system methodology for the purpose of classifying costs within a customer class when setting a basic facilities charge.

(c) Application. – An electric public utility shall be permitted to submit a PBR application in a general rate case proceeding initiated pursuant to G.S. 62-133. A PBR application shall include a decoupling rate-making mechanism, one or more PIMs, and a MYRP, including both an earnings sharing mechanism and proposed revenue requirements and base rates for each of the years that a MYRP is in effect or a method for calculating the same. The PBR application may also include proposed tracking metrics with or without targets or benchmarks to measure electric public utility achievement. The following additional requirements apply to a PBR application:

(1) The following shall apply to a MYRP:

- a. The base rates for the first rate year of a MYRP shall be fixed in the manner prescribed under G.S. 62-133, including actual changes in costs, revenues, or the cost of the electric public utility's property used and useful, or to be used and useful within a reasonable time after the test period, plus costs associated with a known and measurable set of capital investments, net of operating benefits, associated with a set of discrete and identifiable capital spending projects to be placed in service during the first rate year. Subsequent changes in base rates in the second and third rate years of the MYRP shall be based on projected incremental Commission-authorized capital investments that will be used and useful during the rate year and associated expenses, net of operating benefits, including operation and maintenance savings, and depreciation of rate base associated with the capital investments, that are incurred or realized during each rate year of the MYRP period; provided that the amount of increase in the second rate year under the MYRP shall not exceed four percent (4%) of the electric public utility's North Carolina retail jurisdictional revenue requirement that is used to fix rates during the first year of the MYRP pursuant to G.S. 62-133 excluding any revenue requirement for the capital spending projects to be placed in service during the first rate year. The amount of increase for the third rate year under the MYRP shall not exceed four percent (4%) of the electric public utility's North Carolina retail jurisdictional revenue requirement that is used to fix rates during the first year of the MYRP pursuant to G.S. 62-133, excluding any revenue requirement for the capital spending projects placed in service during the first rate year. The revenue requirements associated with any single new generation plant placed in service during the MYRP for which the total plant in service balance exceeds five hundred million dollars (\$500,000,000) shall not be included in a MYRP. Instead, the utility may request and the Commission may grant, if it deems appropriate, permission to establish a regulatory asset and defer to such regulatory asset incremental costs related to such electric generation investments to be

considered for recovery in a future rate proceeding. In setting the electric public utility's authorized rate of return on equity for an MYRP period, the Commission shall consider any increased or decreased risk to either the electric public utility or its ratepayers that may result from having an approved MYRP.

- b. In a proceeding authorizing a MYRP, the Commission shall establish a rider to refund amounts related to the earnings sharing mechanism, and to refund or collect amounts related to PIM rewards or penalties, and decoupling adjustments.
 - c. Within 60 days of the conclusion of each rate year, the Commission shall establish a proceeding to:
 - 1. Examine the earnings of the electric public utility during the rate year to determine if the earnings exceeded the authorized rate of return on equity determined by the Commission in the proceeding establishing the PBR. If the weather-normalized earnings exceed the authorized rate of return on equity plus 50 basis points, the excess earnings above the authorized rate of return on equity plus 50 basis points shall be refunded to customers in the rider established by the Commission. If the weather-normalized earnings fall below the authorized rate of return on equity, the electric public utility may file a rate case pursuant to G.S. 62-133. Any penalties or rewards from PIM incentives and any incentives related to demand-side management and energy efficiency measures pursuant to G.S. 62-133.9(f) will be excluded from the determination of any refund pursuant to earnings sharing mechanism.
 - 2. Evaluate the performance of the electric public utility with respect to Commission approved PIMs applicable in the rate year. Any financial rewards shall be collected from customers and any penalties refunded to customers, in each case, through the rider established by the Commission.
 - 3. Evaluate the decoupling rate-making mechanism, and refund or collect, as applicable, a corresponding amount from residential customers through the rider established by the Commission.
- (2) The proposed decoupling mechanism shall only be applied to residential customer classes. The Commission shall establish an annual revenue requirement per residential customer and an appropriate distribution of said revenue requirement per customer in each month of the year. The established monthly revenue requirements times the actual number of residential customers each month shall become the target revenue for the residential class. Each month, the electric public utility shall defer to a regulatory asset or liability account the difference between the actual revenue and the target revenue for the residential class. The changes in revenue requirements for the second and third rate years shall be allocated to the residential customer class and divided by the number of residential customers to determine the appropriate adjustment to the annual revenue requirement per residential customer that is used to establish the target revenues for the residential class in the second and third rate years of a MYRP. The electric public utility may exclude rate schedules or riders for electric vehicle charging, including EV

charging during off-peak periods on time-of-use rates, from the decoupling mechanism to preserve the electric public utility's incentive to encourage electric vehicle adoption.

- (3) The policy goal targeted by a PIM shall be clearly defined, measurable with a defined performance metric, and solely or primarily within the electric public utility's control.
 - (4) Any PIM shall be structured to ensure that, pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, any penalty shall be refunded to customers and any reward shall be collected from customers and shall be limited such that the total of all potential and actual PIM incentives or penalties does not exceed one percent (1%) of the electric public utility's total annual revenue requirement that is used to fix rates during the first year of the MYRP pursuant to G.S. 62-133, excluding any revenue requirement for the capital spending projects to be placed in service during the first rate year, where the PIM is approved. Any incentives related to demand-side management and energy efficiency measures pursuant to G.S. 62-133.9(f) shall be excluded from the limits established in this section and shall continue to be recovered through the demand-side management and energy efficiency (DSM/EE) rider.
 - (5) Subject to the limitations set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection, any PIMs proposed by an electric public utility shall include one or more of the following:
 - a. Rewards based on the sharing of savings achieved by meeting or exceeding a specific policy goal.
 - b. Rewards or penalties based on differentiated authorized rates of return on common equity to encourage utility investments or operational changes to meet a specific policy goal, which shall not be greater than 25 basis points.
 - c. Fixed financial rewards to encourage achievement of specific policy goals, or fixed financial penalties for failure to achieve policy goals.
- (d) Commission Action on Application. –
- (1) The Commission shall approve a PBR application by an electric public utility only upon a finding that a proposed PBR would result in just and reasonable rates, is in the public interest, and is consistent with the criteria established in this section and rules adopted thereunder. In reviewing any such PBR application under this section, the Commission shall consider whether the PBR application:
 - a. Assures that no customer or class of customers is unreasonably harmed and that the rates are fair both to the electric public utility and to the customer.
 - b. Reasonably assures the continuation of safe and reliable electric service.
 - c. Will not unreasonably prejudice any class of electric customers and result in sudden substantial rate increases or "rate shock" to customers.
 - (2) In reviewing any such PBR application under this section, the Commission may consider whether the PBR application:
 - a. Encourages peak load reduction or efficient use of the system.
 - b. Encourages utility-scale clean energy and storage.
 - c. Encourages DERs.
 - d. Reduces low-income energy burdens.
 - e. Encourages energy efficiency.

- f. Encourages carbon reductions.
- g. Encourages beneficial electrification, including electric vehicles.
- h. Supports equity in contracting.
- i. Promotes resilience and security of the electric grid.
- j. Maintains adequate levels of reliability and customer service.
- k. Promotes rate designs that yield peak load reduction or beneficial load-shaping.

(3) When an electric public utility files with the Commission an application for a general rate case pursuant to G.S. 62-133 and that application includes a PBR application, the Commission shall institute proceedings on the application as provided in this subdivision. The electric public utility shall not make any changes in any rate or implement a PBR except upon 30 days' notice to the Commission, and the Commission may require the electric public utility to provide notice of the pending PBR application to the same extent as provided in G.S. 62-134(a) and may suspend the effect of the proposed base rates and PBR implementation pending investigation in the same manner as provided in G.S. 62-134(b), provided that, the Commission may suspend the implementation of the proposed base rates for no longer than 300 days. The electric public utility's application shall plainly state the changes in base rates and the time when the change in rates will go into effect and shall include schedules in the same manner required pursuant to G.S. 62-134(a). The Commission shall, upon reasonable notice, conduct a hearing concerning the lawfulness of the proposed base rates and the PBR application. After hearing, the Commission shall issue an order approving, modifying, or rejecting the electric public utility's PBR application. In the event that the Commission rejects a PBR application, the Commission shall nevertheless establish the electric public utility's base rates in accordance with G.S. 62-133 based on the PBR application. If the Commission rejects the PBR application, it shall provide an explanation of the deficiency and an opportunity for the electric public utility to refile, or for the electric public utility and the stakeholders to collaborate to cure the identified deficiency and refile.

(e) Commission Review. – At any time prior to expiration of a PBR plan period, the Commission, with good cause and upon its own motion or petition by the Public Staff, may examine the reasonableness of an electric public utility's rates under a plan, conduct periodic reviews with opportunities for public hearings and comments from interested parties, and initiate a proceeding to adjust base rates or PIMs as necessary. In addition, the approval of a PBR shall not be construed to limit the Commission's authority to grant additional deferrals between rate cases for extraordinary costs not otherwise recognized in rates.

(f) Plan Period. – Any PBR application approved pursuant to this section shall remain in effect for a plan period of not more than 36 months.

(g) Commission Authority Preserved. – Nothing in this section shall be construed to (i) limit or abrogate the existing rate-making authority of the Commission or (ii) invalidate or void any rates approved by the Commission prior to the effective date of this section. In all respects, the alternative rate-making mechanisms, designs, plans, or settlements shall operate independently, and be considered separately, from riders or other cost recovery mechanisms otherwise allowed by law, unless otherwise incorporated into such plan.

(h) Utility Reporting. – For purposes of measuring an electric public utility's earnings under a PBR application approved under this section, an electric public utility shall make an annual filing that sets forth the electric public utility's earned return on equity, the electric public utility's revenue requirement trued-up with the actual electric public utility revenue, the amount

of revenue adjustment in terms of customer refund or surcharge, if applicable, and the adjustments reflecting rewards or penalties provided for in PIMs approved by the Commission.

(i) Commission Report. – No later than April 1 of each year, the Commission shall submit a report on the activities taken by the Commission to implement, and by electric public utilities to comply with, the requirements of this section to the Governor, the Environmental Review Commission, the Joint Legislative Commission on Energy Policy, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, the chairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Natural, and Economic Resources, the chairs of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, and the chairs of the House Committee on Energy and Public Utilities. The report shall include a summary of public comments received by the Commission. In developing the report, the Commission shall consult with the Department of Environmental Quality.

(j) Rulemaking. – The Commission shall adopt rules to implement the requirements of this section. Rules adopted shall include all of the following matters:

- (1) The specific procedures and requirements that an electric public utility shall meet when requesting approval of a PBR application.
- (2) The criteria for evaluating a PBR application.
- (3) The parameters for a technical conference process to be conducted by the Commission prior to submission of any PBR application consisting of one or more public meetings at which the electric public utility presents information regarding projected transmission and distribution expenditures and interested parties are permitted to provide comment and feedback; provided, however, no cross-examination of parties shall be permitted. The technical conference process to be established shall not exceed a duration of 60 days from the date on which the electric public utility requests initiation of such process.
- (4) In the event the Commission rejects a PBR application, the process by which an electric public utility may address the Commission's reasons for rejection of a PBR application, which process may include collaboration between stakeholders and the electric public utility to cure any identified deficiency in an electric public utility's PBR application. (2021-165, s. 4(a); 2023-138, s. 1(c).)