

**Lisa Kopp**  
*Supervisor, Consumer Outreach*



March 31, 2023

Hon. Michelle Phillips  
Secretary to the Commission  
New York State Public Service  
Commission Three Empire State Plaza  
Albany, N.Y. 12223-1350

Re: 2023 Annual Outreach and Education Plan (Case No. 17-M-0475)

Dear Secretary Phillips:

Central Hudson hereby submits its 2023 Outreach & Education Plan. As directed, one copy of this report will also be sent via U.S. mail.

Please contact me with any questions regarding this filing.

Respectfully,

*Lisa Kopp*

Lisa Kopp

cc: J. Nappi – Central Hudson  
E. O'Dell-Keller, S. Kailas & M. Rivera – Public Service Commission Staff

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# **Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN 2023**

Submitted by Lisa Kopp  
on April 1, 2023  
to Erin O'Dell-Keller, DPS Office of Consumer Services  
and Maribel Rivera, DPS Office of Consumer Services  
cc: Sangeetha Kailas, DPS Office of Consumer Services

# Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN

### 2023

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**Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation**  
**OUTREACH & EDUCATION PLAN**  
**2023**

**Section 1**  
**Utility Information**

# UTILITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION AND COMPANY OFFICIALS

Dates Covered by Plan: From: January 1, 2023 To: December 31, 2023

- Outreach & Education (O&E) Liaison to Office of Consumer Services (OCS) Staff:

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- Senior Manager/Officer in charge of Outreach & Education:

Name: Jerry Nappi  
Title: Manager – Public Relations  
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- President & Chief Executive Officer:

Name: Chris Capone  
Title: President & CEO

# SERVICE PROFILES

## Service Territory:

- Municipalities (counties, towns, villages) served in whole or in part: Albany, Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan and Ulster.
- Estimated or known total population in the service territory: 745,664 Please identify the source of this statistic: 2020 Census Data

Total number of service accounts in 2022:

	Electric	Natural Gas Service
Residential	270,046	71,183
Commercial	50,577	16,098

## Electronic Access:

- Total number of customers who participate in paperless billing at the end of 2022: 151,329
- Total number of customers using e-mail for utility information and alerts at the end of 2022: 184,000 unique email addresses; 66,787 accounts were registered for text message or email outage alerts.
- Total number of accounts registered for an online account at the end of 2022: 175,856.
- Total number of mobile application downloads, minus uninstalls, for customers to manage their account through the end of 2022: 99,237 (18,294 downloads in 2022)
- Total number of customer sessions using mobile applications to obtain educational information, alerts, etc.: 696,884 (Central Hudson only tracks our mobile application, we are not able to capture what they are using the application for)

## Low Income Customers

- Estimated number of low income customers and/or number eligible for the

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) at the end of 2022: 19,098

- Estimated number of customers receiving HEAP during the 20210-2022 heating season:
  - regular: 8,337
  - emergency grants: 3,343

#### Special Needs Customers

- Total number of accounts coded 62 or over: 9,831
- Total number of accounts coded Elderly/Blind/Disabled: 12,934
- Total number of customers known to be on life support equipment (Electric companies only): 936
- Total number of customers receiving bills and brochures in Braille: 0
- Total number of customers receiving large-print bills: 811

#### Customers with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

**Languages other than English spoken in the service territory:** Spanish is the most prevalent language other than English spoken in our service territory. In 2022 our Spanish Bi-lingual Customer Service Representatives received 28,091 calls from these customers in Central Hudson's dedicated Spanish queue. There are several other languages spoken by our customer base, these calls are handled by our Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) who have 24/7 access to an Interpreter Service. The Interpreter Service has CSRs available in many different languages such as Spanish, French, Arabic, Urdu, Albanian, Hindi, Romanian, Turkish, Mandarin, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Hakka Chinese, Punjabi, Pashto, Ukrainian, Polish, and Cantonese. The Interpreter Service line took approximately 843 calls in 2022.

**Please identify the source of this information:** Interpreter Service Line reports and our Spanish queue reports. We have 10 Spanish Bi-lingual Customer Service Reps and a separate que for the bi-lingual CSRs. Non-Spanish speaking CSRs can transfer Spanish speaking customers to this queue. Any CSR can use our interpreter line through our outside vendor Language Services Associates while servicing a customer.

#### How does the utility identify special needs and LEP customers?

**LEP** – Our current CIS allows for an account to be coded as “Spanish Speaking.” As demonstrated by the data above, this represents the majority of our LEP customers. Based on a customer's request, the account will be coded “Spanish Speaking.”

**Special Needs** – Central Hudson collects this information while taking an application, a financial statement, or through general conversation with a customer either over the phone, in person, email, or Live Chat. The account will be coded

based on the special need (disabled/elderly/blind/hearing or speech impaired or any combination of the above) of the primary customer and also coded EBD (elderly, blind or disabled based on the household make up in accordance with the Home Energy Federal Practices Act (HEFPA)). Our annual Rights and Responsibilities bill insert also provides a form that a customer can complete and return to indicate they are a special needs customer, EBD, LSE or other.

How does the utility encourage these customers to identify themselves?

- During the service application process every customer is asked for their employer information. Customers may indicate if they are disabled or retired. The customer is then asked questions to determine if they are elderly, blind or disabled, which would identify both the primary customer and their household as special needs or not. Elderly customers can also be identified by their date of birth.
- Upon completion of a financial statement customers are asked about their income, including SSI, SS, public assistance, or pension.
- On the back of the customers' bills, it states that there is a senior identification program and an LSE program.
- All programs are available for viewing online.
- Rights and Responsibilities brochures are mailed to all residential and non-residential customers annually. This information is also available on the website and linked in ebills messaging.
- Payment Reminder notices have a statement geared specifically to elderly and special needs customers and on the back of our Final Termination Notices it states that the customer is entitled to HEFPA protections.
- Our Powering Connections newsletter is for low-income, seniors and customers coded EBD and includes information advising customers of our programs.
- Table signs and banners at our outreach events make customers aware of available programs.
- Messages are placed on bills advising customers of programs for which they may qualify.
- Written material such as flyers are available at all table events, libraries, community agencies, and grocery stores. Written materials such as flyers are also available electronically for any customer to download. A link to our website directing customers to payment assistance options was placed on school websites where permitted, and we worked with local schools to send out electronic payment assistance flyers to the families of school-age children. These flyers are available in Spanish and English.
- This information is also shared periodically through radio ads, social media, etc.

Do customer service representatives discuss Special Needs Programs with customers who call to apply for service?

Yes



# BUDGET INFORMATION

## Estimated Outreach & Education Budget for January – December 2023:

Provide a budget breakdown of the FY'22 Estimated Budget for Outreach and Education Expenditures. Please make it clear whether your winter budget is part of your overall budget. Spending details should be included in the topic specific pages found in Section 4.

**Total** ..... \$775,500

**Electric: Total** ..... \$620,400

**Gas: Total** ..... \$155,100

### Breakdown by Categories:

#### ▪ **Customer Service**..... \$95,500

Includes messaging on billing, complaint procedures, rate information, rights and responsibilities, special needs, etc.

	Electric	Gas
Bill Inserts	\$8,000	\$2,000
Brochures/Flyers	\$6,000	\$1,500
Direct Mail	\$8,000	\$2,000
Educational Videos		
Email	\$6,400	\$1,600
Media	\$32,000	\$8,000
Newsletters	\$8,000	\$2,000
Web and digital media	\$8,000	\$2,000
Other		

#### ▪ **Energy Affordability**..... \$88,000

	Electric	Gas
Bill Inserts	\$1,600	\$400
Brochures/Flyers		
Direct Mail		
Educational Videos		
Email	\$800	\$200
Other		
Media	\$64,000	\$16,000
Newsletters		
Web and digital media	\$4,000	\$1,000

## Estimated Outreach & Education Budget for January – December 2023:

### ▪ Energy Efficiency..... \$167,000

	Electric	Gas
Bill Inserts	\$4,000	\$1,000
Brochures/Flyers		
Direct Mail	\$76,000	\$19,000
Educational Videos		
Email	\$1,600	\$400
Media	\$44,000	\$11,000
Newsletters		
Web and digital media	\$8,000	\$2,000
Other (explain)		

### ▪ Seasonal Communications..... \$70,000

Specify the amounts dedicated to winter outreach \$70,000

	Electric		Gas	
	total	winter	total	winter
Bill Inserts	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$1,600	\$1,600
Brochures/Flyers				
Direct Mail				
Educational Videos				
Email	\$800	\$800	\$200	\$200
Media	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Newsletters				
Web and digital media	\$800	\$800	\$200	\$200
Other (explain)				

### ▪ Service-Related Communications..... \$329,000

Includes messaging on outages, infrastructure, metering, safety, tree trimming, etc.

	Electric	Gas
Bill Inserts	\$48,000	\$12,000
Brochures/Flyers		
Direct Mail	\$64,000	\$16,000
Educational Videos		
Email	\$4,000	\$1,000
Media	\$136,000	\$34,000
Newsletters		
Web and digital media	\$11,200	\$2,800
Other (explain)		

## Estimated Outreach & Education Budget for January – December 2023

### ▪ **Other Communications**..... \$26,000

Identify and describe other programs that do not fall into the previous categories (e.g. COVID-19).

	Electric	Gas
Bill Inserts		
Brochures/Flyers	\$800	\$200
Direct Mail		
Educational Videos		
Email	\$4,000	\$1,000
Media	\$16,000	\$4,000
Newsletters		
Web and digital media		
Other		

## Actual Outreach & Education Expenditures for January – December 2022:

Provide Outreach and Education expenditures for the previous year. Indicate the total proposed budget for 2021 and the total actual expenditures. Each category table should include actual (not proposed) spending by outreach method/tool for the year.

	Planned	Spent
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>\$691,224</b>	<b>\$896,644</b>
<b>Electric: Total</b> .....	<b>\$555,812</b>	<b>\$717,315 (winter \$101,127)</b>
<b>Gas: Total</b> .....	<b>\$135,412</b>	<b>\$179,329 (winter \$25,282)</b>

### Breakdown by Categories:

	Planned	Spent
▪ <b>Customer Service</b> .....	<b>\$66,200</b>	<b>\$103,152</b>
Includes messaging on billing, complaint procedures, rate information, rights and responsibilities, special needs, etc.		

	Electric	Gas	Total
Bill Inserts	\$9,832	\$2,458	\$12,290
Brochures/Flyers	\$5,832	\$1,458	\$7,290
Direct Mail	\$13,550	\$3,388	\$16,938
Educational Videos			
Email	\$5,640	\$1,410	\$7,050
Media	\$32,959	\$7,865	\$40,824
Web and digital media	\$7,414	\$1,854	\$9,268
Newsletters	\$7,593	\$1,899	\$9,492
Other			

		Planned	Spent
▪ <b>Energy Affordability</b> .....		<b>\$16,000</b>	<b>\$96,837</b>
	Electric	Gas	Total
Bill Inserts	\$1,689	\$423	\$2,112
Brochures/Flyers			
Direct Mail			
Educational Videos			
Email	\$480	\$120	\$600
Media	\$71,592	\$17,899	\$89,491
Newsletters			
Web and digital media	\$3,707	\$927	\$4,634
Other			

**Actual Outreach & Education Expenditures for January – December 2022:**

		Planned	Spent
▪ <b>Energy Efficiency</b> .....		<b>\$281,524</b>	<b>\$147,293</b>
	Electric	Gas	Total
Bill Inserts			
Brochures/Flyer			
Direct Mail	\$73,830	\$18,458	\$92,288
Educational Videos			
Email	\$1,440	\$360	\$1,800
Media	\$42,564	\$10,641	\$53,205
Newsletters			
Web and digital media			
Other (explain)			

Planned

Spent

▪ **Seasonal Communications**.....

\$45,000

\$126,409

Specify the amounts dedicated to winter outreach

\$45,000

\$126,409

	Electric		Gas		Total
	Total	Winter	Total	Winter	
Bill Inserts	\$6,052	\$6,052	\$1,514	\$1,514	\$7,566
Brochures/Flyers					
Direct Mail					
Educational Videos					
Email	\$840	\$840	\$210	\$210	\$1,050
Media	\$85,385	\$85,385	\$21,347	\$21,347	\$106,732
Newsletters	\$8,848	\$8,848	\$2,213	\$2,213	\$11,061
Web and digital media					
Other (explain)					

- Planned      Spent
- **Service-Related Communications**..... **\$250,000      \$331,222**  
 Includes messaging on outages, infrastructure, metering, safety, tree trimming, etc.

	Electric	Gas	Total
Bill Inserts	\$45,207	\$11,302	\$56,509
Brochures/Flyer			
Direct Mail	\$69,372	\$17,343	\$86,715
Educational Videos			
Email	\$3,960	\$990	\$4,950
Media	\$135,316	\$33,830	\$169,146
Newsletters			
Web and digital media	\$11,121	\$2,781	\$13,902
Other (explain)			

**Actual Outreach & Education Expenditures for January – December 2022:**

- Planned      Spent
- **Other Communications**..... **\$25,000      \$91,731**  
 Identify and describe other programs that do not fall into the previous categories (e.g. COVID-19).

	Electric	Gas	Total
Bill Inserts			
Brochures/Flyers	\$1,570	\$393	\$1,963
Direct Mail			
Educational Videos			
Email	\$1,680	\$420	\$2,100
Media	\$70,134	\$17,534	\$87,668
Newsletters			
Web and digital media			
Other (explain)			

# INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Please describe infrastructure investments and any structural or physical developments (such as tree or pole maintenance) planned for the year. Indicate whether the Company is conducting public awareness regarding these activities. If outreach is planned, use the Infrastructure/ Security in Section 4 to provide more in-depth information about your public awareness activities regarding this topic.

## **Activity #1: Vegetation Management**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Vegetation Management, as scheduled each year, generally by circuit.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: letters are mailed to property owners in advance in areas where tree trimming is to take place. Annual written notifications are sent to all municipalities within Central Hudson's service territory of its Danger Tree Removal.

## **Activity #2: Electric Distribution Improvement Projects**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Electric distribution improvement projects, as planned and scheduled each year.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: letters are mailed to property owners and municipal leaders in affected areas.

## **Activity #3: Natural Gas Distribution Improvement**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Natural gas distribution improvement projects, the replacement of aging gas mains and services, as planned and scheduled each year.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: letters are mailed to impacted property owners and virtual and in-person open house events (when permitted) are provided for most projects. Work is coordinated with municipalities.

#### **Activity #4: H&SB-Lines Electric Transmission Rebuild**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** All permitting complete, including Article VII Certificate and Environmental Management & Construction Plan approval by NYSPSC. Construction commenced late 2022 and will continue until 2026.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: Significant public awareness occurred during New York State's Article VII process, including public open houses, public hearing and legal notices. A project website is maintained through Central Hudson's website. Additional and on-going public awareness occurs in compliance with Article VII Certificate Conditions; including general notification of construction commencement (Condition #36); 7-45 day landowner notifications prior to construction in their immediate area (Condition #37); periodic extension of work hours (Condition #51); letter to agricultural operators (Condition #121).

#### **Activity #5: Poughkeepsie Former Manufactured Gas Plan Remediation**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Poughkeepsie MGP site remediation, North Water Street.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: In 2017, Central Hudson met with city and county officials to discuss the planned activated once approved by regulators. In 2018, letters were sent to nearby property owners, and we met with Hudson River based rowing clubs, property owners, and city officials, and conducted a community meeting which included news media and began the project. In 2019, the next phase of the project began, and we notified and met with stakeholder groups, including municipal and county representatives. During 2020, a pilot project was conducted to test a new method; weekly virtual stakeholder meetings before and during the project were held. The project is currently on hold pending regulatory approval of a new remediation plan. Regular stakeholder and community communications will continue as needed.

#### **Activity #6: KM Transmission Line, rebuild**

**New or On-going Activity:** Ongoing

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Rebuild the 69kV KM line between Knapps Corners Substation and Myers Corners Substation due to aging & deterioration. Rebuild to include replacement of all pole structures and conductors.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: Participated in public hearing events in both Towns of Wappinger and Poughkeepsie in 2022. Direct communications with abutting property owners will take place prior to construction commencement, planned for late 2023.

## **Activity #7: Primary Control Center – Training Academy facility**

**New or On-going Activity:** New

**Description and Schedule for Planned Activity:** Construction of a new Primary Control Center and a centralized Training Academy on property adjacent to the Kingston District Office in the Town of Ulster.

**Public Awareness Planned:** Y/N, Yes: Held in-person and virtual meetings with adjoining neighbors and other stakeholders in 2021 and continue to hold quarterly virtual meetings in 2022 to provide project updates, exchange ideas and address concerns.



**Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation**  
**OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN**  
**2023**

**Section 2**

**Mandated Outreach and Education**

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION REQUIRED BY COMMISSION ORDER – (PART I)**

Various Commission Orders have included specific Outreach & Education requirements. Please complete the form in Part II of this section for each case that included requirements for O&E, and for which the reporting time is still active. Similarly, we request that all Steam Corporations indicate the last time an O&E report was filed with the Commission and to which office it was sent.

### **PLEASE FILL OUT:**

We have 2 number of Cases at this time and have completed a form for each active case.

# **OUTREACH & EDUCATION REQUIRED BY COMMISSION ORDER (PART II)**

## **Case No.20-E-0428/20-G-0429**

Required by Order, Joint Petition, Settlement, Other:  
Order JP

Date the Order was issued and Effective:  
November 18, 2021

Summary of O&E requirements:

The Company will, during the term of this JP, continue to file an annual Outreach and Education Plan with the Secretary by April 1 of each Rate Year that is consistent in scope with plans filed by the Company under the 2018 Rate Plan.

Intervals for which the O&E Report/s are Required to be submitted (e.g., quarterly annually): Annually

Confirm that past reports have been properly submitted: It is important to note that the reports must be sent to the Secretary's office. Please indicate to which office your O&E Reports were submitted and specify the date/s:

Reports have been submitted properly in case 17-M-0475.

This report was last submitted on 4/1/21. Previous submission dates include 8/26/20, 8/30/19,9/10/18.

Date Reporting May Cease:

## **Case No. 14-M-0565 and Case No. 20-M-0266**

Required by Order, Joint Petition, Settlement, Other:  
Order

Date the Order was issued and Effective:  
August 12, 2021

Summary of O&E requirements:

The Company will submit an addendum to the Outreach & Education plan that incorporates targeted outreach to inform customers on the availability of the self-certification process for Central Hudson's Low-Income Bill Discount Program.

Intervals for which the O&E Report/s are Required to be submitted (e.g., quarterly annually):  
Annually

Confirm that past reports have been properly submitted: This report was first due in February 2022.

Date Reporting May Cease:

**Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation  
OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN  
2023**

**Section 3**

**Global Outreach and Education Tools**

# **2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results**

## **CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE LINES/CALL CENTER**

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Central Hudson's CSRs address initial inquiries and explain available assistance programs. Central Hudson adheres closely to all requirements provided by the Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA) for public utilities. Central Hudson works closely with the Department of Social Services, Salvation Army, Family Partnership of Poughkeepsie and Community Action as well as other charitable organizations to ensure each customer receives assistance with questions and problems related to their electric and natural gas use. Central Hudson's Cares Unit helps customers with HEAP and other programs for customers with low incomes.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C.

Central Hudson works to develop new avenues of communication whenever possible. We have continually expanded our email and chatbot offering. Customers can use Chat Live and receive assistance anytime, day or night. In 2022, we received 20,324 live-agent chats. Additionally, in 2022, our CSRs answered 138,469 e-mail communications through the following separate email accounts:

- Customer Account Services
- Contact Us email account
- Commercial, Meter Reading email account
- Spanish Community email account.

In early 2019, we started a pilot program to staff CSRs at Shop Rite grocery stores in Poughkeepsie and Newburgh to assist customers with their billing questions and to provide educational materials on our programs and services. These visits were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With Covid restrictions ending, the Consumer Outreach team was able to resume weekly visits to Shop Rite in Vails Gate and Poughkeepsie early in 2022.

**Goals for 2023:**

CSRs receive various training throughout the year. All new employees receive at least 8 hours of training in connection with Outreach and Collections. All Contact Center employees receive annual refresher training twice a year on various topics including Outreach and Collections. In 2023, our CSRs and Supervisors will have in person and/or virtual monthly team meetings for continuous training. Customer satisfaction results are targeted to be above 89 percent.

Central Hudson intends to continue responding to customers' needs through our contact center, including with Chat Live and emails.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Maintaining compliance with the Home Energy Fair Practices Act is the highest priority for Central Hudson.

**Description of 2023 Program:**

CSR Training Bursts which are completed live via Microsoft Teams have been implemented. This allows CSRs to access refresher training any topic they feel they need more training on throughout the year.

New employees will receive formal training at 2 months, 12 months and 24 months. The formal class covers a two week time period. The training agenda covers a variety of subjects related to Outreach and Collections. Each training period is scheduled for eight hours in length. In addition, informal training is scheduled for the entire Contact Center staff during April and October of 2022.

Central Hudson will continue to staff the contact center, including with Chat Live and emails with CSRs who can assist our customers.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## MASS/BLAST NOTIFICATIONS

Please describe how and when the utility uses e-mail, text alerts and robo-calls for mass notifications as part of its overall O&E plan. Note: use of these tools for specific topics (e.g. safety) should also be described in more detail on the page for that program.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

**E-mail:** Central Hudson sends emails to all customers who have given us their email addresses (about 184,000 unique addresses associated with approximately 213,000 of our customer accounts) in the following cases:

Prior to any major storms and during emergencies with messaging that includes safety reminders, preparedness tips and outage resources.

Distribution of “*PowerTalk*,” our quarterly e-mail newsletter, with information about topics such as safety, account resources, communications tools, and energy efficiency.

Monthly, or more frequent, emails about energy efficiency program offerings.

Distribution of other emails about important issues, new programs and promotions as warranted.

Sometimes targeting subsets of customers/stakeholders based on account characteristics, such as: assistance program(s) recipients; municipal officials; etc.

**Outbound Calls:** Central Hudson uses outbound calls in the following cases:

To communicate with Special Needs and LSE customers prior to the arrival of major storms urging preparation.

As “call backs” throughout storm restoration efforts to confirm that service has been restored- as crews complete repairs.

In specific cases, generally of an urgent nature, as determined on a case-by-case basis (for example, outbound calls are used to contact customers affected by localized interruption of natural gas service to coordinate re-lights).

For notification of special programs including notification to potential customers that may be eligible for HEAP and/or enrollment in Central Hudson’s Low Income Bill Discount Program. Announcements are made when HEAP is available along with other HEAP related messages

To communicate with customer’s that have a past due amount to raise awareness that they have a bill that we have not received payment on.

**Text Alerts:** Text messaging is used to communicate with subscribers regarding electric service outages (notifications, reporting, status and restoration), and provides billing notifications and a payment option.



**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Central Hudson maintains about a 20 percent open rate across all its email channels. We monitor open rates, click rates, conversion rates, and followers and unsubscribe rates on an ongoing basis. We adjust messaging strategies based on open and click rates and program participation objectives.

**Goals for 2023:**

Continue with the above listed forms of communications to engage with customers and we will ensure email blast updates are sent every day during a major storm to update customers on the restoration efforts.

Continue to grow our database of customer email addresses on file and follow best practices for distribution to ensure a high delivery rate to help maximize the reach of this messaging.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Mass communication is an effective tool in reaching customers quickly with relevant information regarding safety and their utility services.

**Description of 2023 Program:**

Send quarterly editions of *PowerTalk*, our e-newsletter

Send additional emails each month or more frequently about topics such as: safety, energy efficiency, renewable energy options, beneficial electrification and customer service offerings.

Continue to utilize our text message alerts service for outages and account notifications.

Continue to populate customer records with up-to-date email address information.

Work to continue enrollment growth in our text message alerts program.

Continue to communicate via email during major storm restorations daily or more frequently.

Continue to communicate via email about billing and energy program options.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## OUTREACH MATERIALS

Identify the types of materials (e.g. print, visual aids, exhibits) developed for consumer outreach and education programs. Note: use of these tools for specific topics (e.g. safety) should also be described in more detail on the page for that program.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Outreach uses multiple methods for communicating to customers print and digital, via mail and in-person at events, with some materials being available in both English and Spanish.

- Our communication channels:
- Direct mail letter
- Bill inserts and onserts
- Bill messages
- Newsletters
- News releases
- Social media communications, including livestream broadcasts
- E-blasts
- Program specific brochures and flyers
- In-person & virtual events
- Radio spots (including announcements during impactful events) - English and Spanish
- Text messaging
- Table signs, including QR-coded table signs
- Advertisements in bilingual magazine LaVoz
- Senior ID Program (tool)
- Large Print Bills
- Upfront recorded messages for customers calling our Contact Center
- Interpreter Service (tool)
- Spanish-speaking CSRs (tool)
- Website available in Spanish, and available in other languages via browser translator tools
- Bilingual forms
- Outreach van
- Promotional materials

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

In 2022 Central Hudson was actively communicating about , the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), and the Electric & Gas Bill Relief Program for low-income customers. These new programs included communications via social media, radio, print ads, website and email.

Also in 2022, Central Hudson began hosting open house events for its customers. These events, which continue in 2023, offer the ability for customers to meet with employees in person to get information about solar programs and energy efficiency, service reliability, billing, and state energy goals. Open houses take place in each district Central Hudson serves. Customers receive invitations via email.

Central Hudson continues having a presence at the Dutchess County Fair, as it has done for decades. Our two booths provided another opportunity for customers to meet with us, ask questions, voice concerns and boost their energy efficiency behavior by purchasing inexpensive LED bulbs. We also had a presence at the Newburgh Illuminated event in the summer of 2022, providing an opportunity for customers to speak with us.

With Dutchess Outreach, we distributed 1,000 co-branded tote bags and outreach materials for the food drive and donated numerous cases of water and non-perishable food items.

With People's Place in Ulster County, we distributed 1,000 co-branded tote bags and outreach materials for the holiday hunger program.

In the Fall, Central Hudson set up a table at area Shop Rites and food pantries.

### **Goals for 2023:**

In 2023, we will continue the above distribution of outreach materials electronically, via mail and through material drop-offs at agencies. We will continue hosting outreach presentations on our programs and services via Facebook Live and other methods. We will also continue hosting the bi-monthly online "Coffee Buzz" with local organizations to share ideas and resource information. In 2023, we will continue to work to increase Spanish outreach engagement, and accessibility of our literature for our Spanish speaking customers.

In 2023 Central Hudson expects to attend outreach events at locations such as community clubs, senior events, speaker bureau engagements, presentations at the college level, chamber of commerce events, employment events, food pantries, churches, farm stands, community action agencies grocery stores and the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Central Hudson will continue hosting its open house events at locations throughout its service territory.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Goal prioritization was set with the intent of supporting important company initiatives such as: assisting low-income customers; ensuring public safety; and ensuring customers are informed and educated on our programs and services.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include such as audience, messaging, schedule)

We will continue all activities indicated above.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## UTILITY OUTREACH EVENTS

Describe how the utility identifies and participates in public events. Distinguish between utility-sponsored and community sponsored events. Use the tracking sheet in Appendix A to list events conducted in 2022 and those planned for 2023.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Maintaining a community presence is important to Central Hudson. Central Hudson has continued hosting an online bimonthly Coffee Buzz for our community partners, which includes government agencies and non-profit organizations who assist our customers. We also hosted our annual Outreach Forum in person for our community partners.

Central Hudson maintained a presence in the few months of 2022 by attending community sponsored events by community partners. In late Spring of 2022, our Community Outreach increased to include presentations of low-income programs and payment assistance to various agencies. Tabling events at local events also increased during this time. For example, we set up a table at the Newburgh Illuminated Festival, Cars for a Cause Car show and tabled at 3 Office of the Aging picnics during the summer of 2023. In November of 2022, Consumer Outreach began tabling at the Poughkeepsie Galleria in the evenings to assist holiday shoppers with questions regarding their Central Hudson service. Tabling at the Galleria continued throughout the remainder of 2022 and into 2023.

So far in 2023, we have hosted a virtual Coffee Buzz, attended monthly farmstands, and have done presentations at 5 different senior citizen centers/communities.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Central Hudson participated in many presentations giving our community partners information on energy efficiency, renewable energy, utility careers, payment assistance, safety and more. Our annual Outreach Forum was again held in person and had about 100 attendees from community organizations and state agencies. We provided payment assistance information to various local organizations and distributed more than 2,000 bags to local food organizations and others. Central Hudson also hosted numerous Facebook Live events.

### **Goals for 2023:**

Central Hudson will continue to participate in virtual and in-person events. We are researching new avenues to reach our customers and new relationships with community partners.

In 2023 we will continue our bi-monthly virtual “Coffee Buzz” meetings to connect with agencies and share program information and ideas on how best to assist our customers. Our goal in 2023 is to host at least one additional program via Facebook Live to ensure our customers have an alternative to in-person events. In 2023, we will also work to increase our Spanish engagement outreach and education.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Goal prioritization was set with the intent of supporting important company initiatives such as: assisting low-income customers; helping customers make wise decisions regarding their energy use; and enhancing customer satisfaction. Meeting with our customers in-person helps us to accomplish these goals and so therefore, is a high priority.

**Description of 2023 Program:**

In 2023, we will continue with our virtual bimonthly Coffee Buzz and in person Outreach Forum in the fall. We will also continue with hosting outreach presentations on our programs and services via Facebook Live.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA & MOBILE APPLICATIONS

Please describe how the utility uses its Website, Social Media, and Mobile Applications as part of its overall O&E plan. Note: use of these tools for specific topics (e.g. safety) should be described in more detail on the page for that program.

### New/Continuing Program:

**Websites/App:** Central Hudson's website continues to be a primary resource for customers to find information and conduct transactions. Major upgrades to our website offerings that were deployed in 2022 included: a Spanish version of the payment experience, guest users Apple & Google Pay payment options, a new version of an Emergency Website and an update StormCentral Outage map. In 2022, Central Hudson also deployed upgrades to our mobile app which included: biometrics (touch & face ID), request an agent callback, change password, app ratings & reviews, enrollment options for budget billing, automatic payments, eBills & a payment wallet, credit card payment option, a Spanish version of the payment experience, guest users Apple & Google Pay payment options. We continue to use CentralHudson.com to inform customers about all aspects of our services and customer energy use. Information about storms and outages, safety, energy efficiency, energy choice, online resources, account tools, payment options and payment assistance programs are just some of the resources available here.

**Customer-specific information and targeted notifications inside the customer account portal:** Customers logged into the My Account section of our website are presented information tailored to their account profile and status about energy-efficiency, billing and payment programs. For example: Anyone past due on their latest bill payment who logs in will see a note alerting them to the late payment status and a prompt about payment assistance program offerings such as HEAP, deferred payment agreements and more. Logged-in customers are presented information about energy efficiency incentives and non-wires alternative programs for which they are eligible. Paperless eBills, Budget Billing, Automatic Payments and our text messaging service enrollment options are also prominently presented to customers upon login.

**Web Chat:** Central Hudson's Live Web Chat service gives customers the option to seek information and assistance from our CSRs in private, online chat sessions. Our automated chat service allows us to serve a greater number of customers through this service and address routine tasks. There were approximately 111,000 automated chat sessions in 2022 – a 39% increase from 2021. If the automated service is unable to adequately serve the customer, the customer is given the option to chat with a live representative.

**Contact us form with informational prompts:** The “Contact Us” form on Central Hudson’s website allows customers to submit information and request assistance from us online. Central Hudson CSRs respond to these inquiries. The form prompts customers with information and self-service options related to the topic of their inquiry.

**Texting:** Central Hudson’s texting program continues to gain in popularity. At the end of 2022, we had more than 66,000 customers enrolled in our alerts service: 13,460 receiving emails and 53,327 receiving SMS text messages. This is an increase of 25% above 2021. This service provides customers with billing reminders, proactive notifications about service interruptions and restoration updates and allows customers to report outages and make payments via text message.

**Social media:** Frequent use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to inform customers about a wide range of topics such as safety, storm preparedness, energy efficiency tips, payment assistance programs, and resources available to our customers. Throughout 2022 we have been using private messaging options on these channels daily to assist with customer service requests shared by customers there. We continue to use YouTube to share videos about Central Hudson, our operations and services and started using Vimeo for these purposes as well. We will continue to use LinkedIn to share news of career opportunities at Central Hudson

**Email:** In addition to account-specific email notices sent to customers registered for online account access, Central Hudson sends email blasts to all customers with an address on file about important topics such as major storm warnings and restoration updates, safety, energy efficiency programs, payment assistance programs and the availability of resources intended to improve customer service.

**2022 Results, Evaluation and Feedback:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

**Website:** Central Hudson’s website drew more than 7 million visits in 2022. It continues to be a primary resource for customers to find information and conduct transactions. Major upgrades to our website offerings that were deployed in 2022 included: a Spanish version of the payment experience, guest users Apple & Google Pay payment options, a new version of an Emergency Website and an updated StormCentral Outage map.

**Mobile App:** In 2022, Central Hudson also deployed upgrades to our mobile app which included: biometrics (touch & face ID), request an agent callback, change password, app ratings & reviews, enrollment options for budget billing, automatic payments, eBills & a payment wallet, credit card payment option, a Spanish version of the payment experience, guest users Apple & Google Pay payment options.

**Chat Bot:** Central Hudson’s chatbot, Hudson, continues to see high customer engagement with 111,000 sessions in 2022, an increase of 39% from 2021. Customers used self-service options like make a payment and report an outages over 16,000 times.



**Social Media:** Central Hudson continued to utilize social media in 2022. We issued approximately 1,000 social media posts throughout 2022, plus thousands of additional responses to customer comments on social media. Social media was vital to keeping our customers informed about billing matters, impending storms and during widespread outage events. Other topics frequently communicated via social media included: safety; energy efficiency programs; payment assistance programs; self-service options and updates about our customer information system transition. At the end of 2022, Central Hudson had 29,276 Facebook followers (+8%), 5,455 Twitter followers (+5%), and 2,360 Instagram followers (+13%).

**Email:** Central Hudson has more than 195,830 unique customer email addresses associated with more than 229,000 accounts. Central Hudson sent more than 200 email blasts to customers and stakeholders in 2022. Our quarterly PowerTalk e-newsletter, which has been distributed to all customers since 2010, includes messages devoted to topics such as: energy efficiency; storm preparedness; account options, such as paperless billing; safety; payment assistance programs; electric vehicles; New York State energy initiatives and more. We sent e-newsletters to inform elected officials about topics such as public safety and infrastructure improvement projects. Email blast messaging was also used to keep customers informed about major storms, safety, special promotional offers, energy efficiency programs and important updates regarding customer accounts and the transition to our new customer information system.

**eBills:** Participation in our paperless eBills program stood at 151,329 at the end of 2022.

**Outage Map:** Central Hudson's StormCentral Outage Map remains a primary tool to obtain outage information. In 2022 there were more than 658,000 customer views of the Outage Map. Our outage map displays accurate, timely information to customers, employees, municipal leaders, and local news outlets. We provide up to the minute information regarding restoration times. When appropriate, relevant comments such as wires are down, poles are broken and being replaced, or work is being performed off road in wooded areas are displayed. This information, especially when provided during off hours, allows our customers to be well informed and understand outage duration times. We also upgraded to a newer version of our Outage Map in 2022, with additional features and a modernized interface.

**Goals for 2023:**

Develop and deploy enhanced online Start, Stop and Transfer service flows. These are the most complex transactions customers perform online with Central Hudson and we will be providing streamlined, optimized flows to improve customers' ability to complete the process.

Increase digital engagement through customer registration and enrollment in My Account, eBills, automatic payments, social media and other offerings.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Goal prioritization was set with the intent of supporting important company initiatives such as: assisting low-income customers; ensuring public safety; helping customers make wise decisions regarding their energy use; and enhancing customer satisfaction for those using our digital channels to locate information or conduct transactions. Opportunities were assessed and priorities were determined primarily by teams of employees under our Customer Services, Corporate Communications and Information Technology groups.

**Description of 2023 Program:**

Seek increased customer engagement with a broad range of our digital services by achieving all stated goals to better serve our customers and educate them about energy usage and safety topics.

# **Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN 2023**

## **Section 4 Outreach and Education Topics**

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## BILLING SERVICES AND PAYMENT ALTERNATIVES

This section should include outreach and education programs regarding how consumers are informed of bill payment services and options. Indicate how this information is shared with new customers and special needs populations such as those with Limited English Proficiency.

### New/Continuing Program:

- Central Hudson continues to promote billing options, payment assistance programs, and convenience options such as text message reminders to our customers. The Company encourages enrollment through incentive contests and provides information and education via CSR interactions, bill inserts, news releases, social media, e-blasts, and program specific brochures, presentations at public and senior citizen events, and in person by employee representatives at Shop Rite stores and several other locations. Details of the program include:
- Convenient Billing Options: Central Hudson offers automatic payment, and promotes it as a convenient, worry-free method for customers to pay their utility bills automatically. To encourage participation in the program, Central Hudson sends a direct-mail letter and enrollment application to customers participating in the Budget Billing Plan. The correspondence is sent after the customer's annual budget adjustment bill is issued. These mailings are aimed at budget billing customers because they are billed the same amount each month and the automatic payment option is a complement to budget billing as a means for customers to manage their bills as well as their energy costs. Additional outreach to our entire customer population regarding the automatic payment option is conducted through website banner ads, bill inserts, bill messages, and radio spots. Customers also can pay by credit card through our third-party vendor at no additional cost to the customer.
- Customers who enroll in our Notifi texting service can also pay their bill using SMS messaging. Once registered, they will receive bill ready and payment due reminder text messages. For customers with checking account information already on file in our Customer Information System, texting the message "PAY" will set up an automatic payment for the current amount due. This bill payment feature is quite easy and accessible to all customers.
- We also look for opportunities to increase the number of customers who receive and pay their utility bill on-line, through the secure "My Account" section of our website. The website banner ads, bill inserts, *Powertalk*, and bill messages convey the ease and convenience of eBills.

- **Large-Print Bills:** For customers who are sight-impaired Central Hudson offers a large-print bill option upon request. Annual notification is made via our Rights & Responsibilities bill inserts, periodically in our Powering Connections newsletter, and during outreach events in the community.
- **Extra Security Plan (ESP):** This program provides an extended billing due date to the 6th of the month following their 'normal' due date for customers who are on a fixed income.
- **Third Party Notification:** As provided by HEFPA (Home Energy Fair Practices Act), Central Hudson offers a Third-Party designation for residential customers. With this protection, any final termination notice issued on an account is also mailed at the request of the customer to the designated Third Party. The Third-Party application form is available on our website and is also available in Spanish.
- **Good Neighbor Fund (GNF)** is funded by voluntary customer contributions and matched by the company. The GNF is administered by Central Hudson's Consumer Outreach and Careunit departments. The Salvation Army Corps is the fiscal intermediary. This program is available to eligible customers as a last resort benefit. Through the GNF, Central Hudson has also made available a special grant for eligible veterans and active military families who are experiencing financial hardship. Typically, the GNF is communicated to customers via bill messages, bill inserts, Powering Connections newsletter, radio spots, *PowerTalk*, social media, the website, and CSR referrals. Information on the program is also shared with our partners in the community such as Catholic Charities and Family Services. Our Outreach team also provides face to face service at community events and education workshops.
- **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Awareness:** We utilize several sources to communicate HEAP availability to customers including; bill inserts, the bill message at the beginning of the HEAP season, Powering Connections, social media, banner ads on our website, outbound calling campaigns, radio ads, banners on popular Hudson Valley weather site and CSR referrals. While HEAP remains open, we include a banner on the homepage of our website, which links either to the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance or to the "payment assistance" section of our website. Outbound calls are made to customers that received HEAP in a prior year to encourage them to apply again if they have a current final termination notice. Our Outreach team also provides face to face service at community events and education workshops.
- Prior to the winter heating season, a presentation is given to all CSRs and Field Collectors which provides an overview of the customer protections as well as a summary of the services and programs that customers may be eligible to receive.
- **Bill Discount Program:** Residential customers who receive a HEAP benefit paid to Central Hudson are automatically enrolled in the Bill Discount Program. Customers who receive HEAP for another fuel source, Lifeline; SNAP; Medicaid; SSI; Federal

Public Housing Assistance; Veteran Pension or Survivors Pension; and certain programs for Native Americans can “self-enroll” in the program by providing supporting documentation are eligible for a monthly credit to be applied to that account for 12 consecutive months, provided the account remains open and active for the entire 12-month period. The amount of the bill discount credit is based on the service type and amount of the HEAP benefit. Each customer is entitled to one monthly credit regardless of whether the customer has electric and gas service from the Company. The credit appears on the customer’s monthly billing statement as “CH Benefit for HEAP recipients.”

- Bill Discount Program:

<b>Central Hudson Discounts</b>				
	<b>Electric Heat</b>	<b>Electric Non-Heat</b>	<b>Gas Heat</b>	<b>Gas Non-Heat</b>
<b>Tier 1</b>	\$31.57	\$31.57	\$28.74	\$3.00
<b>Tier 2</b>	\$40.65	\$40.65	\$53.35	\$3.00
<b>Tier 3</b>	\$62.98	\$59.03	\$71.74	\$3.00
<b>Tier 4</b>	\$51.99	\$51.99	\$64.70	\$3.00

- Low Income Reconnection Fee Waiver: Customers receiving a HEAP benefit applied to their Central Hudson account during the HEAP season will be eligible to receive one reconnection fee waived should they be locked for non-payment. The benefit is automatically initiated when a Low-Income participant is locked in non-payment and the order to restore service is issued. In 2022 Central Hudson was not locking customers, so there were no Reconnection Fees.
- Central Hudson ([www.CentralHudson.com](http://www.CentralHudson.com)) continues to provide information regarding retail access (Customer Choice Plan), CCA (Customer Choice Aggregation), and CDG (Customer Distributed Generation). Summary information about energy deregulation including a history of the supply costs charged by Central Hudson, as well as how customers can switch to another energy supplier can be accessed through our website. Listings for both electric and natural gas energy suppliers who operate in our service area are available on our website or via U.S. Mail. The website also provides historic supply charges for electricity and natural gas for full-service customers, providing a comparison for those who are shopping for alternatives.
- Consumer protection tips related to energy supply company marketing campaigns are included in news releases, Powering Connections newsletter, on our social media pages, and distributed at various community presentations throughout our service territory.

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C:

- \* Customers who participated in online billing: **151,329**
- \* Customer accounts registered for billing and payment email notifications, including all My Account customers: **175,856**

**Goals for 2023:**

Central Hudson will continue to educate its customers in 2023 on the various billing and payment options available to them. We will strive to increase the number of participants in our electronic billing and automatic payments by 10 percent. Central Hudson is also seeking to increase the number of customers enrolled in text alerts by 25 percent, to increase our reach via digital communications.

Central Hudson will continue to engage customers to increase enrollment within the Bill Discount Program for all eligible participants. We will continue our Consumer Outreach presence at various agency offices when permitted. Central Hudson continued a Facebook Live streaming format to educate our customers about all our payment assistance, special assistance and payment options in 2022 where customers have the opportunity to ask to interact and ask questions live.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Programs are designed to comply with HEFPA regulations and findings through customer satisfaction surveys, Outreach Forums, outreach presentations, and employee engagement in community activities and non-profit organizations. Local economic conditions and availability of federal, state, and local programs are also taken into consideration.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include)

- **Target Audience:** Central Hudson will continue to inform our customers about the Company's billing options and payment assistance programs. The billing options are available to all residential customers. Payment assistance programs are geared to assist the elderly, blind, disabled and low income customers.
- **Key Messages:** Included in the key messaging is information regarding Central Hudson's budget billing program, automatic payment options, Notifi texting service, large print bills, Extra Security Program, Third Party Notification and Good Neighbor Fund. Additional information is available regarding the Home Energy Assistance Program and the Bill Discount Program.
- **Outreach Materials:** The various billing options and payment assistance program are included in Central Hudson's brochures and on the web. This information is presented at meetings and shared with customers and community partners.
- **Delivery Vehicles:** Central Hudson utilizes its website and social media platforms to communicate this information to all its customers. Additional information on billing options and payment assistance is provided in bill inserts, press releases, *Powering Connections* newsletter, *PowerTalk* e-newsletter and in person at various locations.

- **Public and Community Relations**: As described above, the Company will continue to work with the Department of Social Services, Family Partnership of Poughkeepsie, Community Action Agency offices and various local food pantries through educational virtual workshops and in-person table events.
- **Corporate Partnerships**: N/A
- **Schedule**: Central Hudson will continue to communicate its billing options and payment assistance program information throughout the year. Specific information regarding the Home Energy Assistance Program and the Bill Discount Program will be communicated over the course of the entire year with an emphasis placed during the November through April timeframe.
- **New Initiatives**: In 2023 we are working to increase the number of in person Outreach events.



# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section should include outreach and education programs regarding how consumers are informed of their rights as a utility customer. Indicate how this information is shared with new customers and special needs populations such as those with Limited English Proficiency. Also include details regarding the Company's requirements under Case 20-M-0029 to inform customers of the right to obtain billing history of a dwelling.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

- The Rights & Responsibilities brochure is mailed as a bill insert during the August billing cycle and within the first bill of new customers.
- For customers receiving eBills, a link "Current Bill Insert" is embedded on the bill; the ebill that customers receive always contains a link to our Customer Rights & Responsibilities website section.
- Most pages on Central Hudson's website, including the "My Energy" (and "My Business" for commercial customers) include a link where customers can view and/or print the Rights & Responsibilities brochure.
- Bill messaging to inform prospective tenants or leasee's of the right to obtain billing history of a dwelling under Case 20-M-0029 was placed on the September Central Hudson bill, and on our website at: <https://www.cenhud.com/customer-service/your-rights-responsibilities/>. Central Hudson periodically notifies landlords, current residents & prospective tenants of their right for billing history limited to no more than 2 years free of charge for their residential properties.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

In 2022, the Rights & Responsibilities brochure was mailed in the August billing cycle. In addition, new customers received the Rights & Responsibilities with their initial bill. While we did not receive any specific feedback, if a customer called and requested a copy, then a customer service representative would mail one to them.

### **Goals for 2023:**

- The Rights & Responsibilities brochure will be mailed as a bill insert in August 2023.
- For customers receiving eBills, a link "Current Bill Insert" can be found at the top of their Page 1 billing statement (for the month of August, the current bill insert is the Rights & Responsibilities).
- Most pages on Central Hudson's website, including the "My Energy" (and "My Business" for commercial customers) include a link where customers can view and/or print the Rights & Responsibilities.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

The priority was set to meet our regulatory requirements and provide the best service and information to our customers.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include) Central Hudson's goal is to comply with the provisions of HEFPA and provide our customers with information regarding their rights and responsibilities as a utility customer. With this information customers will be empowered to make informed decisions about their utility service, they will be aware of assistance and other programs available to them, and they will understand the resources available to them to resolve any utility related problem.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

If the Company files a separate outreach plan as part of a Commission proceeding, the plan should be briefly described here. Reference the case number and date of most recent filing.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Continuing. The 2022 Energy Efficiency and Electrification programs were a continuation of the existing portfolio of offerings and will continue into 2023. Key energy efficiency and electrification related outreach efforts are described in detail below.

### **Community Lighting Distribution**

Central Hudson added this initiative to the Electric Portfolio in 2016 by leveraging an existing relationship with Philips to secure the purchase of LED bulbs at a lower than retail cost. This is an opportunity to engage with LMI customers and distribute LED light bulbs to them. This initiative targets customers using services from organizations such as the United Way and local food pantries and distribution efforts through our internal outreach team.

### **Behavioral Modification**

The Behavioral Modification program is presented to customers as energy insights. Enrollment is automatic, and customers are chosen based on a tier of requirements. Such as the length of time the account is open and usage. The goal of this initiative is to reduce consumption through targeted and seasonal messaging in emails and mailed paper reports. Energy reports capture seasonal trends such as focusing on cooling in the summer for electric customers.

### **Clean Heat (Heat Pump) Program Education**

All Heat Pump program activities were incorporated into the NYS Clean Heat program ("Clean Heat") as of April 1, 2020. Clean Heat is a common statewide framework deploying incentives for achieving MMBTU savings through cold climate heat pump installations. Savings targets for the program are based on first-year energy savings, accounting for the decreased fuel and change in electricity consumed at a given site.

Eligible technologies include Air-Source Heat Pumps ("ASHPs") and Ground Source Heat Pumps ("GSHPs") for space heating applications, and Heat Pump Water Heaters ("HPWHs") for water heating; all of which apply to residential, multifamily, small and large commercial applications. Central Hudson has built upon its trade ally base to develop a network of qualified Clean Heat installers to adopt and install these technologies throughout the territory. In addition, Central Hudson has worked in conjunction with other statewide utilities to offer certification training on heat pump installation guidelines and best practices related to full legacy fossil fuel displacement, further emphasizing statewide carbon reduction goals. For more information, please see Case Number: 18-M-0084 at:

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/MatterFilingItem.aspx?FilingSeq=247065&MatterSeq=55825>

### **Electric Vehicle Education**

The Electric Vehicle (“EV”) Education program promotes the adoption of electric vehicles. Progress is measured by the incremental electric vehicles registered in Central Hudson’s service territory on an annual basis. Electric vehicles are defined as battery electric vehicles (“BEVS”) and plug-in hybrid vehicles (“PHEVS”). Central Hudson continues to leverage a range of channels to communicate with customers about electric vehicle topics, including e-newsletters, social media, events, press releases, websites, direct mail, vehicle wraps and advertisements. The company actively collaborates with manufactures, local advocacy groups and other parties to expand awareness of electric vehicle information and develop new opportunities.

Central Hudson is an advocate for the adoption of EVs and acts as a resource for customers. At community events, including the Dutchess County Fair, Central Hudson customers can learn about our EV Make-Ready program, fleet assessment services, available charges at popular tourist destinations with an interactive map Central Hudson created, and how and where to charge elsewhere in our service territory. Customers are educated on the types of electric vehicles available, types of batteries, driving ranges, and what Central Hudson is doing to expand electric vehicle adoption. In addition, during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2022, Central Hudson hosted a virtual discussion on costs, rebates, benefits, and the charger installation process.

Employees are provided hands-on opportunities to increase their knowledge of electric vehicles and help to encourage electric vehicle adoption within communities served. The company currently owns a small fleet of all electric vehicles that are used to educate customers and showcase at local events such as county fairs. The fleet is also available for employees to test drive for an approved period and then essentially becomes ambassadors promoting the technology.

#### School Education Program

Central Hudson added this initiative to its portfolio in 2019. This initiative includes live performances presented in front of local elementary and middle school students within the Central Hudson service territory. The live performances are paired with assignments for the students to complete to educate them on energy and energy conservation. The theater held performances of the program in-school during 2022.

#### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:**

The key performance indicators for each Energy Efficiency and Electrification program are determined and defined through Earning Adjustment Mechanisms (EAMs). Results can be found within the Central Hudson Annual SEEP Reports and the Central Hudson Clean Energy Dashboard which are filed quarterly In the Matter of a Comprehensive Energy Efficiency Initiative- Matter Master: 18-00381/18-M-0084.

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId={62D42D5A-1CD2-46C8-B8E5-427995AEF27A}>

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId={CDD7B01B-E123-4954-BA92-F95D632F1B51}>

### **Goals for 2023:**

Central Hudson's Energy Efficiency outreach and communication efforts can be found in the Central Hudson 2021-2025 SEEP filing which is filed In the Matter of a Comprehensive Energy Efficiency Initiative- Matter Master: 18-00381/18-M-0084.

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId={D0AF4E87-3656-489E-B6C5-84D041FE4F81}>

### **How Priority Was Set:**

The New York State Public Service Commission's (PSC) December 2018 Order<sup>[2]</sup> adopts significantly accelerated utility energy efficiency targets, which will double utility energy efficiency achievement over 2019 to 2025, including a subsidiary goal for energy savings from the installation of heat pumps. The PSC action further requires that a minimum of 20 percent of the additional public investment in energy efficiency be dedicated to the low-to-moderate income sector.

All EE outreach and education efforts are designed to meet the goals set forth in the NE:NY Order referenced above.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include such as audience, messaging, delivery vehicles, schedule, evaluation plan, etc.)

#### **Energy Efficiency Education Campaign**

**Description:** The EE awareness and education plan for 2023 centers around building upon past outreach successes and focusing more efforts on income-eligible program participation.

**Target Audience:** All Residential and Commercial customers located in the Central Hudson service territory.

**Key Messages:** Air source and ground source heat pumps, Combination Boilers, Weatherization, Electric Vehicles, and LEDs.

**Outreach Materials:** Email, webpage, direct mail, paid search, paid social media.

**Delivery Vehicles:** In-store signage, media (digital advertising), website, email, social media, customer assistance.

**Public and Community Relations:** The Company consistently has Consumer Outreach teams deployed in the service territory. Central Hudson plans to continue to have reps available to support local agencies that serve our low-to-moderate income customers.

**Schedule:** The 2023 marketing and advertising efforts are scheduled to run the full program year.

# **2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results**

## **ENERGY SERVICE AFFORDABILITY**

If the Company files a separate outreach plan as part of a Commission proceeding, the plan should be briefly described here. Reference the case number and date of most recent filing.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Central Hudson filed an annual Low-Income program update report for case 14-M-0565. Pursuant to the August 2021 order, in January 2023. This report highlights the status of Central Hudson's Low-Income Bill Discount program and other programs targeting customers with low incomes. The report includes customer enrollment by tier level and the accompanying outreach and education specifically used towards the Low-Income Energy Affordability programs. It also identifies the steps Central Hudson takes to raise awareness of these programs in our community. This report also includes, (1) how many of the affordability program participants in the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) file match were not able to be identified in the utility system, and (2) the estimated number of total Home Energy Assistance Program recipients served by OTDA in their respective service territories.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Outreach in 2022 was focused on promoting HEAP enrollment and encouraging customers to enroll in the monthly low-income discount Program. Customers enrolled in this program before December 31, 2022, and who had arrears before May 1, 2022, were credited through New York State's Bill Relief Program. Central Hudson made automated outbound calls, sent emails and flyers to Community partners for customer distribution. As of January 2023, 5,634 accounts were credited for arrears totaling over \$7 million dollars.

### **Goals for 2023:**

The goal for 2023 is to identify low-income customers in our service territory who are using alternate fuel sources to ensure they are benefiting from the discounts provided to enable their energy burden to be at or below the goal of case 14-M-0565 and 20-M-0266 of 6% or less. A second goal is to promote the fact that customers with benefits other than HEAP, such as Food Stamps and SSI (Supplemental Security Income) can now self-certify, and direct them to Central Hudson's website.

**How Priority Was Set:**

Priorities were established in the Low-Income Order 14-M-0565 and 20-M-0266.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include such as audience, messaging, delivery vehicles, schedule, etc.)

Central Hudson will continue to focus on encouraging customers to apply for HEAP and promoting their ability to self-certify Central Hudson's Low-Income Bill Discount Program on the website. In addition, if a new arrears program is established, Central Hudson will promote that as well. Central Hudson will use all means available to promote these programs, including flyers, newsletters, social media, automated outbound calls, and Outreach events.



# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## INFRASTRUCTURE & SECURITY

This section should include outreach and education programs regarding structural or physical developments, e.g. tree/pole maintenance, transmission system upgrades, etc. Also include public awareness campaign/materials that focus on recognizing threats to utility systems and how you direct customers on how to report any wrongdoing.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

#### **2023 Continuing programs:**

- Routine tree trimming/vegetation management notification mailings.
- Mailings to property owners potentially affected by electric transmission repair/maintenance projects.
- Mailings to property owners affected by natural gas distribution improvement projects, public information sessions held virtually.
- Annual gas safety mailings to municipal officials and first responders, threat recognition training which focuses on the steps we take to familiarize customers on how to recognize suspicious activity in relation to the electric or gas infrastructure and reporting.
- *Dig Safely, now UDigNY* outreach to the public and municipal officials via mailings, newsletters, social media, news release with threat recognition information and reporting.
- H&SB line electric transmission line rebuild - web page updates, ongoing construction updates.
- MGP remediation project in Poughkeepsie – meetings to be held with state agencies and community stakeholders as needed. Explanatory signs were posted in public areas overlooking the project location Project ongoing.
- Video content through the “Story Chasers” initiative continues, featuring select employees addressing a variety of topics and initiatives, including safety, energy efficiency, energy issues.
- Knapps Corners electric substation rebuild: Nearing completion. Regular updates provided to municipal leaders; project ongoing.
- Central Hudson promotes utility infrastructure safety videos via social media to communicate and highlight the importance of maintaining safe distance from critical utility infrastructures and the need to call for mark outs before excavating.
- Primary Control Center / Training Academy facility under construction, Lake Katrine, Ulster County. Held in-person and virtual meetings with adjoining neighbors and other stakeholders in 2021 and in 2022 to provide project updates, exchange ideas, reinforce safety and address concerns. Regular updates to local elected officials.

- Video content through the “Story Chasers” initiative continues, featuring select employees addressing a variety of topics and initiatives, including safety, energy efficiency, energy issues.
- Continued use of the Municipal Portal, a resource for municipal and county emergency managers. This two-way, interactive tool provides critical information, online desktop and mobile reporting for power interruptions and road closures/conditions, and customized alerts when addressing major storm events and other emergencies.

#### 2023 new programs:

- Biannual mailing to 10,000 property owners along natural gas transmission corridors, with information on rights, responsibilities, and restrictions within the rights-of-way.
- Contractor Mailing
- Quarterly meetings with Newburgh Public Works departments to coordinate, update and discuss ongoing Leak Prone Pipe Projects.

See also ***“Infrastructure Investments and Developments.”***

#### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Received minimal comments from customers and elected representatives as a result of advanced communications. Most concerns were regarding specific customer-related issues, rather than the work in general.

#### **Goals for 2023:**

Continue to provide outreach for routine and new projects, safety measures and other activities that may impact customers. Seek to communicate in advance of projects, to alleviate customer concerns and promote an understanding of the necessity and nature of the work.

#### **How Priority Was Set:**

Central Hudson sets its priority regarding infrastructure communications based on the following:

- Regulatory requirements
- Projects that will have a significant impact on traffic
- Projects that require street repair and/or heavy tree trimming or tree removal
- Projects that require long construction duration
- Projects that are highly visible
- Projects that have the potential to raise community and/or customer concerns
- Public safety concern and messages.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include)

**2022 Continuing programs:**

- Routine tree trimming/vegetation management notification mailings.
- Mailings to property owners potentially affected by electric distribution improvement projects.
- Mailings (and open houses, if resumed) for property owners affected by natural gas distribution improvement projects.
- Annual gas safety mailings to municipal officials and first responders.
- *Dig Safely, now named UDigNY*, outreach to the public and municipal officials via mailings, newsletters, social media, news release; (see <https://www.cenhud.com/gas-projects>).
- H&SB electric transmission line rebuild: Planning board meetings, public notices, web page updates.
- Poughkeepsie former Manufactured Gas Plant site remediation continued outreach as activities restart. Letters to nearby property owners, meeting stakeholders (in person and/or virtually).
- TV transmission line rebuild. Letters to property owners, in-person/telephone contacts by construction crews and Central Hudson representatives.
- Potential resumption, depending on CDC protocols: Central Hudson offers an expanded on-site, hands-on training program for emergency responders, including local police and fire departments, utilizing a mobile training trailer that can be delivered to a municipal or county location. The program and equipment provide conditions and situations responders may encounter in the field.
- Safety videos via Facebook to communicate and highlight the importance of maintaining safe distance from critical utility infrastructures and the need to call for mark outs before excavating.
- A Municipal Portal for registered users, which debuted in 2020, provides a resource for municipal and county emergency managers. This two-way, interactive tool provides critical information, online desktop and mobile reporting for power interruptions and road closures/conditions, and customized alerts when addressing major storm events and other emergencies.

See also ***“Infrastructure Investments and Developments.”***

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## METERING

This section should include outreach and education programs regarding metering (e.g. how to read a meter), sub-metering, and AMR programs.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

General information about meters, including how to read them is found here on our website: <https://www.cenhud.com/en/my-energy/meters/how-to-read-meters/>. We also provide information on our website about ERT meters: <https://www.cenhud.com/en/my-energy/meters/ert-meters/>. Here, tariff and ERT Q&A information is also available.

When a meter is going to be changed due to our Annual Meter Test program a letter is sent to our customers to advise them of this. This test is done to ensure that our customers are billed accurately. The meter numbers are selected randomly each year for testing based upon their age and type. These meters are replaced with New York State approved Encoder Receiver Transmitter (ERT) meters, which allows quick and accurate readings from a short distance. The letter that is sent is attached to the Outreach Plan.

For those who would prefer to not have this type of meter installed, Central Hudson offers an opt-out program to residential customers. Some restrictions apply. The opt-out form is available on our website: [https://www.cenhud.com/globalassets/pdf/ert\\_optoutapplication.pdf](https://www.cenhud.com/globalassets/pdf/ert_optoutapplication.pdf).

In the past, if a customer voluntarily subscribed to Insights+ or elected to participate in one of our customer programs that included Insights+, the meter was replaced with a State-approved Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meter. This program has been discontinued.

Customers may submit their own meter readings during billing cycles when Central Hudson does not read the meter and would issue an estimated reading. Customers may easily submit these readings via our website: <https://www.cenhud.com/en/forms/meterreading/>

We also regularly communicate about meter reader safety, via the website and bill messages: <https://www.cenhud.com/en/my-energy/safety/meter-reader-safety/>  
Shared meter brochures and letters are mailed, upon inquiry, to applicable landlords and tenants. There's also a landlord/tenant meter agreement form on the website for a shared meter condition:  
<https://www.cenhud.com/globalassets/pdf/forms/ltagreement.pdf>

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

The ERT Opt Out letter issued to customers was successful. The letter informed customers of their choice to opt out of the ERT meter installation prior to the meter being changed for a time test. A meter reading text notification was deployed in December 2021. Customers enrolled in our Text Message Alerts program can now receive a text reminder when their 2-day window opens to submit a meter reading. In 2022 we incorporated image reader technology into our online customer-submitted meter reading option. Customers who upload an image of their digital display meter on the form will have the reading populated for them by the image reader.

**Goals for 2023:**

The purpose of our meter related communications is to inform the customers of their options. The information available on the website and the letters sent to the customers inform the customer of the choice to opt out of an ERT meter in advance of the meter change during the time test process or as part of a customer program enrollment. As we enhance our services in future years, we will ensure that the information is available on the website, on bill messages, and in-person events to inform the customer of their metering related service options.

**How Priority Was Set:**

It is required by the Public Service Commission and included in the ERT opt out tariff. Letters are currently sent to our customers on what to expect if their meter is changed out and replaced with a more efficient meter type when selected for time tests. These letters are mailed out 30 days in advance to provide customers the choice to opt out. Commercial representatives also leave door hangers with the customers explaining why meters are changed.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include)

Annual Meter Time test program:

- Target audience: customers whose meters were selected for a random time test.
- Key messages: Provides background of the time test program and allows the customer the choice to opt out of an ERT meter 30 days in advance of the meter change.
- Outreach Materials: letter
- Delivery vehicles: direct mail
- Schedule: direct mail – letters for Electric meter time tests are initiated when the time test selection program is run at the beginning of the year. The Gas time test letters are initiated at least 30 days prior to changing a gas meter; and are mailed out in increments prior to the scheduled change.
- New Customers: Upon application, new customers moving into a location that had an existing ERT meter are offered the choice to 'opt out'.

# **2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results**

## **NATURAL GAS/ELECTRIC SAFETY**

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Central Hudson offers educational resources about the safe use of electricity and natural gas to its customers, community organizations and local governments.

Safety information is included periodically in quarterly e-newsletters sent to customers for whom we have valid email (about 184,000 email addresses on file). Central Hudson's website offers on-line resources for both electric and natural gas safety. Also, bill inserts/onserts are sent for both electric and natural gas safety.

### **Electric Safety Education**

Central Hudson educates the public on the potential hazards of electricity, and how to safely respond to electrical emergencies. Safety-related communications are continually issued via news releases, blast emails to customers, newsletters to elected officials and community stakeholders, paid radio spots and safety tips are posted on the website and social media (Facebook and Twitter).

In addition to these public communications, Central Hudson offers training to police, fire, and other first responders on electrical and natural gas safety. The training program covers how to respond to wires down on vehicles, approaching electrical hazards, maintaining safe distances from downed wires (and how to address gas emergencies). In 2017, Central Hudson added a first responder portal to the website, covering online training for responding to downed wires and other emergencies.

In 2023, Central Hudson will once again issue a biannual safety mailing to approximately 9,000 equipment operators that include tree contractors and equipment rental companies as part of a larger outreach campaign on natural gas and electric safety, and featured information on safe working distanced from overhead electric lines when working in elevated positions (see below, under Gas Safety Education). This mailing will be again conducted in 2025.

Safety information is also included in all news releases and communications during storm or storm warnings and shared with elected and municipal officials.

Safety videos on storm preparation and downed wires were developed, recorded and promoted on social media and via direct emails to customers, and used in conjunction with storm messaging.

## **Gas Safety Education**

Central Hudson communicates regularly with customers on natural gas safety through a series of paid radio spots, social media outreach, bill inserts (including scratch-and-sniff brochures to educate the public to recognize gas odors), news releases, blast emails to customers and newsletters to elected officials and community stakeholders. Central Hudson also participates in a collaborative paid media campaign through the Northeast Gas Association (NGA).

In compliance with DOT Pipeline Safety requirements for natural gas, letters are sent to municipalities and to emergency responders during the first half of the year; and in 2022 a biennial mailing was conducted in the summer to about 10,000 property owners adjacent to natural gas transmission rights-of-way (these mailings take place every two years, on even calendar years). Corporate Communications and Engineering initiates these mailings.

New in 2019, Central Hudson developed an on-site, hands-on training program for emergency responders, including local police and fire departments, utilizing a mobile training trailer that can be brought to responders' location. The program and equipment provide conditions and situations responders may encounter in the field. The program was suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic was reinstituted in 2022.

During 2017, an outreach program was conducted to provide municipalities, counties, farms, excavating/construction companies and any entity that may perform excavating with safety information when working near natural gas and electric lines via direct mailings, delivery of training materials through a fulfillment service and on-line resources. This outreach is performed biennially and was conducted in 2021. Tree contractors and equipment rental companies are included in this outreach campaign (see above, under Electric Safety Education) with approximately 9,000 businesses, farms and municipalities identified and contacted. The mailing and outreach will again be conducted during 2023.

Central Hudson issues news releases and provides social media posts regarding gas safety and the importance of calling before digging during "Dig Safely" Month in April. All utilities together in the NGA 811 outreach informed the public that DIY and construction projects could place your families, contractors and community at risk. Municipalities continue to be reminded of the need for safe digging practices in a monthly newsletter to municipal and elected officials.

Central Hudson actively participates in "Dig Safely New York" (DSNY), now called UDIG NY. A Central Hudson employee serves on the Board of Directors to provide input, as well as to stay aware of the latest trends/topics. Central Hudson is also actively involved with the Hudson Valley Damage Prevention Council. Both groups in the past raised awareness for excavation safety and underground utility damage prevention by conducting area safety presentations, participating at industry trade shows, hosting informational breakfasts and providing a website containing information and videos.



Annually, Central Hudson sends letters to all school districts within its service territory informing educators of its gas safety message on the Kids Corner section of the company's website.

The Patroller programs continues, in which company representatives contact individuals at job sites throughout Central Hudson's gas service territory (including homeowners, professional and municipal excavators) to distribute materials promoting safe excavating practices and to educate/enforce 16 NYCRR Part 753 – Protection of Underground Facilities.

Central Hudson continues work with municipalities to prevent damage to utility facilities by contractors retained by municipalities. Appropriate points of contact are provided so that incident information can be shared.

Central Hudson requires all excavator operators working for the Company to be certified in dig-safe excavation safety through the DSNY/UDIG NY training program. Additionally, Central Hudson uses a field quality inspection organization team to provide inspection oversight on Central Hudson's and its contractors' construction projects.

To help ensure customer safety and to remain in compliance with 16 NYCRR Part 255, Central Hudson annually offers natural gas safety training to first responders (police and fire departments), supplemented this in-person training offer with an online offering. Working with the Northeast Gas Association, Central Hudson hosts a first responder portal to our corporate website, which contains online training for responding to natural gas emergencies. This approach provides training options for the first responders in our communities. An expanded on-site, hands-on training program for emergency responders, including local police and fire departments, utilizing a mobile training trailer that can be delivered to a municipal or county location is also offered. The program and equipment provide conditions and situations responders may encounter in the field.

### **Safety Communications**

Thirty-second commercial scripts aired in 2022 on approximately two dozen local AM and FM radio stations across the Mid-Hudson Valley.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Central Hudson successfully completed the outreach and education programs in 2022. The Storm Central outage map included safety messages during storm events.

Central Hudson's Public Safety Committee also continued, consisting of individuals from different areas of the Company to ensure maximum program coverage. This internal team meets quarterly, and their discussions focus on issuing safety messages (news releases, web pages, social media posts) based on recent local and national events. Central Hudson also completed a pipeline awareness study in 2022.

### **Goals for 2023:**

- Continue to offer gas and electric safety on-line training programs.
- Re-start in person training program for emergency responders, including local police and fire departments, utilizing a mobile training trailer that can be brought to responders' location.
- Storm preparedness and safety tips to be issued on each of the following communication channels during 2023: website, radio advertisement, bill insert, news release, email newsletters to customers and legislative officials, and Facebook/Twitter.
- Comply with the DOT Pipeline Safety requirements for natural gas: letters are sent to municipalities and to emergency responders during the first half of the year; and letters to about 10,000 property owners adjacent to natural gas transmission rights-of-way will be sent in 2024 (letters are sent every two years).
- Issue a news release and provide social media posts regarding gas safety and the importance of one-calls in April (during Dig Safely Month), and mail information to municipalities via a monthly newsletter.
- Participate in 2 Hudson Valley Damage Prevention Council events during the year.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Central Hudson's Public Safety Committee meets regularly and drives many of our efforts in this area. In addition, the company participates in industry organizations such as the Northeast Gas Association, American Gas Association, and Edison Electric Institute where best practices are shared and learned.

### **Measures to Evaluate the 2023 Program:**

Central Hudson will:

- Track communications and customer comments to ensure messages resonate and are relevant.
- Participate in outreach programs will be evaluated. Feedback from First Responder training will be used to refine the training as needed.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## NATURAL GAS EXPANSION

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Central Hudson continues to expand the natural gas system into local communities, offering residents and businesses the opportunity to convert to this economical and efficient fuel. We have seen a global increase in natural gas prices, however, prices remain competitive, if not lower, when compared to other sources of heating such as electric, oil and propane.

Central Hudson offers and promotes the turnkey program for customers interested in a package deal that offers convenience and leverages discounts for a residential natural gas heat conversion. Key services offered to customers through the turnkey program include:

- Dedicated energy advisor
- Free personalized proposal that includes high efficiency options and equipment rebates, that leverages discounted equipment and labor rates
- Installation of natural gas service line
- All necessary permits for performing work
- Installation of new gas heat system (including removal of old system)
- Removal of old oil tank (if needed)
- 0% financing for 24 months with additional terms at low-interest rates
- Equipment and labor warranties

Additionally, the Company will promote gas heat and appliance conversion with network trade allies and are working with trade allies for cross-marketing opportunities.

A more targeted marketing approach will be utilized for commercial gas customers demonstrating savings across various types of businesses. Ultimate savings can be achieved by combining upgrades such as LED lighting and energy efficient appliances, along with natural gas.

### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Central Hudson exceeded the 2022 residential and commercial gas meter goals. Overall, 1,005 residential and 157 commercial meters were installed. This success was in part due to customer demand and diligent efforts to stimulate customer interest in the versatility, reliability and price competitiveness of natural gas compared to oil. Central Hudson's natural gas (Simply Better) webpage views increased by 21.86 percent compared to the previous year. Surpassing the goals of gas conversions demonstrates the ongoing demand for natural gas in our service territory.

### **Goals for 2023:**

The target for outreach is the customer base residing within 100 feet of existing gas main and not currently utilizing gas heat service. Gas main extension projects may be considered in areas that do not result in undue bill pressure on the entire customer base. Primary focus is on converting customers from oil or propane heat to high-efficiency natural gas systems. The all-meter residential goal for 2022 is 812 and 112 for commercial customers.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Central Hudson discusses gas expansion strategy at the executive level throughout the year which culminates in Business Plan. Given the current gas conversion acquisition quantities, the yearly target goal should decrease by about 5 percent. Outreach activities are aligned to gas expansion and maintenance plans, while also maintaining consistent focus on eligible customer prospects along the existing gas mains.

### **Description of 2023 Program:**

Central Hudson will continue the efforts outlined within “New/Continuing Program” above, focusing on the efficiency, resiliency and convenience of natural gas. Increased information on the benefits of natural gas as cost-competitive and versatile option compared to oil will be published on the website, within email, print advertisements, direct mail, and handouts. The Company is also encouraging high-efficiency conversions.

Outreach activities and materials planned to be utilized for 2022 include:

- Sales call follow-up to old/cold leads
- Direct mail postcards and letters
- Brochures
- Fuel comparison calculator
- Sales packets
- Targeted email blasts
- Newsletters sent by email
- Trade ally education: newsletters and events
- Lead processing in the Central Hudson Contact Center
- Updated Web features on CentralHudson.com/Simply Better
- Customer surveys (both paper and online)
- Informational exhibits at community events
- Promotional giveaways
- Web and print advertisements
- Social media marketing

**Measures to Evaluate the 2023 Program:**

Central Hudson will evaluate its outreach and education for the residential natural gas program in five ways:

1. Number of leads
2. Web site traffic on [www.CentralHudson.com/SimplyBetter](http://www.CentralHudson.com/SimplyBetter)
3. Number of on-site consultation appointments with customers
4. Number of natural gas agreements signed
5. Sold jobs

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## PRICE VOLATILITY

This section should describe outreach and education efforts to proactively communicate with customers about price volatility including unexpected surges in energy supply prices, the impact on utility bills, and steps the utility will take to mitigate costs and protect customers.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Information regarding price volatility and price surges are shared via a dedicated web page, news releases, social media posts, participation in community/municipal meetings, newsletters to community stakeholders and elected officials, direct blast emails to customers, forums with community service organizations, and consultation with the news media.

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

General information was provided to customers and other stakeholders regarding energy supply prices, and information was shared with customers enrolled with ESCOs and CCAs regarding energy supply options and the market price for energy.

### **Goals for 2023:**

Continue to communicate with customers, elected officials and stakeholders to build awareness of the causes of energy price volatility and the availability of billing and assistance programs. Improve internal communication regarding energy purchasing in an effort to provide advanced warning when larger price spikes are expected to occur.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Goals and activities were set through consultation with community stakeholders and with customer-facing staff.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include such as audience, messaging, delivery vehicles, schedule, evaluation plan, etc.)

Messaging in 2023 will be shared via the following channels:

- Dedicated web page
- News releases
- Social media posts
- Participation in community/municipal meetings
- Newsletters to community stakeholders and elected officials
- Direct blast emails to customers
- Forums with community service organizations
- Consultation with the news media
- Educating employees and providing them with materials to share with customers
- Continued engagement letters with customers changing enrollment with ESCOs and CCAs

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS

### New/Continuing Program:

Central Hudson communicates outage information to our customers in a variety of ways. We provide Estimated Restoration Times (ETRs) and outage status to customers via the following methods:

- Storm Central outage map
- News releases and media interviews
- Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) updates and responses
- Storm outages webpage on corporate website
- Municipal and emergency officials conference calls
- Outbound calls
- SMS messaging to subscribed users
- Email blasts
- Upfront recorded messages for customers calling our Contact Center
- Pre-recorded radio announcements during major storms
- Municipal Portal for municipal and county emergency managers.

Elected and municipal officials also receive direct communication during storm events. Life Support Equipment (LSE) customers receive a call within 12 hours from a live agent, whenever they are affected by an outage. Special Needs and Elderly, Blind or Disabled (SNEBD) customers receive a daily automated call during major storms which provides them with information on our restoration progress, directions for how to contact Central Hudson, and safety advisories.

When weather forecasts provide sufficient advance warning of weather likely to cause widespread outages, Central Hudson uses our outbound calling system to notify all LSE/SNEBD customers and Critical Facility managers to alert them of a possible severe weather event and encourage them to be prepared for potential loss of power at their home or business.

On an annual basis Central Hudson provides our Electric Emergency Plan to the highest elected official in each county we serve. This is sent via email and US mail with a link to the electronic version of the plan.



### **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:**

Our highly responsive social media team can address customer inquiries and concerns quickly via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, especially during storms.

In 2020 Central Hudson developed a new Municipal Portal software product. This gives various municipal leaders and emergency responders enhanced outage information and a streamlined means for reporting & gaining status of road closure type incidents during storm events. This new application is used during storms and gives municipal leaders and emergency personnel (specifically those in the Emergency Operations Centers) the ability to report incidents quickly and receive the latest status.

### **Goals for 2023:**

During 2023, we will continue our outreach to enroll customers in the text notification service and encourage customers to “connect with us” by providing their email address to receive email communications. We also plan to utilize text broadcast notifications more often – to mass communicate about storms and other matters to those who prefer to receive communications by text.

This service is offered at no charge to our customers, and it provides text alerts when an outage is predicted, when ETRs are added or updated, and when the outage case is believed to be restored. Customers can also report an outage using SMS texts and check their power status.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Results of our customer surveys continue to indicate that outage communication, and service reliability, is a high priority for our customers.

### **Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include)

Central Hudson is committed to maintaining many channels for customers to report outages and check estimated restoration times. Accuracy of messaging is reviewed regularly to ensure all systems are working as designed.

In 2020, Central Hudson rolled out the Municipal Portal which is another resource for emergency managers. This two-way, interactive tool provides critical information, online desktop and mobile reporting for power interruptions and road closures/conditions, and customized alerts when addressing major storm events and other emergencies. User

registration is required for the Municipal Portal and we will continue to promote widespread adoption and in use of this resource.

**Measures to Evaluate the 2023 Program:**

Continued use of the *How Did We Do* and other customer surveys

Periodic review of industry best practices for outage response and communication

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## SPECIAL NEEDS CUSTOMERS

### New/Continuing Program:

Central Hudson will continue to look for ways to reach and identify customers with special needs through outreach and education via phone, community events and outreach activities. Training is conducted in the spring and fall with our CSRs and public facing field employees, to provide education on how to further identify customers that may require special services. Our Consumer Outreach team continues to attend community events to promote programs available to this population. Information pertaining to special needs programs and services is also available on our website for all our customers and provided via newsletters, radio ads and social media platforms. Central Hudson will continue to offer the following programs:

- Senior ID Program: Customers who are 62 years or older, can contact Central Hudson to self-identify themselves as a senior citizen. Once identified, their account will be coded with a senior code to receive special services and protections.
- Extra Security Plan: This program provides an extended billing due date to the 6th of the month following their 'normal' due date for customers that are on a fixed income. At the end of 2022 there were 1,875 enrolled in this program.
- Powering Connections: This newsletter is issued to vulnerable customers that are coded elderly, disabled or low income on their account. This newsletter is also mailed to Central Hudson retirees and provided to libraries, local agencies, and senior centers in our service area free of charge. Each edition offers information about Central Hudson's programs and services and safety and conservation articles. Powering Connections is also provided at local outreach events.
- TTY Phone Service: Available by dialing 711
- Life Support Program: Customers with life support equipment in-use are eligible for special coding on their account. These customers also receive continuous outreach during major outage events. If a field visit is necessary during storms, Central Hudson will leave a door tag with emergency contact phone numbers. At the end of 2022 there were 936 customers on the Life Support Equipment (LSE) program.
- Third Party Notification: As provided by HEFPA (Home Energy Fair Practices Act), Central Hudson offers a Third-Party designation for residential customers. With this protection, any final termination notice issued on an account is also mailed to the designated Third Party. Approximately 514 residential accounts have Third Party designation on their account at the end of 2022. The Third-Party application form is printable from our website and is available in Spanish language.
- Hospitalization Program: Central Hudson provides a 30-day extension to customers that have been in the hospital. The form is available by phone or on our website and can be

faxed, mailed, or e-mailed. Office and Field staff have been trained on the program and can assist customers in applying.

- Large Print Bills: These bills are sent to sight-impaired customers who request them. Annual notification offering this option is made via our Rights & Responsibilities bill insert and in the Powering Connections newsletter which is issued in the spring and fall of each year.
- Interpreter Service: This service is available in various languages. In 2022 it was used approximately 843 times in various languages including Spanish, Mandarin, French, Arabic, Albanian, Hindi, Turkish, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Bengali, Hakka Chinese, Ukrainian, Punjabi, Pashto, and Cantonese.
- Spanish-speaking CSRs: Central Hudson has 10 bilingual speaking CSRs to meet the needs of this population as well as an interpreter service for other languages. In 2022 our bilingual reps took 28,091 calls via our dedicated Spanish queue.
- Good Neighbor Fund (GNF) This program is normally administered by the local Salvation Army Corps and available to eligible customers as a last resort benefit. Typically, the GNF is communicated to customers via bill messages, bill inserts, Powering Connections, radio spots, PowerTalk, social media, the website, and various outreach events in the community and CSR referrals. Our customers donate to this fund and Central Hudson's shareholders match their donations up to \$50,000 each year. In 2022, Central Hudson provided 174 Veteran Grants totaling \$48,540.00 and 67 Regular Grants totaling \$13,740.00
- Essential Service Program: Central Hudson voluntarily elects to provide Essential Service Apparatuses (a load-limiter device) to residential customers in the winter in lieu of shutting of the service for non-payment. This device is set to provide enough energy to operate on a limited basis some essential items such as a heating system and lights. Central Hudson has not resumed collection activity since March 2020 and has not set load limiters.
- Low Income Bill Discount Program: Central Hudson customers who are eligible for HEAP, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Lifeline, Medicaid, SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veteran's or Survivor's Pension or certain programs for Native Americans may be enrolled in the Low-Income Bill Discount Program (LIBDP) which provides a monthly credit to their account for 12 consecutive months. For customers heating by any other means such as oil, coal, propane, wood/wood pellets, kerosene or corn, Central Hudson receives a notification of HEAP, and the customer is automatically enrolled into the program. The amount of the benefit is based on service type.
- Low Income Reconnection Fee Waiver: Customers receiving a HEAP benefit applied towards their Central Hudson account during the HEAP season automatically receive one reconnection fee waived upon restoral of their services, should they be shut-off for non-payment. This has not been implemented in 2022, as we are not locking customers in non-payment.
- HEAP Awareness: We utilize several resources to communicate about HEAP availability to our customers such as bill inserts and bill messaging at the beginning of the HEAP year. In addition, we advertise through the Powering Connections newsletter, social

media, outbound call campaigns, CSR referrals, radio advertisement and banner ads on our website. Our Outreach team goes out into the community to hold workshops with agencies and their clients and attend vendor events to bring awareness to HEAP. When HEAP is open, we include a banner on the homepage of our website linking customers to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) or to the payment assistance section of our website. Traditionally, a HEAP pamphlet is inserted in residential Final Termination Notice issued from December through February, which includes income guidelines and contact information to apply. This was not necessary in 2022 as we were not locking customers. HEAP flyers in English and Spanish are distributed at workshops and via email to customers and community partners. Outbound calls are made to customers who received HEAP, ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program), or are enrolled in the monthly discount program during the prior year to encourage them to reapply, and calls are made to customers in arrears who have never received HEAP assistance in the past.

- Special Account Identifications: Our customer database system identifies our specially coded customers on a general information screen. Both office and field employees understand the identifications, where to find them, and how to update them.
- Gift Certificates: This program allows friends, family, or charitable organizations to purchase gift certificates to be applied to a customer's account. Ads are placed in the Powering Connections newsletter, in PowerTalk, on our website, and in radio ads to make customers aware of their availability. Gift Certificate information is also included in every payment assistance presentation given by Consumer Outreach.
- CenHud.com: The Payment Assistance section of our website provides explanations of our special needs' customer programs and services. Website banner ads during HEAP season, our home page website banner is updated to inform customers of the availability of benefits and a direct link to the Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance website or Central Hudson's "Payment Assistance" section.
- News Releases: News releases on assistance programs, safety and HEAP availability are issued periodically. Annually, a news release is issued announcing the Company's Essential Services Program. This information is communicated via email blasts to all customers we have email addresses on file for.
- Radio Ads: Radio ads in both English and Spanish are released on assistance programs, safety, and HEAP availability periodically.
- Direct Mail Letters: Letters are sent to customers with a past due balance and life support or "fixed income" code(s) advising of the availability of HEAP assistance for winter heating costs.

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

Central Hudson will continue to monitor the effectiveness of its special needs' programs through satisfaction surveys at outreach forums, in-person and virtual events and outreach presentations.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Central Hudson understands the importance of identifying our special needs customers. Programs are designed to comply with HEFPA regulations and Company research findings through customer satisfaction surveys, outreach forums, outreach presentations, and employee engagement in community activities and non-profit organizations.

### **Description of 2023 Program:**

Central Hudson's goals are to promote awareness and understanding of programs and services, encourage customer participation in our special programs, and to afford customers all the rights outlined in HEFPA. We will continue to offer the above programs and continue our twice-yearly goal of verifying and updating all EBD (Elderly, Blind, Disabled) and LSE accounts as outlined above. In 2023, Central Hudson will use our Powering Connections newsletter, E-buzz newsletter, and Coffee Buzz virtual presentations to educate our vulnerable customers on payment assistance and special assistance programs and energy efficiency savings programs. We expect to increase the number of virtual workshops and meetings with community partners and local agencies.

In 2023, our Outreach team will continue educating customers and community agencies on Central Hudson's special assistance, payment assistance, gas safety, and energy efficiency programs in both virtual and live formats as well. This customer education is delivered in workshops normally conducted on-site in community agencies. In addition to discussing assistance programs, these workshops provide valuable information on safety, energy efficiency and help in understanding their Central Hudson bill.

In 2023, we will work to increase our engagement in our local communities' agencies, food banks, schools, senior events, and Legal Services of Hudson Valley to educate them on the availability of our programs. We will partner with local agencies to provide wrap-around service for families in need. Central Hudson will continue working with OTDA on a file transfer of customer information to better identify our low-income customer population to enroll them in our LIBDP program.

Central Hudson will continue to bring awareness to our non-heating customers and their potential eligibility in our new low-income program. We will create written and electronic material that will be provided to schools and other agencies to educate customers who do not heat with gas or electricity about the availability of HEAP for their Central Hudson bill.

# **2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results**

## **SUMMER DEMAND RESPONSE/ LOAD REDUCTION**

Case Number 00-E-2054 required utilities to provide a public awareness plan detailing the Company's steps to educate customers regarding the load and capacity situation and actions consumers can take to control their energy usage and bills.

### **New/Continuing Program:**

#### **Peak Perks:**

Central Hudson is currently implementing a Targeted Demand Management Program (TDM) as the Company's first Non-Wires Alternative. The program is referred to as Peak Perks and was launched in April of 2016. A full marketing campaign of direct mail, email blast, web advertisements, outbound calling, and door to door sales is used to communicate to customers. An educational video and other program information can be found at CenHudPeakPerks.com as well as CentralHudson.com.

In 2022, for the third year in a row, a local business gift card program was offered to residential Peak Perks participants. The gift cards were provided in addition to the annual program incentives.

#### **Dynamic Load Management (DLM):**

The Company's Dynamic Load Management portfolio is comprised of the Commercial System Relief Program ("CSRP") along with Auto- and Term-DLM program offerings. The CSRP program has been active since the summer of 2015. Currently there are no enrollments in the Auto or Term-DLM programs. Central Hudson provides a program overview and related documents on the Company's Commercial & Industrial Demand Response web page, located at <https://www.cenhud.com/my-energy/save-energy-money/commercial-demand-response>. Since the program is available only to a small group of large commercial & industrial customers, it is marketed primarily by trade partners. No other outreach is being performed at this time.



## **Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:**

### **Peak Perks:**

As of 9/31/22, there were over 2,746 residential and small commercial customers participating in this program with approximately 3,544 active devices, including thermostats and digital control units. Additionally, nearly 4,398 kW of curtailment was available from fourteen large commercial and industrial customers. The total achieved load reduction for the program was 8.23 MW in 2022.

In 2021, the Company expanded upon the gift card incentive inviting approximately 140 small, locally owned businesses within (or near to) the TDM areas to be included as a choice in the gift card incentive. In total, twenty-seven businesses enrolled for 2022. Of approximately 2,874 residential customers who were offered the gift card incentive, 693 responded. The gift card incentive was well received by Peak Perks customers and provided a meaningful economic impact to participating local businesses.

For more details on the Peak Perks program, see “Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation’s 2022 Annual Report for the Targeted Demand Response Program, a Central Hudson Non-Wires Solution,” filed on December 1, 2022 under Case 14-E-0318.

### **Targeted Energy Efficiency:**

In September 2018, the Company launched a targeted Commercial and Industrial (C&I) energy efficiency initiative within the TDM zones. The initiative has continued through 2022 and is designed to impact locational loads by concentrating efficient retrofit projects within NWA areas. This initiative has supplemented load reductions achieved through the Peak Perks program. As of 11/30/22, an additional capacity of approximately 2.5 MW has been achieved through this initiative.

For more details on the Targeted Energy Efficiency program, see “Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation’s 2022 Annual Report for the Targeted Demand Response Program, a Central Hudson Non-Wires Solution,” filed on December 1, 2022 under Case 14-E-0318.

### **Commercial System Relief Program:**

In 2022, twenty-eight customers participated in the CSRP, all of whom enrolled through an aggregator. The enrolled load relief totaled 7.4 MW. There were no events called during the 2022 season. An Annual Stakeholder conference is hosted by DPS Staff at the end of the summer demand response season. The



meeting includes utilities and stakeholders to discuss performance results and offer feedback on the current affairs. For more details on the Program, see “Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation’s Dynamic Load Management Programs Annual Report filed November 15th, 2022 under Case 15-E-0186.

### **Goals for 2023:**

Central Hudson desires to contract for its full total load relief target of available demand response capacity by the end of 2023, in its Targeted Demand Response (“TDM”) areas with distinct sub-goals in particular regions. Due to economic impacts related to COVID-19, the Program was impacted significantly early in 2020 with a loss of resource and unique challenges in procuring additional capacity. Aggressive efforts continue with a focus on signing large C&I participants while continuing a steady approach to residential and small commercial participants. Procurement targets and incentives have been increasing in Targeted Efficiency. The Company has begun pursuing additional capacity solutions, which may include an energy storage resource and managed electric vehicle charging. As of December 31st, 2022, approximately 11.2 MW of resource capacity has been achieved.

For the 2023 DLM CSRP program, the Company has targeted a similar enrollment levels as the prior year. Additionally, Central Hudson has solicited for the new Auto- and Term-DLM categories in late 2022 for the 2024 capability period.

**Description of 2023 Program:** (see guidance document regarding program elements to include)

### **CenHub Peak Perks**

- **Target Audience:** The primary target audience is residential and small commercial customers who are located in three targeted geographical areas and utilize central air conditioning.
- **Key Messages:** Customers are given free equipment, such as WiFi thermostats, and paid to automatically curtail energy usage when needed.
- **Outreach Materials:** Emails, brochures, direct mail pieces.
- **Delivery Vehicles:** Direct mail, website, outbound calling, door-to-door sales, CenHubPeakPerks.com
- **Public and Community Relations:** None
- **Corporate Partnerships:** None

- **Schedule:** The program season runs from June 1st to September 30th. All outreach and education efforts are run continually throughout the year.
- **New Initiatives:** The Annual gift card program seeks further interest for partnerships with local businesses and more Peak Perks customers. A new Custom Savings Demand Response pilot program has been developed which offers customers a custom, non-prescriptive way to participate in demand response and earn an incentive at a prorated dollar per Kilowatt (\$/kW) rate.
- **Additional Information:** New customers are provided with a bundle of materials that is designed to educate and ensure they have a positive experience in the program. The existing Peak Perks website and video has been updated with the latest program information.

#### Commercial System Relief Program:

- **Target Audience:** Large commercial & industrial customers who can commit to curtail at least 50kW when called upon.
- **Key Messages:** Customers are paid to curtail energy usage when needed.
- **Outreach Materials:** None, this program is solely marketed by market aggregators.
- **Delivery Vehicles:** CentralHudson.com has a page dedicated to information about commercial demand response.
- **Public and Community Relations:** None
- **Corporate Partnerships:** None
- **Schedule:** The program season runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- **New Initiatives:** New Auto- and Term-DLM categories have been designed and solicited for the 2024 capability season.

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## WINTER HEATING SEASON

### **New/Continuing Program:**

**Central Hudson.com:** The Assistance Programs section of our website provides explanations of our special needs' customer programs and services.

**Social Media:** Throughout the winter Central Hudson posts information regarding HEAP, ERAP, and other payment assistance on all social media channels.

**News Releases:** News releases on assistance programs, safety, HEAP, ERAP and New York State's Electric & Gas Bill Relief Program availability are issued periodically. Annually, a news release is issued announcing the Company's Essential Services Program, however this was not completed in 2022 due to the company not locking accounts for non-payment. This information is communicated via email blasts to all customers we have email addresses on file for.

**Radio Ads:** Radio ads in both English and Spanish are released on assistance programs, safety and federally funded programs availability periodically. Ads run frequently reminding customers to enroll in monthly Budget Billing to avoid billed amount fluctuations due to weather-related usage.

**Bill messages:** Winter messages remind customers that colder weather will result in higher bills, and the availability of HEAP, ERAP, and other payment assistance programs. Summer bill messages reinforce that Central Hudson works to ensure electric energy supply during increased summer demand periods.

**Powering Connections Newsletter:** This newsletter is issued to vulnerable customers that are coded elderly, disabled or low income on their account. This newsletter is also mailed to Central Hudson retirees and provided to libraries, local agencies and senior centers in our service area free of charge. Each edition offers an array of information about Central Hudson's programs and services as well as safety and conservation articles. Powering Connections is also provided at local outreach events. Central Hudson aims to provide Winter Heating information when it coincides with the latest issue.

**E-Newsletter:** Central Hudson moved to a monthly e-newsletter, E-Buzz, which is sent to all community partners we have email addresses for. This contains information on upcoming events, Federal, Local and State Programs, safety information and any important information we need to relay to our community partners.

**Coffee Buzz:** Central Hudson hosts a "virtual" bi-monthly Coffee Buzz, bringing our community partners to speak about any programs they may offer, upcoming events, and slide show

presentations. Agencies share information on how best they assist vulnerable customers with assistance.

Welcome, New Customer: Electronic “Welcome, New Customer” communication provides direct links to billing and payment options and Savings Central features on our website.

Employee training: Customer Service personnel attend annual refresher training where winter rules are reinforced. Customer sensitivity and how to recognize health impairments are reviewed at least annually together with customer assistance programs and referral procedures. At the start of each winter heating season, an article explaining our assistance programs are featured in employee newsletters.

Outbound Call Campaign: Outbound calls are made at the beginning of each HEAP season and throughout the HEAP season to potential and past HEAP recipients, including customers that heat with an alternate fuel source.

New Program Eligibility: Expanded the customer base who can self-enroll into the Low-Income Bill Discount Program. Customers that receive SNAP, Lifeline, Medicaid, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veteran’s or Survivor’s Pension or certain programs for Native Americans can provide documentation for self-enrollment.

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

*How Did We Do* survey measures Customer Satisfaction. For 2022 the overall Customer Satisfaction rating was 66.7 percent

During the winter months the monthly satisfaction rating was: January 72.4 percent, February 69.5 percent, March 70.0 percent November 68 percent and December 63.8 percent.

Central Hudson conducted automated outbound calls to customers who have received HEAP, were previously enrolled in the low-income discount program, and those who have received ERAP. This was successful.

### **Goals for 2023:**

Central Hudson’s goal is to comply with the provisions of HEFPA (Home Energy Fair Practices Act) and any agreements made with the Public Service Commission during the annual winter meeting. Central Hudson aims to provide our eligible residential customers with information regarding energy financial assistance, HEAP and our Low- Income Bill Discount Program.

Our goal in 2023 is to inform customers with Food Stamps, SSI, and other benefits that they can self-certify for Central Hudson’s Bill Discount Program.

We will strive to inform all customers who may be eligible for HEAP and the Low-Income Bill Discount Program to apply.

### **How Priority Was Set:**

Local economic conditions and availability of federal, state, and local programs are also considered. Central Hudson also makes a winter voluntary agreement with the Public Service Commission to take extra steps to help minimize winter terminations of residential gas and electric service of our most vulnerable customers to ensure their health and safety.

**Description of 2023 Program:** see guidance document regarding program elements to include (In addition to advising customers about disconnection of service, this category should include issues such as weatherization, furnace inspection, zone heating, preventing carbon monoxide emergencies, etc.)

Once it is announced when HEAP will open in the fall, Central Hudson will coordinate its outreach to customers. We will again provide information with bills and with final termination notices. We will also conduct outbound calls to encourage customers to apply for HEAP. We will send email blasts to past and potential HEAP applicants. Field collectors will be provided with information to customers in person. All HEAP updated/information will be provided to all CSR's during refresher training held in the fall 2023.

Central Hudson will continue to provide information through a variety of methods regarding weatherization, preventing carbon monoxide emergencies, and responding to gas odors. Some of the channels will include bill inserts, social media posts, upfront messaging on our phone system, news releases and our electronic newsletter, PowerTalk, Powering Connections and educational workshops and presentations by our Outreach team.

We will advise our customers of the HEAP Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Program available through OTDA and the cooling component.

We will continue to promote our Low-Income Bill Discount program to customers that are eligible for HEAP for any fuel type, including alternate fuel companies, as well as SNAP, Lifeline, Medicaid, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veteran's or Survivor's Pension or certain programs for Native Americans. This program will be communicated via electronic communications as well as direct mail letters and our Powering Connections newsletter that is mailed to our low-income customers, life support customers, elderly, and disabled customers. This will be communicated at our bi-monthly Coffee Buzz as well.

We will continue to distribute flyers on these programs.

# **Central Hudson Gas & Electric OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN 2023**

## **Section 5**

### **Employee Outreach and Education**

# 2023 Outreach & Education Plan with 2022 Results

## CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

### **New/Continuing Program:**

Central Hudson will continue to use its employee newsletter to update employees on our customer satisfaction index, customer feedback, and good customer service practices. Employees receive daily emails and a monthly video which is also shared on our retirees' website. Our Consumer Outreach staff trains CSRs and public facing field representatives on identifying customers who need assistance. Public-facing field representatives carry various brochures and pamphlets explaining benefit information and eligibility requirements for payment assistance programs given to customers. Customer service personnel will continue to receive annual refresher training. Customer sensitivity refreshers, in addition to customer assistance programs and referral procedures, are reviewed annually.

New employees receive continued formal training upon their hire date. After this formal training is completed, training is conducted at progression time intervals based on whether the employee is full-time or part-time. Part-time employee training interval would be 2 years and 5 years. Full-time employee training intervals would be 1 year and 1.5 years. The formal class is a one to two-week long training school which covers a variety of subjects including outreach and collections. Each training period is 8 hours in length.

**Summary of 2022 Results and Lessons Learned:** Provide detailed evaluation in Appendix C

*How Did We Do* survey measures customer satisfaction. For 2022 the Customer Satisfaction Index was 66.7 percent. Our Customer Satisfaction Committee meets throughout the year to review customer satisfaction survey results and develop programs to better address our customers' expectations.

### **Goals for 2023:**

- Continue to provide CSRs, CSAs and Field Collectors with training at the beginning and end of the winter rules season. During this training, topics will include special customer protection, payment assistance options, including HEAP, how to recognize health impairments, and the referral process.
- Provide CSRs, CSAs and Field Collectors Dunning related training, including the handling of finaled accounts and late fee applications.
- Use the employee daily emails, and monthly video as a company-wide vehicle for providing customer service tips and information.
- Continue to complete CSR Training Bursts in a virtual format via Microsoft Teams/in-person for any topic employees want more information and/or training on.

- A joint project team has been formed to enhance Customer Experience employee training and development. The team, led by Human Resources and working together with Contact Center management and union employees, has been established to implement an enhanced training program for employees. The enhanced training content will be deployed throughout 2023 and ongoing, as needed.

**Description of 2023 Program:**

Central Hudson will continue the training detailed above. Also, during 2023 Central Hudson will continue to provide adhoc training for all employees within the Contact Center in person and via Microsoft Teams.