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**PSC DIRECTS NORTHWESTERN ENERGY TO GIVE  
\$150,000 IN EXCESS UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS CHARGES  
TO ENERGY SHARE FOR BILL ASSISTANCE**

An additional \$150,000 in energy assistance funds will be available to Montanans having trouble paying their utility bills as a result of action by the state Public Service Commission this month. The PSC directed NorthWestern Energy to give half of the approximately \$300,000 in receipts greater than anticipated revenues that NorthWestern estimates will be derived from ratepayers in natural gas universal system benefits charges to Energy Share of Montana, a nonprofit organization that provides utility bill payment assistance. The current universal system benefits charge paid by NorthWestern's gas customers is 8.33 cents/dkt/ month. The charge funds public purpose programs as designated by state law, including energy conservation, low-income weatherization, and low-income energy bill assistance.

The disposition of the remaining balance of the company's gas USB fund is the subject of a pending PSC proceeding.

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