VT Settles Consumer Protection Case With Gas Firm

Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — The nation's largest retail propane gas dealer is going to pay $545,000 in fees, donations and penalties to settle a case that alleged the company violated Vermont consumer protection laws by not promptly removing propane storage tanks or issuing refund checks after consumers terminated propane service, the Vermont Attorney General's office said Monday.

The state also alleged AmeriGas Propane, LP, charged a fee for reading propane meters without proper disclosure.

Attorney William Sorrell said AmeriGas failed to pay close attention after Vermont changed its laws to better protect propane customers.

"Vermonters were harmed, and now AmeriGas will compensate consumers and the state of Vermont," Sorrell said in a statement.

The attorney general's office says that AmeriGas Propane, LP, has agreed to pay almost $255,000 to Vermont consumers, $190,000 to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and $100,000 in civil penalties to the state.

AmeriGas identified 169 consumers who, between Jan. 1, 2010, and June 30, 2013, experienced delays in propane disconnection, whether in removing the tank or providing a refund. The company also charged a fee for reading propane meters without proper disclosure.

AmeriGas Vice President Bob Young said the company no longer charges fees to read meters and tanks are picked up and refunds issued in a more timely fashion.

"The company and its employees take great pride in our service; it was unfortunate that some of our customers were inadequately informed of fees for meter reading, or, did not receive timely refunds for unused propane fuel after the disconnection of service," said Young.

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