

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

May 2, 2017

IN RE:

**COUNCE NATURAL GAS ACTUAL
COST ADJUSTMENT FILING FOR THE
PERIOD OCTOBER 1, 2015 THROUGH
SEPTEMBER 30, 2016**

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**DOCKET NO.
16-00125**

**ORDER ADOPTING ACA AUDIT REPORT OF
TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION'S UTILITIES DIVISION**

This matter came before Chairman David F. Jones, Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard and Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission ("Commission" or "TPUC"), the voting panel assigned to this docket, during a regularly scheduled Conference held on April 10, 2017 to consider the report of the Commission's Utilities Division Staff (the "Staff") resulting from the Staff's audit of Counce Natural Gas Company's ("Counce" or the "Company") annual deferred gas cost account filing for the year ended September 30, 2016. The Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA") Compliance Audit Report (the "Report") attached hereto as Exhibit 1, and incorporated into this document as if fully rewritten herein, contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Staff.

Counce filed its annual report of the transactions in the ACA Account for the period of October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2016, on November 1, 2016. The Staff completed its audit of the Company's filing on February 17, 2017, and the preliminary ACA audit findings were sent to Counce for comment. The Company responded on February 17, 2017 via email, and its comments were incorporated into the final Audit Report (attached hereto as Exhibit 1).¹

¹ *Memorandum*, p. 2 (March 31, 2017).

The Staff filed its Report on February 23, 2017 for public review and approval by this Commission. The Report contained one finding: Counce did not include the calculated interest due to customers for the current review period. Staff calculated the total monthly interest due to customers to be (\$148.40), which increases the Company's calculated over-collected gas costs of (\$259.17) as shown on page 5 of the Audit Report.² The Company agreed with the audit finding and stated that it will include interest due to customers in future filings.

The Staff recommended that Counce wait for the Staff to calculate the new ACA factor at the completion of the audit, rather than the utility itself calculating and implementing a new ACA factor based on its filing. The corrected ending balance in the ACA Account at September 30, 2016 is (\$259.17) in over-collected gas costs. Based on this corrected balance, Staff calculated a new ACA factor of (\$0.02) per MCF (refund), as shown in Attachment 1 to the Audit Report.³ Counce concurred with the findings and recommendations in the Report.

At the regularly schedule Commission Conference held on April 10, 2017, the voting panel unanimously approved and adopted the Report and directed the Company to begin refunding the \$259.17 in over-collected gas costs to customers concurrent with the Company's April 2017 customer billing. Additionally, the Commission directed Counce:

1. To file as soon as possible a PGA tariff showing the approved rate of \$0.02 per MCF effective with its April 2017 billing;
2. To file its billing rates for the period with Staff prior to billing its customers;
3. To send its ACA summary electronically to Staff on a quarterly basis for review no later than the following dates:

² *ACA Report*, Exhibit A to *Notice of Filing by the Utilities Division of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority*, p. 5 (February 27, 2017).

³ *Id.* See Attachment 1 for detail of the calculation of the ACA factor.

- a) April 30, 2017, for the two quarters ended December 31, 2016 and March 30, 2017;
 - b) by July 30, 2017 for the quarter ending June 30, 2017;
 - c) by October 30, 2016, for the quarter ending September 30, 2017; and
4. To use the over-collected balance of negative \$259.17 as the corrected ACA ending balance as of September 30, 2016, as the beginning balance in the next annual ACA Account filing.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The Actual Cost Adjustment Compliance Audit Report relative to Counce Natural Gas Company's gas costs for the year ended September 30, 2016, a copy of which is attached to this Order as Exhibit 1, is approved and adopted, and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein are incorporated in this Order as if fully rewritten herein.
2. Counce Natural Gas Company is directed to file as soon as possible a PGA tariff with the Commission indicating the approved refund rate of \$2.00 per MCF effective with its April 2017 billing.
3. Counce Natural Gas Company is directed to file its billing rates for the period with Commission Staff prior to billing its customers.
4. Counce Natural Gas Company is directed to send a summary of its Actual Cost Adjustment Account electronically to Commission Staff on a quarterly basis for review⁴ no later than the following dates: April 30, 2017, for the two quarters ending December 31, 2016 and March 30, 2017; by July 30, 2017, for the quarter ending June 30, 2017; and by October 30, 2017, for the quarter ending September 30, 2017.

⁴This review will not be part of the annual audit process.

5. Counce Natural Gas Company is directed to use the over-collected balance of negative-\$259.17, as the Staff-corrected Actual Cost Adjustment Account ending balance as of September 30, 2016, as the beginning balance in the next annual Actual Cost Adjustment Account filing.

Chairman David F. Jones, Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard and Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill concur.

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Earl Taylor", written in black ink.

Earl R. Taylor, Executive Director

EXHIBIT 1

EXHIBIT 1

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT OF COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY
ISSUED FEBRUARY 23, 2017

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

February 23, 2017

IN RE:)
)
COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY) **Docket No. 16-00125**
ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT (ACA) AUDIT)

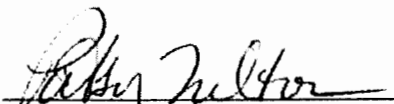
**NOTICE OF FILING BY THE UTILITIES DIVISION OF THE TENNESSEE
REGULATORY AUTHORITY**

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 65-4-104, 65-4-111 and 65-3-108, the Utilities Division of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority hereby gives notice of its filing of the Compliance Audit Report of the Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA") Component of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule ("PGA Rule") for Counce Natural Gas Company (the "Company") in this docket and would respectfully state as follows:

1. The present docket was opened by the Authority to hear matters arising out of the audit of the Company's ACA filing for the period October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016.
2. The Company's ACA filing was received on November 1, 2016, and the Compliance Audit Staff ("Staff") completed its audit of same on February 17, 2017.
3. On February 17, 2017, the Utilities Division submitted its preliminary ACA audit findings to the Company via e-mail. The Company responded on February 17, 2017 via e-mail and this response has been incorporated into the final report.

4. The Utilities Division hereby files its Report attached as Exhibit A with the Tennessee Regulatory Authority for deposit as a public record and approval of the Report and recommendations contained therein.

Respectfully Submitted:



Patsy Fulton, Utility Rate Specialist IV
Utilities Division
Tennessee Regulatory Authority

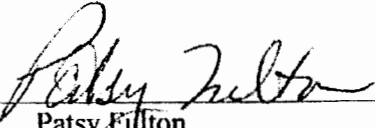
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 23rd day of February 2017, a true and exact copy of the foregoing has been either hand-delivered or delivered via U.S. Mail, postage pre-paid, to the following persons:

David F. Jones
Chairman
Tennessee Regulatory Authority
502 Deaderick Street, 4th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Mr. Mike Horton, President
Counce Natural Gas Company
P.O. Box 385
Burnsville, MS 38833

Mr. Vance L. Broemel
Office of the Attorney General
Consumer Advocate and Protection Division
P. O. Box 20207
Nashville, TN 37202



Patsy Fulton

EXHIBIT A

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

OF

COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY

ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT

Docket No. 16-00125

PREPARED BY THE

TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

UTILITIES DIVISION

February 2017

COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY
COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT OF
ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT FILING
DOCKET NO. 16-00125

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I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this audit is Counce Natural Gas Company's ("Company" or "Counce") compliance with the Actual Cost Adjustment and Refund Adjustment of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule¹ ("PGA Rule") of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority ("TRA" or the "Authority"). The objective of the audit was to determine whether the Purchased Gas Adjustments, which are encompassed by the Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA")², for the twelve (12) months ended September 30, 2016, were calculated correctly and were supported by appropriate source documentation.

II. AUDIT OPINION

Audit Staff ("Staff") reviewed the Company's ACA filing and the underlying documentation supporting its calculation of the ending balance of the ACA account. Staff's review using a random sampling of bills determined that customers were billed without error during the period October 1, 2015 thru September 30, 2016. The audit resulted in one (1) finding, described in Section VIII. Since the finding was immaterial, Staff can provide assurance that Counce is correctly reporting the Gas Charge Adjustment, the Refund Adjustment, and the Actual Cost Adjustment in accordance with the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rules for TRA regulated gas companies.

III. SUMMARY OF COMPANY FILING

On November 1, 2016, Staff received Counce's ACA filing supporting the activity in its deferred gas cost account ("ACA Account") for the period October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016. For the period under review, the Company's ACA filing showed a beginning balance of negative \$14,817.89 in over-recovered gas costs. To the beginning balance, the Company added \$63,405.58 in total gas costs for the current period and subtracted \$48,698.46³ in costs recovered from customers through rates during the same period, resulting in a calculated ending balance in the ACA Account of negative \$110.77 in over-recovered gas costs. The following chart shows the ACA Account as filed by Counce. A comparison of the Company's filing to the Staff's corrected filing is shown in Section VIII.

¹ TRA Rule 1220-4-7.

² The ACA is more fully described in Section VI.

³ This amount includes PGA adjustment recoveries and ACA adjustment recoveries.

**COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY
ACA FILING OCTOBER 2015 TO SEPTEMBER 2016:⁴**

Line No.		Company (as filed)
1	Beginning Balance at 10/01/15	\$ (14,817.89)
2	Activity During Current Period:	
3	Plus Gas Costs	63,405.58
4	Minus ACA Recoveries (refund)	(15,371.55)
5	Minus PGA Recoveries (surcharge)	<u>64,070.01</u>
6	Ending Balance before Interest (line 1 + line 3 – line 4 – line 5)	(110.77)
7	Plus Interest	<u>0</u>
8	Ending Balance Including Interest at 09/30/16 (line 6 + line 7)	<u>\$ (110.77)</u>

IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMPANY AND GAS SUPPLIERS

Counce Natural Gas Company, with its headquarters in Burnsville, MS, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tumlinson Engineering, Inc., and was formed in 1995 for the purpose of acquiring the operating authority of Hardin County Gas Company and providing natural gas service to customers in Hardin County, Tennessee. Hardin County Gas Company's certificate of convenience and necessity ("CCN") was transferred to Counce on December 22, 1995, in Docket No. 95-03379. In October 2000, ownership of Tumlinson Engineering, Inc. was transferred from Ted Tumlinson to Mike Horton.

The natural gas used to serve this area is purchased from Horton Enterprises, Inc (an affiliate), which is owned by Mike Horton. Horton Enterprises, Inc operates as a reseller of gas from Atmos Energy Marketing.

⁴ A negative balance in the ACA Account represents an over-collection (or over-recovery) of gas costs; a positive balance represents an under-collection (or under-recovery) of gas costs.

V. JURISDICTION OF THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) gives jurisdiction and control over public utilities to the Tennessee Regulatory Authority. T.C.A. §65-4-104 states:

The [A]uthority has general supervisory and regulatory power, jurisdiction, and control over all public utilities, and also over their property, property rights, facilities, and franchises, so far as may be necessary for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

Further, T.C.A. §65-4-105 grants the same power to the Authority with reference to all public utilities within its jurisdiction as chapters 3 and 5 of Title 65 of the T.C.A. have conferred on the Department of Transportation's oversight of the railroads or the Department of Safety's oversight of transportation companies. By virtue of T.C.A. §65-3-108, this power includes the right to audit:

The department is given full power to examine the books and papers of the companies, and to examine, under oath, the officers, agents, and employees of the companies and any other persons, to procure the necessary information to intelligently and justly discharge its duties and carry out the provisions of this chapter and chapter 5 of this title.

The Utilities Division of the TRA is responsible for auditing energy, water and communications utilities under its jurisdiction to ensure that each company is abiding by Tennessee statute as well as the Rules and Regulations of the Authority. Patsy Fulton and Pat Murphy of the Utilities Division conducted this audit.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASED GAS ADJUSTMENT RULE

The PGA Rule is located at Chapter 1220-4-7 of the Rules of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority. The PGA Rule permits a gas company to recover, in a timely fashion, the total cost of gas purchased for delivery to its customers and to assure that a company does not over-collect or under-collect gas costs from its customers. The PGA consists of three major components:

- 1) **The Actual Cost Adjustment (ACA)**
- 2) **The Gas Charge Adjustment (GCA)**
- 3) **The Refund Adjustment (RA)**

The ACA is the difference between the revenues billed customers by means of the GCA and the cost of gas invoiced the Company by suppliers plus margin loss (if allowed by order of the TRA in another docket) and related interest as reflected in the Deferred Gas Cost account. The ACA then "true-up" the difference between the actual gas costs and the gas costs recovered from customers. The RA (refunds) surcharges the "true-up" along with other supplier refunds. For a

more complete definition of the GCA and RA, refer to the PGA Formula attached as Appendix A to this report.

Section 1220-4-7-.03(2) of the PGA Rule requires:

Each year, the Company shall file with the [Authority] an annual report reflecting the transactions in the Deferred Gas Cost Account. Unless the [Authority] provides written notification to the Company within one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of filing the report, the Deferred Gas Cost Adjustment Account shall be deemed in compliance with the provisions of these Rules. This 180-day notification period may be extended by mutual consent of the Company and the [Authority] Staff or by order of the [Authority].

VII. SCOPE OF ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT AUDIT

The ACA audit is a limited compliance audit of Counce's ACA Account. The objective of the audit is to verify that the Company's calculations of gas costs incurred and recovered were materially correct,⁵ and that the Company is following all Authority orders and directives with respect to its calculation of the ACA Account balance. Refer to the ACA Account detail provided in Section III, SUMMARY OF COMPANY FILING (Counce's ACA filing for October 2015 to September 2016).

To accomplish the audit goal, Staff reviewed gas supply invoices, copies of the Company's canceled checks, as well as supplemental schedules and other source documentation provided by the Company. Where appropriate, Staff requested additional information to clarify the filing. Staff also audited a sample of customer bills to determine if the proper tariff rates, as well as PGA and ACA rates were applied in the Company's calculation of customer bills during the audit period. After sampling Company bills, Staff determined that the Company's billing rates appear to be correct.

⁵ The audit goal is not to guarantee that the Company's results are 100% correct. Where it is appropriate, Staff utilizes sampling techniques to determine whether the Company's calculations are materially correct. Material discrepancies would dictate a broadening of the scope of Staff's review.

VIII. ACA FINDINGS

Staff's audit revealed one (1) finding totaling negative \$148.40 in over-recovered gas costs. The finding, when added to the Company's calculated balance of negative \$110.77, results in a corrected net ending balance in the ACA account of negative \$259.17 which represents the Company's over-recovered gas costs. A summary of the ACA Account as filed by the Company and as adjusted by the Staff is shown below, followed by a description of the finding.

SUMMARY OF THE ACA ACCOUNT

Line No.		Company (as filed)	Staff (as adjusted)	Difference (Findings)
1	Beginning Balance at 9/30/16	(\$14,817.89)	(\$14,817.89)	
2	Activity During Current Period:			
	Plus:			
3	Gas Costs	63,405.58	63,405.58	0.00
	Minus:			
4	ACA Recoveries	(15,371.55)	(15,371.55)	0.00
5	PGA Recoveries	<u>64,070.01</u>	<u>64,070.01</u>	<u>0.00</u>
6	Ending Balance before Interest (line 1 + line 3 – line 4 – line 5)	(110.77)	(110.77)	0.00
	Plus:			
7	Interest	<u>0.00</u>	<u>(148.40)</u>	<u>(148.40)</u>
8	Ending Balance Including Interest at 09/30/16 (line 6 + line 7)	<u>(\$110.77)</u>	<u>(\$259.17)</u>	<u>(\$148.40)</u>

FINDING

Exception

The Company did not include the calculated interest due to customers for the current review period.

Discussion

Staff calculated⁶ the total monthly interest due to customers to be negative \$148.40, which increases the Company's calculated over-recovered gas costs at September 30, 2016 by this amount. Our calculations used for the approved rate to accrue interest for the 2015-2016 audit period: 3.25% for 4th quarter 2015; 3.25% for 1st quarter 2016; 3.46% for 2nd quarter 2016; and 3.50% for 3rd quarter 2016.

Company's Response

The Company will include interest due to customers in future filings.

⁶ In accordance with the Authority's Rule 1220-4-7 effective March 1, 1994, Gas Utilities are required to accrue interest on the average total un-refunded balance in the "Refund Due Gas Customers" account. Specifically, Rule 1220-4-7-.03(1)(b)2,(vii) states that the interest on the "Refund Due Customers' Account" be computed as follows "...using the average monthly balance based on the beginning and ending monthly balances. The interest rates for each calendar quarter used to compute such interest shall be a rate equal to the arithmetic mean (to the nearest one-hundredth of one percent) of the prime rate value published in the "Federal Reserve Bulletin" or in the Federal Reserve's "Selected Interest Rates" for the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd months preceding the 1st month of the calendar quarter."

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Actual Cost Adjustment is the difference between the **actual** invoiced gas costs paid by the utility and the **actual** gas costs recovered (or collected) by the utility from its customers via their approved tariff rates. The annual true-up process produces an ACA adjustment factor to be used in billing during the ensuing period until a new factor is determined.

The Staff's corrected balance in the ACA Account as of September 30, 2016 is a negative **\$259.17, representing over-collected gas costs.**⁷ This balance will be used as the beginning balance for the October 2016 – September 2017 ACA filing. Spreading the negative \$259.17 balance over the 12 month-to-date September 2016 sales of 12,174 MCF produces an **ACA adjustment factor**⁸ of negative \$.02 (refund) per MCF.⁹

During the audit, Staff found that Counce had billed the correct TRA approved PGA and ACA tariff rates.

Recommendations

To help ensure that Counce bills and reports the correct rates and complies with its tariff on a going-forward basis, Staff makes and requests approval by the TRA of the following recommendations:

1. Counce is directed to file as soon as possible a PGA tariff to implement its new ACA rate and to continue billing this ACA rate until the completion of Staff's next audit;
2. Counce is directed to file its billing rates for the period with Staff prior to billing its customers;
3. Counce is directed to send its ACA summary electronically to Staff on a quarterly basis for review;¹⁰ no later than the following dates: March 15, 2017 for quarter ending December 31, 2016; April 30, 2017 for quarter ending March 30, 2017; and July 30, 2017 for quarter ending June 30, 2017. Non-compliance could result in the Company being subject to penalties.
4. Counce is directed to use the **negative \$259.17** corrected ACA ending balance at September 30, 2016 as the beginning balance in the next ACA filing.

The intent of these recommendations is to assist Counce, by ensuring that the Company bills the TRA approved rates and correctly reports these rates in its ACA Account. The recommendations will also provide a mechanism for Staff to timely monitor the ACA Account balance and be aware if the balance becomes significantly over-or under-collected. In that instance, an interim tariff filing to adjust the PGA rate may be necessary.

⁷ Staff's calculation of this balance is shown in Section VIII, ACA Findings.

⁸ Small gas companies, such as Counce, do not automatically surcharge or refund the balance in the ACA Account until the Staff's audit is complete and the surcharge or refund factor is determined by the TRA.

⁹ See Attachment I for detail of the calculation of the ACA factor.

¹⁰ This review will not be a part of the annual audit process.

APPENDIX A

PGA FORMULA

The computation of the GCA can be broken down into the following formulas:

$$\text{Firm GCA} = \frac{D + \text{DACA}}{\text{SF}} - \text{DB} + \frac{P + T + \text{SR} + \text{CACA}}{\text{ST}} - \text{CB}$$

$$\text{Non-Firm GCA} = \frac{P + T + \text{SR} + \text{CACA}}{\text{ST}} - \text{CB}$$

where

- GCA = The Gas Charge Adjustment in dollars per Ccf/Therm, rounded to no more than five decimal places.
- D = The sum of all fixed Gas Costs.
- DACA = The demand portion of the ACA.
- P = The sum of all commodity/gas charges.
- T = The sum of all transportation charges.
- SR = The sum of all FERC approved surcharges.
- CACA = The commodity portion of the ACA.
- DB = The per unit rate of demand costs or other fixed charges included in base rates in the most recently completed general rate case (which may be zero if the Company so elects and the Commission so approves).
- CB = The per unit rate of variable gas costs included in base rates in the most recently completed general rate case (which may be zero if the Company so elects and the Commission so approves).
- SF = Firm Sales.

ST = Total Sales.

The computation of the RA can be computed using the following formulas:

$$\text{Firm RA} = \frac{\text{DR1} - \text{DR2}}{\text{SFR}} + \frac{\text{CR1} - \text{CR2} + \text{CR3} + i}{\text{STR}}$$

$$\text{Non-Firm RA} = \frac{\text{CR1} - \text{CR2} + \text{CR3} + i}{\text{STR}}$$

where

RA = The Refund Adjustment in dollars per Ccf/Therm, rounded to no more than five decimal places.

DR1 = Demand refund not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment, and received from suppliers by check, wire transfer, or credit memo.

DR2 = A demand surcharge from a supplier not includable in the GCA, and not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment.

CR1 = Commodity refund not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment, and received from suppliers by check, wire transfer, or credit memo.

CR2 = A commodity surcharge from a supplier not includable in the GCA, and not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment.

CR3 = The residual balance of an expired Refund Adjustment.

i = Interest on the "Refund Due Customers" account, using the average monthly balances based on the beginning and ending monthly balances. The interest rates for each calendar quarter used to compute such interest shall be the arithmetic mean (to the nearest one-hundredth of one percent) of the prime rate value published in the "Federal Reserve Bulletin" or in the Federal Reserve's "Selected Interest Rates" for the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd months preceding the 1st month of the calendar quarter.

SFR = Firm sales as defined in the GCA computation, less sales under a transportation or negotiated rate schedule.

STR = Total sales as defined in the GCA computation, less sales under a transportation or negotiated rate schedule.

ATTACHMENT 1

ATTACHMENT 1

Counce Natural Gas Corporation

Calculation of the ACA factor

Docket No. 16-00125

<u>Line No.</u>	Factor to be applied to residential, commercial and industrial customers:	
1	Invoiced Gas Costs (10/1/015 - 9/30/16)	\$ <u>63,405.58</u>
2	Gas Cost (PGA) Recovered (10/1/15 - 9/30/16)	<u>64,070.01</u>
3	Under/(Over) Recovery (line 1 minus line 2)	\$ (664.43)
4	Interest on Average Monthly Balances	(148.40)
5	ACA Surcharges/(Refunds) (10/1/15 - 9/30/16)	(15,371.55)
6	Beginning Balance at 10/01/15	<u>(14,817.89)</u>
7	ACA BALANCE INCLUDING INTEREST at 9/30/16 (line 3 + line 4 - line 5 + line 6)	\$ <u>(259.17)</u>
8	Sales Volumes (Actual MCF for 12 month ended 9/30/16)	12,174
9	ACA Factor per MCF (line 7 divided by line 8)	\$ <u>(0.02)</u>