Utility Service FAQs

The Public Service Commission has a staff of Consumer Affairs Technicians who specialize in solving utility-related problems. If you are experiencing difficulties paying a utility bill or have another utility related problem, you should first contact your utility company and attempt to resolve the problem with them directly. If the problem is not resolved, feel free to contact one of our technicians at 1-800-642-8544. Last year more than 98% of customers who contacted the PSC with a utility complaint had their problem solved at the informal level. Nearly 94% were resolved in 30 days or less. Sometimes, though, customers simply have a question.

Customers often ask if utilities have to send customers a bill. Yes, bills must be sent either monthly or bi-monthly. They must show the meter readings, and estimated bills must be marked as such. Electric customers are often concerned their meters are inaccurate and they are being overcharged. Customers can check their internal services at the breaker box. Have one person watch the meter while another turns off all the breakers, then turns them back on, one at a time. If the meter spins with excessive speed, the appliance on that breaker may need to be serviced.

Most water and sewer questions involve termination of service. Perhaps the top question is whether water service can be terminated for failure to pay a sewer bill. It certainly can. When a sewer utility requests termination of water service for non-payment of sewer service, the water service shall be discontinued no sooner than 10 days after the sewer utility has mailed the customer written notice of the scheduled termination. However, that written notice becomes void if the utility service has not been discontinued within 30 days of the date on the notice. Service can be terminated even if there are small children in the home. It can be terminated in the winter, but there are certain weather-based limitations for electric and gas that do not apply to water and sewer service.

If service has been terminated, it must be restored within 24 hours after the required portion of the bill is paid along with disconnect and/or reconnect fees, or a deferred payment agreement is established. Terminations must be carried out on days when the utility’s business office is open to accept payment, giving customers a final chance to retain service.

If a customer’s property has been damaged by a utility, the PSC may be able to help negotiate repairs. However, the PSC cannot award monetary compensation for damages related to utility work, such as tree cutting. I hope this information will improve understanding of the rules that govern utilities.

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