

PSC Consumer Connection



Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century

Issue 25 - January 2008

A quarterly publication of the Missouri Public Service Commission
Public Information & Education Department

WHO IS THE PSC?

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is the state government agency charged with ensuring that you receive safe, adequate, and reliable utility services at reasonable rates. The commission must balance the interests of the public — ratepayers as well as company shareholders. In proceedings before the commission, rates are set to give the utility company an opportunity, but not a guarantee, to earn a reasonable return on its investment after recovering its prudently incurred expenses.

Virtually every Missouri citizen receives some form of utility service (electric, natural gas, telecommunications, steam, water or sewer) from a company regulated by the Missouri Public Service Commission.

The PSC regulates four investor-owned **electric** companies (AmerenUE, Aquila Networks-L&P and MPS, Empire District Electric, and Kansas City Power and Light). These companies serve approximately 1.9 million customers. The commission does not regulate the rates of rural electric cooperatives or municipal electric systems. The commission does regulate rural electric cooperatives when it comes to safety issues.

Seven investor-owned **natural gas** companies are regulated by the PSC (AmerenUE, The Empire District Gas Company, Atmos Energy Corporation, Laclede Gas, Missouri Gas Energy, Missouri Gas Utilities, and Southern Missouri Gas Company). These companies serve approximately 1.4 million customers. While the Commission does not regulate the rates of municipal gas systems, the PSC does have jurisdiction in terms of safety. The PSC does not regulate propane.

The PSC regulates 59 **water** companies. The largest company is Missouri-American Water Company, serving more than 461,000 customers. The PSC also regulates 50 investor-owned **sewer** companies, ranging in size from 15 to just over 1,990 customers. Water quality issues are regulated by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The commission does not regulate the rates of municipal water and/or sewer systems, public water supply districts or public sewer districts.

Two companies providing steam service are under PSC jurisdiction (Aquila Networks-L&P and Trigen-Kansas City District Energy Corporation.) These **steam** companies serve approximately 62 customers, primarily commercial and industrial.

The PSC regulates, in different forms, more than 670 **telecommunications** providers (local telephone service providers, long distance companies, pay phone providers,

and shared tenant service providers) in Missouri. The PSC does not regulate wireless telephones, internet providers or cable television.

The PSC regulates manufacturers and retail dealers who sell new and used **manufactured homes and modular units**. There are 172 registered manufacturers, 206 registered dealers and 160 licensed installers in Missouri.

MISSOURI UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND

The Missouri General Assembly authorized the PSC to establish a state Universal Service Fund (MoUSF). The state program provides support for low-income or disabled Missouri residents through increased discounts for basic local telephone service.

Who is eligible for the MoUSF?

The program is in two sections – low-income and disabled. Low-income customers receive both state and federal discounts. Disabled customers receive state support.

What is available to low-income customers?

Qualifying low-income customers are eligible for both federal universal service support and MoUSF support. The state program provides **up to \$3.50** per month to qualifying low-income customers and is designed to maximize federal universal support of **up to** an additional \$1.75 per month. The Federal Universal Service Fund and the MoUSF may offer a discount **up to \$13.50** per month for basic local service to qualifying customers. *The exact amount of the discount is based on the amount of the qualifying customer's basic local telecommunications service.*

Specific criteria must be met to qualify for these programs.

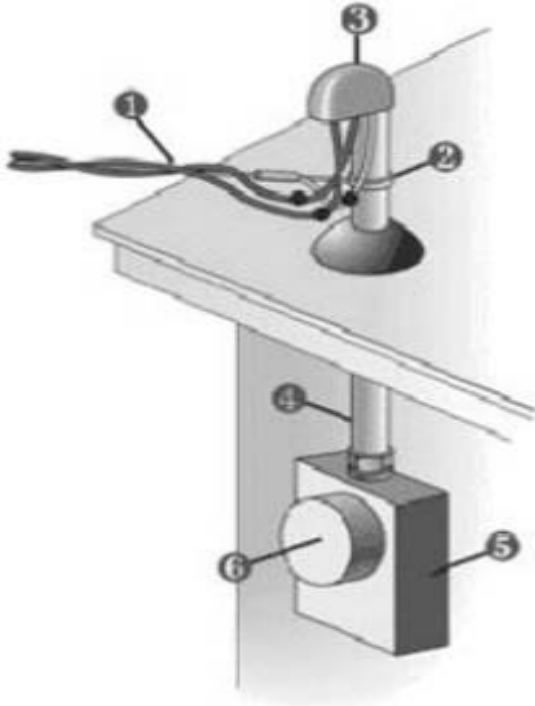
Contact your telephone company for an application and more information.

What is available to disabled customers?

Currently there are no federal lifeline services offered for disabled customers. The MoUSF will offer a discount of **up to \$3.50** per customer per month off local telephone service. *The exact amount of the discount is based on the amount of the qualifying customer's basic local telecommunications service.* If a customer or a dependent of the customer living in the same household has a disability and is receiving disability benefits, the customer is eligible to receive the disability discount. **Contact your telephone company for an application, criteria requirements and more information.**

How will the surcharge appear on the phone bill?

This surcharge will appear on the bill as a separate line item called Missouri Universal Service Fund.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT IS DAMAGED?

Your utility provider will install and maintain these components:

- ◆ The "service drop" that carries power from the line to a home or business (1)
- ◆ The electric meter (6)

Homeowners are responsible for these components. Only a qualified electrician should ever attempt to work on these parts.

- ◆ The service bracket or pipe which protects the connection point for the lines that enter your home or business (2)
- ◆ The "weatherhead" that keeps rain and other material out of the pipe (3)
- ◆ The pipe riser that protects the line entering the meter (4)
- ◆ The meter box that protects all connections to the meter box (5)

Please note that customers are responsible for maintaining trees around the service drop. Call your utility company if you have any questions or need additional information. You can also access the utility company website for additional information.

**Check out our
re-designed webpage!
www.psc.mo.gov**

Missouri Gas Utility Local Public Hearing

Missouri Gas Utility has filed a natural gas rate case seeking to increase gross annual revenues by \$443,131. For a residential customer using 70 Ccf in a month, the increase at the proposed rates would be approximately \$24.00 per month.

The Public Service Commission will hold a local public hearing in Gallatin on February 11, 2008, to receive customer comment on the rate request. The PSC staff will conduct a question and answer session for 5:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. The hearing will run from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., or until all who wish to testify have done so, whichever is sooner.

The local public hearing will be held at the Daviess county Library Community Room, 306 West Grand.

Empire District Electric Local Public Hearing

The Empire District Electric Company filed a rate request on October 1, 2007, with the Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC) seeking an increase of \$34.7 million (10.1%).

If approved, a residential customer using approximately 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a month, would see an increase of approximately \$9.75 a month.

Local public hearings have been set before the PSC as follows:

6:00 p.m.* Tuesday, March 25, 2008, at Webster Hall, Missouri Southern State University, 3950 E. Newman Road, Joplin, Missouri.

12:00 p.m.* Wednesday, March 26, 2008, at Webster Hall, Missouri Southern State University, 3950 E. Newman Road, Joplin, Missouri.

6:00 p.m.* Wednesday, March 26, 2008, at the Tri-Lakes TCRC, University of Missouri Extension at Reeds Spring High School, ITV Room, 20277 State Highway 413 (in the South Wing of Reeds Spring High School), Reeds Spring, Missouri.

***A question-and-answer session will be held one-half hour before the beginning of each hearing.**

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email joyce.neuner@psc.mo.gov

Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline 1-800-392-4211
or email: pscinfo@psc.mo.gov

Mail your inquiry or complaint to:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102

