

PSC *Connection*

Missouri Public Service Commission Publication

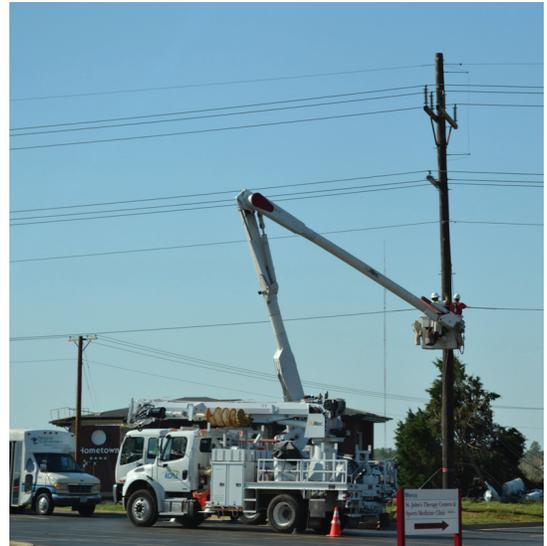
VOL. 1 NO. 3 -- November 2011



Joplin Rebuilds

HEAVY WORKLOAD

Utility crews were kept busy after the Joplin tornado. Neighboring utility companies, like Kansas City Power & Light, sent assistance. The Empire District Electric Company said, at one time, 31 of 60 circuits in Joplin were out. Storm costs have been estimated between \$20 and \$30 million. *(Photo by Jeannette Eaves)*



What's Inside

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After a tornado ripped through Joplin on May 22, 2011, most of the utility infrastructure had to be rebuilt.

10 COLD WEATHER RULE

Since 1977, this rule has provided consumer protection during winter's deep freeze.

15 WINTER HEATING

Energy saving information and tips to help keep you warm when the temperature drops.

Our Mission

To ensure that Missourians receive safe and reliable utility service at just and reasonable rates.



On The Cover

The violent tornado that struck Joplin on May 22, 2011 tangled electric wires and poles. Approximately 7,000 homes and 2,000 businesses were reduced to rubble, according to the American Red Cross. The death toll was 162. *(Photo courtesy of The Empire District Electric Company)*

Chairman's Corner

In times of tragedy, we have always come to the aid of those in need. I believe that is what makes the United States the great country that it is. We received such a call to help our fellow Missourians after a devastating tornado hit Joplin on May 22, 2011.

The National Weather Service identified the tornado as an EF-5, with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. Because of that tornado, lives were lost, many more were injured and thousands of homes and businesses were leveled. An area hospital sustained massive damage and only rubble remained where a school once stood.

The call for help went out shortly after the tornado hit. Missourians, as well as others across the country, came to the aid of their Joplin neighbors that day and in the days that have followed. The City of Joplin is rebuilding. It will not be easy but Joplin is determined to rebuild its fine city and that determination, I believe, will make it happen.

Our feature article in this edition of the *PSC Connection* takes an in-depth look at the PSC's role in disaster recovery. In addition, it looks at what the utility companies in the area were faced with right after the devastating tornado and what they did and are doing to restore service to Joplin customers.

Since 1977, the Public Service Commission's Cold Weather Rule has been there for customers, helping to keep them warm during the harsh winds of a Missouri winter. Since its inception, it has helped more than two million Missourians.

In our second magazine article, we explore the origins of the Cold Weather Rule, what the rule means to you and details on where consumers can get assistance in helping pay those heat-related bills this winter. While the Public Service Commission does not have funding available for consumers, we can provide information that can help consumers who are seeking assistance. Our toll-free hotline number is 1-800-392-4211.

Also in this edition, we follow up on our announcement in the last *PSC Connection* regarding PSC "Utility Days" in Missouri. We held our first "Utility Days" event in Chesterfield in October.

This issue of the magazine also includes energy saving tips for the winter and information on how to protect you and your family from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the *PSC Connection* and find it to be informative. Please feel free to share your thoughts about the magazine and give us your suggestions on future topics.



Kevin Gunn

PSConnection

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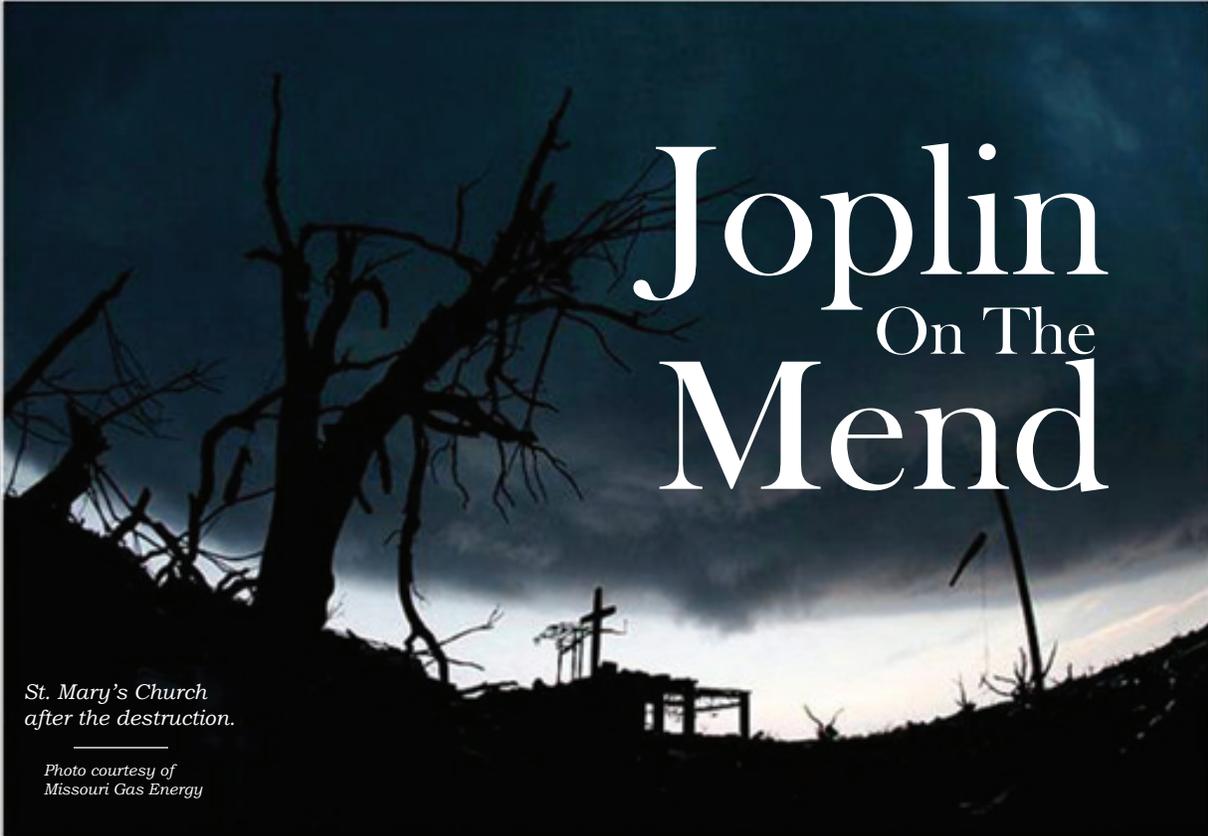
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The Missouri Public Service Commission regulates investor-owned electric, steam, natural gas, water and sewer and telephone companies. Its mission is to ensure Missouri consumers have access to safe, reliable and reasonably priced utility service while allowing those utility companies under our jurisdiction an opportunity to earn a reasonable return on their investment. The PSC also regulates manufacturers and retail dealers who sell new and used manufactured homes and modular units. The Commission was established in 1913. The PSC is comprised of five commissioners, who are appointed by the governor.





*St. Mary's Church
after the destruction.*

*Photo courtesy of
Missouri Gas Energy*

Their Lives Were Changed Forever

At 5:41 p.m. on May 22, 2011, a devastating EF-5 tornado -- with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour -- struck Joplin, continuing through Duquesne, Diamond, Granby, Sarcoxie and Wentworth. The tornado claimed 162 lives, resulted in hundreds of injuries and the loss of thousands of homes and businesses. It was the deadliest tornado since modern recordkeeping began in 1950. The storm took a direct route through much of Joplin's residential and retail district. The primary area of destruction was 6 miles long and, at the widest point, almost a mile wide.

Missourians are familiar with natural disasters. Tornadoes, ice storms, flooding and severe storms are all common occurrences in Missouri. According to the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Missouri has received more than 30 federal major disaster declarations since 1990 -- with more than half of those events occurring in the last five years .

The PSC's Role In Disaster Recovery

As a result of these natural disasters, electrical power, natural gas, public water and communications systems maybe damaged, causing service interruptions or failures. The Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC) works closely with SEMA, other state and federal agencies and utilities to ensure coordination of emergency response and service restoration.

Shortly after the tornado struck Joplin, PSC Commissioners and staff began internal communications and coordination efforts. Over the next several days and weeks, staff participated in daily conference calls with SEMA, the utilities, other state agencies and members of the Joplin response community.

Staff served as a liaison between affected utilities and SEMA to address issues of concern and provide updates on restoration efforts. On various occasions, all five Commissioners, some Commissioner advisors and PSC management toured the devastated areas and visited with The Empire District Electric Company, Missouri Gas Energy and Missouri American Water Company to discuss the event, restoration efforts and future plans.

In the first few days, staff also made several contacts with AT&T as communications systems played a vital role in recovery and response efforts. Members of the PSC's Manufactured

“Whether ensuring temporary housing units are properly installed and anchored, monitoring system rebuilds or considering appropriate cost recovery, the Commission and the PSC staff continue to place a high priority on the needs of the Joplin community.”

-- PSC Chairman Kevin Gunn



Empire District Electric photo

Crews repair poles after the May 22 tornado.

Housing and Modular Unit Program spent many hours in Joplin, actively participating in the set up and inspection of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) temporary housing units and modular classrooms.

Staff continues to communicate with the various utilities and agencies involved in the recovery efforts, receiving status updates and discussing various issues as they arise. In some instances, Commission rules or company tariff requirements will need to be waived or modified to allow utilities to continue to respond to customer needs. In the future, the Commission, staff and interested stakeholders will address proper recovery of the utilities' costs associated with the tornado. Such costs could include labor and materials related to repairs to utility systems and capital costs associated with new infrastructure as systems are rebuilt.



Rows of temporary housing units just south of the city's airport.

Empire District Electric Photo

PSC Manufactured Housing Department Assistance To Joplin Devastation

Members of the PSC's Manufactured Housing and Modular Unit Program were in Joplin throughout the summer working diligently, often in extreme heat, to assist with delivery and proper set up of FEMA homes which serve as temporary housing for families in the area.

"When I first arrived in Joplin, I could not believe the amount of destruction caused by the tornado. I had never seen anything like it before," said Ron Pleus, manager of the PSC's Manufactured Housing and Modular Unit Program.

"Entire neighborhoods were gone. Big business buildings and schools were reduced to rubble. It will take a lot of work to rebuild that area of the city, but the people of Joplin are determined to rebuild," said Pleus.

PSC staff members also met with contractors, installers, local building officials, representatives from FEMA and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide assistance for the proper installation, anchoring and approvals of both FEMA homes and commercial modular units, including modular classrooms.

"The proper set-up of temporary housing was a top priority," said Pleus. "Our inspections focused on safety; ensuring each structure was properly supported and anchored. We inspected

over 225 FEMA homes, or temporary housing units, and 36 modular classrooms in and around the Joplin area."

To date, approximately 500 temporary housing units have been installed at sites in and around the Joplin area. Temporary housing units have been installed in nine different locations as well as in manufactured home parks, and at two large commercial sites built by



Ronnie Mann, a PSC Manufactured Housing Field Inspector, inspects the installation of the anchors under a FEMA Home at the Joplin Airport Site.

the USACE. Approximately 193 of these FEMA houses are located at the Joplin airport. Final installation of these temporary homes was completed in mid-September.

In addition to the temporary housing units, modular classrooms were installed at seven locations throughout the Joplin School District. This year, approximately 3,500 students will attend school in modular classrooms.

The largest modular classroom, referred to as “ShopKo”, is located behind the North Park Mall,

Installations In Joplin Area
(June-September 2011)

Commercial Units	87
Joplin Airport Community	193
R. Hines (Park)	20
Hope Haven (Park)	152
Fountain II (Park)	<u>53</u>
Total Units Installed	505

and will accommodate approximately 1,200 students.

“Due to the hard work and joint efforts of all parties involved, Joplin students were able to begin classes as scheduled,” said Pleus.

Even though work on temporary housing units and modular classrooms is complete, Manufactured Housing and Modular Unit Program staff continue to work with manufacturers and area dealers who sell and install new or replacement manufactured homes (including residential homes and commercial modular structures, such as, fire stations, medical units, office units, and banks).

New structures will be required to meet site-specific residential and commercial building codes. Staff inspections will be conducted to make sure new structures are properly installed and anchored.

The Empire District Electric Company’s Response¹

In the first few moments and hours after the storm passed, and as residents, including many Empire employees, emerged from the wreckage, the mobilization process to assess the damage began. Empire’s initial course of action was to provide for the safety of the public and those working in the impacted area by



Photo by Jeannette Eaves

A view of the destruction in Joplin.

ensuring lines were de-energized. Once completed, the damage assessment and restoration process began in earnest. Critical services were at the top of the list. St. John’s Hospital was destroyed, and the main feeder and back-up lines to Freeman Hospital were down.

Vegetation management and line crews worked to clear a path and connect an alternate feeder line to return power to Freeman Hospital before the morning of May 23. Additional vegetation crews worked through the night to help clear alleys and streets to allow access for emergency vehicles and to prepare for the power recovery process. Electricity was restored to Joplin’s major water and sewer services within 24 hours.

Unlike an ice storm where many lines can be raised and reconnected, wires and equipment were mangled amidst debris during the tornado rendering them unusable. Much of

Footnote

¹ The information provided came from the June/July 2011, Vol. 34/No. 4, Empire Dispatch, the Empire District Electric Company’s newsletter.



Empire District Electric Company photo

The substation at 26th and Pearl was totally destroyed.



Logistics for Empire Recovery Effort

2,400 room nights to house workers
13,000+ meals provided to workers
2,700 pounds of worker laundry

“Feeding and housing additional workers is not an easy task but it is a vital part of an overall plan to restore utility services as quickly as possible,” said Lena Mantle, Manager of the PSC Energy Department.

the early assessment process was conducted on foot, as debris limited vehicle access. Estimated losses due to the storm included 4,000 poles, 1,500 transformers, 110 miles of line, and one entire substation.

Traffic in the devastation and reconstruction areas created major challenges. To avoid work delays, 12 pole and material staging sites were established throughout the area. Pole drops took place at night and materials were pulled and ready for crews at first light. More than 280 personnel were brought in to help, including crews from Kansas City Power & Light Company, City Utilities of Springfield, rural electric cooperatives and several contractors.

While much has already been accomplished, there is still work to be done. It is estimated that 3,000 to 4,000 structures were completely destroyed and will have to be rebuilt. Customers continue to return to service each day as debris is removed and properties are repaired and rebuilt.

Missouri Gas Energy’s Response

“It was a sobering sight that helped put the magnitude of the tornado damage in perspective,” said Bob Leonberger, Supervisor of the PSC’s Gas Safety/Engineering Staff.

“As we entered the MGE Service Center in Joplin, there was an enlarged map on the wall showing the area of damage caused by the tornado. The map

was about 5’-6’tall, covered almost one full wall (about 20’-25’) and continued for a short distance on another wall. The area of destruction to MGE facilities by the tornado was marked on the map and shaped like an elongated football (narrower at the ends and wider in the middle).”

In practical terms, the map showed the location of MGE facilities affected by the tornado for coordination purposes.

The immediate problem for MGE was responding to (and making safe) leaks, caused by above-ground service line piping that had been broken when the structures were destroyed, and damage to regulator station piping. MGE personnel responding to the devastation had to contend with debris blocking the roadways, lack of street signs and landmarks, and misplaced residents.

MGE could not shut off sections of mains to some damaged areas because those mains also served critical infrastructure and areas that were not damaged, such as Freeman Hospital, so service lines had to be shut-off to the individual damaged structures.

Another unforeseen problem was communication. Cellular telephone and radio service was disrupted following the storm. Numerous service personnel went to the Joplin emergency operations command center to be dispatched to areas with reported leaks until cellular and radio communications infrastructure was repaired.



Missouri Gas Energy photo

St. John’s Regional Medical Center felt the force of the storm.



Empire District Electric Photo

The May 22 tornado left a patch of destruction that was a mile wide and six miles long.

After the initial response to critical infrastructure issues, MGE decided to shut off entire sections (blocks) of the natural gas distribution system by exposing, cutting and capping mains and individual service lines. This operation was hampered by having to remove debris. MGE made the decision to cut off structures based on its assessment the structure was damaged to the point of being uninhabitable. As structures were officially inspected, some of these areas were re-visited by MGE.

MGE shut-off service to approximately 3,500 customer locations. After the storm, Jasper County personnel took electronic aerial photographs of the damaged area. MGE was able to compare these photographs with maps to identify damaged structures that required action.

In the days and weeks following the tornado, MGE used the wall map to coordinate efforts to abandon mains and service lines in the heavily damaged area. The company divided the damaged area into 40 grids to conduct systematic street-by-street walking surveys to visually assess the mains and service lines ahead of the demolition and debris removal operation teams.

Continual assessment of the damaged area was necessary to avoid additional damage or injury from ruptured natural gas facilities. MGE concentrated its efforts in these areas ahead of the debris removal teams. Outreach efforts

were made to the Joplin emergency operations command center to communicate to contractors to make sure natural gas service was abandoned before debris was removed.

Additional company and contract personnel assisted in the Joplin area. At the height of the recovery efforts, MGE had approximately 75 additional personnel in Joplin.

Missouri-American Water Response

After the tornado moved through Joplin, Missouri-American Water Company (MAWC) started the difficult task of ensuring the production and delivery of safe and adequate service to its customers in Joplin. Fortunately, a majority of MAWC's transmission and distribution system infrastructure in Joplin is located underground. In addition, major MAWC stand-pipes, water towers, and treatment facilities in Joplin were in areas not affected by the tornado.

Upon realizing the level of devastation that hit the Joplin area, MAWC went into emergency mode. MAWC put its employees on alert and had technicians from other service territories, such as St. Joseph, Warrensburg, Jefferson City, and St. Louis, assist in the recovery and rebuilding phase. MAWC also notified the PSC staff to give it an update as to what happened and MAWC's planned response efforts.

Initially, the major issue for MAWC was the loss of pressure throughout the system. Even though the transmission and distribution is

underground, the system was damaged due to the destruction that occurred above ground. Uprooted trees damaged mains and service lines and caused leaks.

Approximately 4,000 leaks were discovered throughout the system, as well as 25 torn fire service lines. Due to the multitude of leaks, pressure throughout the entire system dropped to levels below standard and even briefly approached zero. Since pressure approached zero, MAWC, in conjunction with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, issued a boil order.

As a point of reference, about ten minutes after the damage, two elevated storage tanks showed a drop in pressure. Less than two hours after the storm, the storage tanks were empty. Full pressure was restored in two days and the boil order was lifted on Saturday, May 27, after a complete flushing of the system and sampling of the water to ensure it was safe to drink.

The MAWC crews in Joplin initially focused on finding and repairing damage to mains and service lines to increase water pressure. The company also redirected the flow of the system around the affected area to help restore system pressure. MAWC systematically shut-down its mains to help re-establish pressure to the areas that were not directly impacted by the tornado.

The company prioritized repairing the main breaks and service lines in the impacted area. This was a tedious process as crews had to go block to block opening valves, getting the mains back in service, and shutting off individual service lines to structures that were destroyed. A high priority for MAWC was to restore fire protection services to the impacted area.

Besides underground infrastructure damage, MAWC sustained damage to other facilities. Its service center and plant storage buildings were completely destroyed. There was roof damage and broken windows at its water treatment plant. Electrical panels at one of its wells and at the 15th Street booster station were damaged. Several company vehicles were also damaged.

After the initial work to get the system operable, there was still a heavy workload for the crews in Joplin. Water line mark-outs had to be performed. Demolition permits were required for



Crews from Missouri-American Water Company work on a water line.

Missouri-American Water Company Photo

the demolition and removal of debris. Water main repairs were ongoing and some fire hydrants, struck by debris removal, needed to be replaced.

Related Issues Affecting All Utilities

In addition to the immediate and on-going response efforts, the utilities had to decide how to address issues such as customer billing, reconnection, tracking customer locations, zoning and planning laws, etc. A primary focus for all the utilities and the Commission is to be cognizant of the needs and sensitivities of customers and the community. The utilities worked together to assist in damage assessment, worked together to get information to customers, and worked with the PSC to make the transition as smooth as possible while working within the structure of existing regulations.

*Major contributors to the article include **Natelle Dietrich** (Director Tariff, Safety, Economic & Engineering Analysis); **Lena Mantle** (Manager-Energy); **Ron Pleus** (Manager-Manufactured Housing); **Jim Busch** (Manager-Water & Sewer); and **Bob Leonberger** (Supervisor-Gas Safety/Engineering). All are with the Public Service Commission staff.*

Brrrrrr...

By Mary Schierman-Duncan

Winter's chill brings cold weather. At the same time, many customers struggle to pay their utility bills. For more than 30 years, the PSC's Cold Weather Rule provides protection during winter's deep freeze.

It is quite possible that you may know of someone who has been able to keep their heat on during a cold Missouri winter because of the Public Service Commission's Cold Weather Rule. Maybe the Cold Weather Rule helped you at some time during the last 34 years. Since 1977, the Cold Weather has helped over two million Missourians keep their homes and families warm from the cold winds of winter.

Many Missourians, like others across the country, were struggling financially in the late 1970s. Thomas M. Supel, Senior Economist for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis noted in early 1978, the "longest and deepest economic recession since the end of World War II began in the late fall of 1973 and hit bottom in midwinter 1975."

In addition, the first Arab oil embargo occurred in 1974 with a second just four years later. People often found incomes weren't keeping up with energy costs.

The Missouri Public Service Commission began to look at a Cold Weather Rule in mid-February 1977. Then Chairman James Mulvaney requested the Secretary of the Commission draft and promulgate a rule prohibiting a utility providing heat-related service from terminating service during severe cold weather. On August 17, 1977, the Commission filed its order of rulemaking with the Secretary of State adopting the Cold Weather Rule effective November 1, 1977.

The Commission received a number of applications for rehearing and reconsideration as well as requests for clarification and interpretation of the rule from utility companies, social service agencies and other state agencies. As a result, on October 13, 1977, the Commission filed with the Missouri Secretary of State, an emergency amendment to the rule to take effect on November 1, 1977.

Helping To Keep Missourians Warm

In its filing, the Commission said, “The Commission finds that an immediate danger to the public safety exists in that this rule is scheduled to become effective on November 1, 1977, and should be clarified prior to becoming effective. This emergency amendment removes the uncertainty regarding temperature readings by substituting a time period, clarifies notice procedures and establishes a registration procedure for financial assistance.” The emergency amendment expired on March 1, 1978.

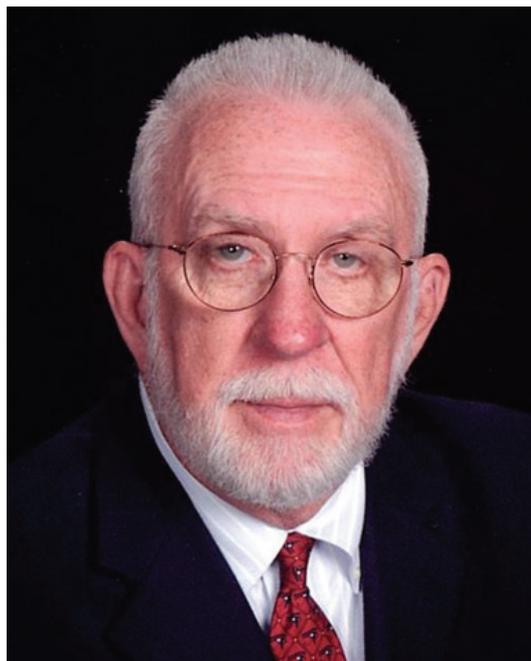
Charles Fraas, came to the Public Service Commission in December 1977, replacing James Mulvaney as its chairman. Fraas remembers the Commission feeling a sense of urgency to have a rule in place that winter that would protect consumers. “We also realized that as an emergency amendment, it would expire in March of 1978 and a permanent solution was needed.”

How to respond to the needs of Missourians while also recognizing the rights of a utility company to conduct its business was a central issue as the Commission attempted to fashion a permanent rule which would help people keep their heat-related service during the winter.

The Commission searched for consensus. It needed to determine how much authority the Commission had to influence the revenue stream of a utility company and how to administer a rule that recognized those faced with a bill they can’t pay in full but who want to work with the utility to keep service.

A permanent rule was ultimately adopted by the Commission prior to the winter of 1978. Over the next 14 years, the rule was amended and evolved by:

- Substituting a time period for weather conditions.
- Clarifying notice procedures and establishing a registration procedure to ensure those who had a difficult time paying their bill in full during the cold weather months would not be terminated if they met all requirements, including entering into a payment arrangement with the utility company.
- Providing special notice for any elderly and disabled person who requested such notice.
- Extending time period and providing more lenient payment



“It was a long rule-making process, but not a particularly contentious struggle.”

**Charles Fraas,
Former PSC Chairman**

arrangements for customers eligible for energy assistance.

- Clarifying the responsibilities of utility companies and customers regarding the discontinuance and a reconnection of heat-related utility service.
- Allowing customers to maintain service under certain payment terms and restricting deposits.
- Ensuring adequate customer notification prior to disconnecting service.
- Encouraging customers who could not pay their utility bills to seek financial assistance through available sources.

- Setting utility reporting requirements which provide information to gauge the use and effect of the Cold Weather Rule.

Today, the Cold Weather Rule has allowed customers to take advantage of more liberal payment arrangements; it has placed greater restrictions on disconnections or denials of heat-related service; and provided more frequent notification before service is disconnected. In addition, elderly or disabled customers who have registered with the utility company -- and who make minimum payments -- are safe from winter disconnections.

What Do I Need to Do?

If you cannot pay your heat-related utility bill in full, it is important that you:

1. Contact the utility company.
2. Advise the utility that you are unable to pay in full.
3. Provide income information (either monthly or annual).
4. Make the minimum payment.
5. Enter into a payment agreement with the utility.
6. Maintain your agreement payments in a timely manner.

What Resources for Assistance are Available to Me?

Programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can assist you in paying your heating bills. LIHEAP is a federally funded program to help low-income households meet their home heating needs and has two components: Energy Assistance (EA) and Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP).

According to Elaine West, Executive Director of the Missouri Association for Community Action (MACA), LIHEAP funding this year could be significantly less than in previous years. Many community action agencies are struggling



Gray -- United Way of Greater Kansas City
Orange -- United Way of Greater St. Louis

to find ways to adequately provide services to those in need while operating within reduced budgets. Some offices are facing staff reductions, others are reducing their hours and some offices are closing entirely.

Community action agencies began accepting applications on October 1 for households with persons 60 years or older or disabled and on November 1 for all other applicants. For a listing of community action agencies in Missouri, or to find the contact information for the agency near you, go to the Missouri Association for Community Action at www.communityaction.org.

The United Way of Missouri can also provide assistance resources. You can access its website at www.211missouri.org or by calling 2-1-1 from any landline telephone or certain cell phones.

If your cell service does not support the 2-1-1 dialing option, you can call the United Way of Greater St. Louis at 1-800-427-4626 or the United Way of Greater Kansas City at 1-866- 320-5764.

What Does The Cold Weather Rule Mean To Me?

The Cold Weather Rule period is from November 1 through March 31. The rule prohibits a utility company from disconnecting heat-related service when the temperature is forecasted to drop below 32 degrees. That is based on a National Weather Service forecast between 6 am and 9 am for the following 24 hour period in which the temperature is predicted to drop below 32 degrees.

A temperature provision was not a part of the original Cold Weather Rule adopted in 1977. In 1993, the Commission added a provision to the Cold Weather Rule which prohibits a utility company from disconnecting heat-related service if the temperature is predicted to fall below 30 degrees.

It is important to note that if you have already had service disconnected for nonpayment; the temperature provision does not require the utility company to reconnect you based on the fact that the temperature is predicted to fall below 32 degrees. Under the rule, the utility company is prohibited from shutting off your service on any day when utility employees will not be available to reconnect your service on the following day or days (weekends) or holidays.

The rule allows you to set up a payment plan, spreading your pre-existing debt, current bill and the utility's estimate of the subsequent bills, over 12 months. **A deposit will not be required if you maintain your payment agreement.**

There are a number of customer notification requirements before service can be disconnected. The rule requires that you be notified by mail at least 10 days prior to the date of the proposed disconnection. In the case of a registered elderly or disabled person, the additional party listed on the registration form must also receive notice.

The company must attempt to contact the customer within 96 hours before disconnecting service by either a second written notice sent by first class mail **or** a door hanger **or** at least two telephone call attempts to the customer. Finally, the rule requires one notification attempt in person at the time of disconnection.

The rule also requires that you be notified of the possible availability of financial help in



paying your bill and it allows for reconnection of service for less than the full amount owed.

If you are a senior citizen (65 years or older), or if you are disabled to the extent that your doctor has provided a medical form to the company attesting to the fact that your household must have natural gas or electric service to maintain life or health, or if you have a formal award letter issued by the federal government for disability benefits, you may register with the utility. As a registered low-income elderly

or disabled person, if you have entered into a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, made the initial required payment and continue to make the agreed payments during the effective period, the rule prohibits disconnection of your service.

For a customer who has not defaulted on a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, the initial payment shall be no more than 12 percent of the 12 month budget bill. For those customers who have defaulted on a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, the initial payment shall be an amount equal to 80 percent of the customer's balance. For natural gas customers who have not previously defaulted on a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, the rule requires the company to restore service upon the initial payment of 50 percent or \$500 of the pre-existing arrears, whichever is less, with the deferred balance spread over a 12-month payment period.

If you are a natural gas customer who has defaulted on a previous Cold Weather Rule payment agreement, the rule allows you to make an initial payment of 50 percent of your outstanding balance or \$500, whichever is less, with the remainder to be paid in a Cold Weather Rule payment agreement plan over the following 12 months. A natural gas utility is not required to offer these more lenient payment terms to keep service on or reconnect a customer more than once every two years or when a customer has defaulted on a Cold Weather Rule payment agreement three or more times. In these situations, customers must pay 80 percent of their outstanding balance to keep the service on or have it restored.

-- Mary Schierman-Duncan works in the PSC Consumer Services Department.

THE SILENT KILLER

The Dangers of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. It can kill you before you are aware it is in your home.

At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, burning eyes, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue.

Before each heating season, have your heating system checked by a qualified plumbing or heating professional.

Make sure appliance vents and exhaust ducts, such as those on water heaters, dryers and ranges, are not blocked.

Check your chimney to make sure it is not blocked by debris or bird nests.

Never operate your car or other gas-powered engines in an enclosed space, such as a garage.

It is recommended that households and businesses purchase a carbon monoxide detector. Similar to a fire alarm, these detectors will sound off if CO builds up in your home or office. If the detector sounds the alarm, open the doors and windows, call a professional to check your appliances and call 911 or the Poison Control Center at **800-222-1222** if anyone is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning.

SAFETY NOTICE ON USING GENERATORS

Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

DANGER!
CARBON MONOXIDE

Energy Saving Tips:

No Cost:

- Turn off lights not being used.
- Close off rooms that are not in use.
- Wear extra layers of clothing or blankets.
- Avoid moving the thermostat up or down during the day because this will waste energy and money.
- Make sure vents are not blocked by furniture or drapes.
- Keep draperies and shades open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home.

Low Cost:

- Caulk around windows and doors.
- Install an energy efficient thermostat.
- Replace conventional bulbs with efficient bulbs.
- Have your furnace regularly inspected and maintained.
- Replace furnace filter monthly when dirty.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls.

Long Term:

- Add insulation in attics and have cellulose blown into walls that are not insulated.
- Replace old appliances, windows and doors with new ENERGY STAR® appliances, windows and doors.
- Install a new energy-efficient furnace.
- Install more cold air returns if the house needs increased air circulation to increase furnace efficiency.
- Consider a home energy audit to pinpoint areas where air could escape.

Log on to: www.beenergyefficient.org for more no cost, low cost and long-term energy savings tips like these for you and your family.

For More Information Call:
(800) 392-4211



BEE Prepared for Winter's Wrath

HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS!

- * Be aware of the warning signs of hypothermia and other cold related illnesses. Warning signs may include uncontrollable shivering, exhaustion, confusion, changes in skin color, slurred speech and loss of consciousness. If you are experiencing cold related symptoms seek immediate medical assistance or call 9-1-1. For more information on cold related illnesses, contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 1-800-392-0272 (www.dhss.mo.gov) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-232-4636 (www.cdc.gov).
- * Select proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions. Wear warm, layered clothing and waterproof, insulated boots to keep feet warm and dry.
- * Check on elderly and disabled friends and family often.
- * Winter storms and cold temperatures can be extremely dangerous. Prepare a Family Disaster Supply Kit and Disaster Plan to reduce the stress of coping with the aftermath of a weather related disaster. Information is available from the American Red Cross website www.redcross.org, or the University of Missouri Extension website <http://extension.missouri.edu>.



Be Wise And Be Prepared In Case Of An Emergency!

In Your Home

- * Stock up on non-perishable food (such as canned meats and vegetables).
- * Keep a flashlight, working radio, extra batteries, and candles on hand.
- * Keep a supply of drinking water in case the water supply is contaminated.

Keeping In Contact

- * Keep a list of phone numbers for police, fire and emergency personnel.
- * Develop an evacuation plan in case you have to leave your home.
- * Call relatives or emergency officials if you need a place to stay.

Other Things To Remember

- * If someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life-sustaining medical equipment, check with your utility provider about back-up power sources.

Employee Spotlight



Five Questions With:

Paula Mapeka

Utility Regulatory Auditor III

1) Main job duties

Reviewing all exhibits and testimony on assigned issues from previous and current cases. Conduct interviews and/or other meetings with company personnel to obtain, verify and confirm data and information. Develop accounting adjustments and issue positions which are supported by workpapers and written testimony.

2) How I came to work at the PSC

There was a job posting and I applied for the job. What I remember most about the interview itself was that it was one of the longest job interviews. By the time I left the PSC building, I had a parking ticket on the windshield of my car.

3) What I did before coming to the PSC

I worked at the Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Community and Public Health, Budget and Fiscal Services Section.

4) The most interesting thing about my job

Working with various clients and understanding that no matter the outcome of our decision, somebody is going to disagree. You just have to make the best decisions while abiding by laws, policies and procedures. I have come to learn that some people don't like being asked questions or having their work scrutinized because they view it as unnecessary government intervention. As an auditor, I have learned not to take things personally. At the end of the day, it is about getting the job done right.

5) One thing people do not know about me

I am from a country with the most billionaires in the world. Suffice to say, if you are a tourist in Zimbabwe, the \$5 U.S. dollar note will buy you a \$100 billion Zimbabwean dollar note. If we all lived there, we would be billionaires too.

During each edition of the PSCConnection Magazine, we will spotlight a member of the PSC Staff. Did you know that approximately 48 percent of our employees have more than 15 to 20 years experience.



Chairman Kevin Gunn talks with shoppers who visited the PSC Booth at Chesterfield Mall.

Photo by Annette Slack

“UTILITY DAYS” *Coming To A Place Near You*

The Public Service Commission continues to work to develop programs that will help consumers better understand the role and responsibilities of the agency.

On October 14, 2011, the Commission launched a new program called “**Utility Days**”. The first event was held at the Chesterfield Mall in St. Louis County.

“**Utility Days**” is designed to give customers the opportunity to meet regulators and utility representatives. They can also get information and educational materials in a “one-stop shop” setting.

“Utility regulation is very complex. There is a lot more involved than just flipping a switch or turning on the faucet,” said PSC Chairman Kevin Gunn. “We hope these events will provide information to consumers and also give them the opportunity to meet and talk with the Commissioners who will ultimately decide the rates that they will pay and the type of service they will receive.”

Similar “**Utility Days**” are being planned throughout the state.



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