

Over the past several months, all Missourians have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

March 7, 2020

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Missouri occurred.

March 13, 2020

Governor Parson issued Executive Order 20-02, declaring a State of Emergency, the same day President Trump announced a national emergency. The Governor's executive order authorized the Governor to "waive or suspend the operation of any statutory requirement or administrative rule prescribing procedures for conducting state business, where strict compliance with such requirements and rules would prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action by the department of health and senior services to respond to a declared emergency or increased health threat to the population" under Section 44.100, RSMo5.

March 21, 2020

Governor Parson directed the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Director to require statewide social distancing.

March 24, 2020

State office buildings officially closed.

April 3, 2020

Governor Parson issued a statewide "Stay Home Missouri" Order effective April 6, 2020. Among its provisions were requirements for Missourians to avoid leaving their homes, close public schools, and limit eating at restaurants.

May 4, 2020

Missouri entered **Phase 1** of the **Show Me Strong Recovery Plan**. This plan has four pillars: an expansion of testing capacity and volume, expansion of personal protective equipment ("PPE") reserves, continuation of monitoring and expansion of hospitals and health care system capacity, and an improvement in the ability to predict potential outbreaks using Missouri's public health data. **Phase 2** was announced on June 11, 2020, with an effective date of June 16, 2020. Phase 2 "fully [opened Missouri] for business" and removed the statewide health order. The decision to reopen Missouri was driven by data presented to Governor Parson from the Fusion Cell. The Fusion Cell is a group of experts from various public and private sectors that are able to provide Missouri-specific information. The two focus areas of the Cell are health and economic recovery. In its initial stage, the Cell was mostly focused on health, where currently the Cell has increased its focus on economic recovery.

The PSC Response

COVID

May 12, 2020

The PSC began participation in the **Fusion Cell** to provide the Fusion Cell with information about Missouri's public utilities. The PSC also participates and/or monitors three microcells: Infrastructure, Business, and Community. The microcells are subset groups of the larger fusion cell with a narrowed focus. The PSC continues to monitor developments in Missouri's efforts to recover from the pandemic and to provide information that may help assist in the recovery.

Utility-Related Actions

All of Missouri's regulated public utilities have continued to provide safe and reliable service through the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Commission has supported the utilities' voluntary efforts to support their customers during this difficult time. At the request of many utilities, the Commission authorized variances or waivers of certain tariff provisions. The Commission approved several requests by utilities to forgo assessing late payment fees and to suspend the disconnection of service due to non-payment. Due to the specific language in the tariffs, some utilities were able to adopt similar provisions without Commission approval. Some of the low-income programs that utilities offer customers have also been modified to allow continued participation or expansion of the programs, and utilities have incentive programs to assist customers who have payments in arrears.

May 13, 2020

The Commission opened a working docket (Case No. AW-2020-0356) to consider best practices for recovery of past-due utility customer payments after the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency. In its Order, the Commission noted that in response to the pandemic, utilities have taken action to suspend disconnections for customer non-payment of utility bills. The Commission stated, "As a result of those economic disruptions and continued provision of utility service to customers who are unable to pay for those services, the utilities will likely experience a sharp rise in the level of past-due customer-payment accounts-receivable. Once the emergency has passed, the utilities will be faced with the question of how to collect those past-due accounts-receivable without unduly burdening their vulnerable customers." The Commission directed its Staff to investigate this question and any other relevant concerns and file a report regarding its investigation.

August 3, 2020

Comments were filed by utilities and interested stakeholders, and Staff filed its report summarizing the comments and stakeholder recommendations and providing other relevant background information. Responses to Staff's report and the various stakeholder recommendations were filed August 31, 2020.

August 19, 2020

The Commission directed Staff to gather information from the state's utilities about current levels of disconnections for non-payment, anticipated levels of disconnections in the next six months, the number of customers that have received a final disconnection notice, and the number of customers participating in payment plans. Staff was ordered to provide the Commission a report of the information by the 15th of each month through December 2020 unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. On September 15, 2020, Staff filed its first responsive report.