

PSC Consumer Connection



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

Issue 33 - April 2010

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Public Information & Education Department

April is National Safe Digging Month

Spring means increased excavation activities around homes and businesses. April is National Safe Digging month and the Missouri Public Service Commission reminds everyone how important it is to call before doing any excavation activity.



"Careless excavation and digging causes underground utility lines of all types to be hit and damaged every day in Missouri," said PSC Chairman Robert M. Clayton III. "When these lines are hit, injuries or death could occur; customers may lose utility

service due to an outage caused by the hit; and line repairs cost millions of dollars a year."

The PSC has also engaged stakeholders with proposed revisions to the state's damage prevention law to further reduce outages, injuries and expenses related to underground facility damages. The proposed revisions are the subject of on-going workshops with interested parties and may result in future legislation.

From 2006 through 2008, the underground facilities of companies regulated by the PSC were hit and damaged approximately 12,000 times a year. For calendar years 2006 through 2009, natural gas lines were hit an average of nearly 220 times a month.

MAKE THE CALL: Many utility company facilities, including natural gas pipelines, are located underground and out of sight. If you are planning any excavation work, from digging in your yard to a commercial project, Missouri law requires you to notify the Missouri One Call System at **1-800-DIG-RITE (1-800-344-7483)** or dial **811**, at **least three days but not more than 10 working days in advance, except in the case of an emergency.** After you make the call, Missouri law requires that all utilities with underground facilities affected by the excavation determine if the planned dig is near any underground facilities. If needed, they will survey and mark the area where utility lines are located. **Do not begin digging until all of the utilities in the area have been located and marked.**

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Commissioner Robert Kenney, Will and Roxanne Ward and Chairman Robert Clayton.

St. Louis Family takes part in national energy efficiency contest

A St. Louis family is participating in a unique national energy efficiency challenge -- the "Anybody Can Serve, So Let's Conserve" campaign initiated by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC).

The Ward family, a family of four living in St. Louis, has been selected as the Missouri representative in this national energy saving challenge that involves each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

"We're excited about making our home more energy efficient and saving our energy dollars" said Will Ward.

Each family receives an energy efficiency toolkit to outfit their home. They will also receive a web cam and a blog to keep track of their savings and keep the public updated on their progress. Each participating family will submit their utility bills from April, May and June 2009 to establish a baseline cost for their utility services.

The family that wins the national energy efficiency challenge will get their utility bills (natural gas and electric) paid for the three-month period (April, May and June 2010).

"Energy efficiency is and should be an important part of our daily lives," said PSC Commissioner Robert Kenney. "We need to do all that we can to arm consumers with the information that they need in order to see the financial and environmental benefits that energy efficiency can bring."

How Consumer Services Can Help You

You have a billing problem or a service complaint. You've contacted the utility company but haven't been able to resolve the matter. Who can you turn to? Where can you call for help? If your utility company is regulated by the Missouri Public Service Commission, please

contact our Consumer Services Department.

"Often the first experience a consumer has with the Public Service Commission is when they talk to one of our consumer services specialists," said PSC Chairman Robert

M. Clayton III. "We are proud of the job that they do working with Missourians to try and resolve their issue(s) with the utility company."

"We spend a lot of time with customers in order to get all of the information that is needed to further investigate the issue(s) they have with the utility company," said Gay Fred, Manager of the Consumer Services Department.

"Many times, working with the customer and the utility company culminates in better utility services for the customer. The consumer also feels like their voice has been heard," Fred said.

Consumer Services Department staff can investigate an inquiry or dispute if the concern pertains to:

- Rates or charges
- Installations or disconnections
- Responsibility for a bill
- A request for a deposit
- Refusal of service by a utility
- The quality and type of utility service
- A utility's policies and procedures

The PSC Consumer Services Department has a toll-free hotline consumers can call for assistance (1-800-392-4211). Complaints may also be submitted by fax (573-526-1500), by letter (Missouri PSC, P.O. Box 360, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102) or by email (<http://www.psc.mo.gov/info-con-complaint-form.asp>).

Safe Digging Month

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RESPECT THE MARKS: After it is determined that markings are required, the facility owner will dispatch personnel who will locate and mark the excavation site with paint, stakes or flags. Utilities mark their facilities according to specific guidelines and color codes.

Intervention can lead to customer savings. During the 2009 fiscal year, the Consumer Services Department saved consumers more than \$400,000.

Public Hearings in Laclede Gas rate case

The Missouri Public Service Commission will hold public hearings to learn about service issues following a \$52.6 million rate request filed by Laclede Gas Company. If approved in full, a typical residential customer would see their bill increase by approximately \$5.59 per month.

It is important to note that this rate case before the Commission primarily involves non-gas costs -- operating and maintenance expenses and a return on investment in plant (such as natural gas mains and service lines that carry natural gas to the customer's home or business.)

Local Public Hearing Schedule

Arnold -- Monday, May 24, 5:30 p.m. --
Roy Wilde Conference Center, Fox High School, 849 Jeffco Blvd.

St. Charles -- Tuesday, May 25, 5:30 p.m. -- St. Charles R-6 Schools, 400 N. 6th.

St. Louis -- Wednesday, May 26, 5:30 p.m. -- Harris-Stowe State University, Emerson Performance Building, Bank of America Theatre, 3026 Laclede.

Farmington -- Thursday, May 27, 5:30 p.m. -- Farmington High School, 1 Black Knight Drive

St. Louis -- Tuesday, June 1, 11:30 a.m. -- UMSL, Millennium Student Center, One University Blvd.

St. Louis -- Tuesday, June 1, 5:30 p.m. -- St. Louis Community College -- Meramec, Business Administration Building, Room 105, 11333 Big Bend Road.

St. Louis -- Wednesday, June 2, 11:30 a.m. -- St. Louis County Library (Thornhill Branch Auditorium), 12863 Willowycck Drive

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-522-2760 or email gregg.ochoa@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



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