

Service Quality Standards

Customer Service Performance Reporting Requirements

Pennsylvania has not set service quality standards to which utilities are required to adhere, but instead monitors the level of the electric and gas utilities' customer service performance through uniform measurement and reporting by the utilities.

Why do we monitor the customer service provided by the electric distribution companies (EDCs)?

When laws were enacted in Pennsylvania for electric choice (1996) and gas choice (1999), those Laws said utilities, as they moved to competition, had to maintain, at a minimum, their current levels of customer service to their customers.

With restructuring, customers have a *choice* of energy suppliers, but continue to receive distribution service through a monopoly distribution company (former utility that used to provide supply and distribution).

Policy makers did not want the quality of customer service to decline as utilities reorganized, entered new areas of business and engaged in cost control efforts.

PUC needed a way to effectively measure customer service performance.

With input from interested parties, PUC passed new regulations: the quality of service regulations:

- **Electric distribution companies – 1998**

- <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/052/chapter54/subchapFtoc.html>

- **Natural gas distribution companies – 2000**

- <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/052/chapter62/subchapBtoc.html>





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What are the customer service performance measures?

PUC regulations require companies to report to the Commission annually on performance measures that can impact customer satisfaction.

Companies must uniformly measure and report on four distinct areas:

-  Telephone Access
-  Billing
-  Meter Reading
-  Responsiveness to Customer Disputes

Telephone access:

- Average busy out rate
 - Definition: percent of calls to call center that received busy signal (therefore, call not received by the company).
- Percent of calls answered in 30 seconds
 - Definition: of calls received, percent answered in 30 seconds or less.
- Call abandonment rate
 - Definition: of calls received, percent abandoned by customer before answered.

Billing:

- The number and percent of residential bills that the utility failed to render once every billing period to residential customers and
- the number and percent of bills that the utility failed to render once every billing period to small business customers.

Meter reading:

- Number and percent of meters not read in accordance with regulations.

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Responsiveness to customer disputes:

- Number and percent of customer disputes (complaints to companies) that did not receive a response from the company in 30 days.

What are customer transaction surveys?

The PUC regulations at <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/052/chapter54/subchapFtoc.html> also require EDCs to survey customers who have had recent contact with the company.

Surveys are conducted by an independent research firm under contract with the companies.

The Commission requires that all companies use uniform methodology to gather the data and report to the Commission.

The utilities together with Commission staff worked out the details of the sample, the wording of the survey questionnaire and reporting that all companies must use.

- Satisfaction with the ease of reaching the company.
- Satisfaction with using the company's automated telephone system.
- Satisfaction with the amount of time to speak with a company representative.
- Courteousness of the company representative.
- How knowledgeable the company representative was.
- Satisfaction with the way the representative handled the contact.
- Satisfaction with how field representative handled visit to home/property.
- Overall satisfaction with the quality of the service provided in the contact.

The Report

Transaction survey, call center & other data is collected monthly and reported to the PUC each year.

The PUC produces an annual report that shows performance by company for the prior year.

The report is provided to the companies and made available to the public.

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Additional Requirements

The reporting requirements also include a provision requiring the Bureau of Consumer Services to report to the Commission various statistics associated with informal complaints and payment arrangement requests filed by consumers with the Commission. These performance statistics were already being reported by BCS in the utility Consumer Activities Report and Evaluation and continue to be reported there.