

Consumer Service Best Practices

Kosovo Energy Regulatory Office /
Illinois Commerce Commission
Partnership
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Illinois Commerce Commission Consumer Services Division

- Established in 1972
- Staff of 20
- Deals with complaints and inquiries from members of the public
- Provides policy advice regarding consumer implications and issues in rulemakings and contested cases
- Liaison with phone relay service, low-income support groups

Illinois Administrative Rules

- Administrative Rules establish working procedures to implement laws
- 83 Il. Admin. Code Part 280
 - Establishes consumer related practices for water and energy utilities, including dispute procedures
- 83 Il. Admin. Code Part 735
 - Similar to Code Part 280, but for telephone carriers

Consumer Contacts - 2008

- Over 28,900 in 2008
- Contact numbers have more than doubled since 1989
- Contacts
 - 84.4% - initiated by telephone
 - 11.5% - filed online
 - <http://www.icc.illinois.gov/consumer/complaint/>
 - 2.5% - filed by letter
- 80% of complaints involved energy utilities

Reasons for Complaints

Energy Utilities

- Billing - 40.4%
 - Complaints about payment arrangements, whether customer is responsible for account, questions relating to estimated bills and failure to read meters, and usage / consumption questions
- Termination of Service – 13.6%
 - Situation where customer seeks assistance in getting service reconnected, or has medical certificate

Reasons for Complaints

Energy Utilities (continued)

- Rates – 13.5%
 - General complaints and concerns about rate levels
- Service / Service Quality – 9.6%
 - Complaints regarding timeliness of reconnection or disconnection; timeliness issues generally (e.g., showing up for appointments), behavior of employees, service interruptions
- Deposits – 4.25%
 - Complaints regarding deposit requirements

How ICC Handles Informal Complaints

- Utilities required by rule to designate employees to respond to and resolve customer complaints as appropriate
 - Generally service representatives
- If the utility refuses to resolve complaint, it must advise the customer how to contact ICC CSD
- CSD will intervene only if customer has not been able to resolve

Types of Complaints

- Informal complaints are addressed by CSD
- Formal are resolved by Judges and ICC
 - CSD's informal process must be used first
- CDS authorized to conduct mediation between informal complaint and any formal complaint customer might file

How ICC Handles Informal Complaints (continued)

• Three-Way Calling

- Under certain conditions it is the most efficient way to resolve complaints
- Telephone call with customers, CSD consumer counselor, and utility representative
- Only attempt when dispute can be resolved in the course of a telephone call
- In 2008, CSD resolved over 9,300 complaints using three-way calling

How ICC Handles Informal Complaints (continued - 2)

● Investigative Complaints

- CSD notifies utility that customer has filed a complaint
- Utility must respond within 14 days and provide supporting documentation, which is reviewed by CSD
- Subject matter experts at ICC (engineers, accountants, etc.) are consulted if necessary, depending on issue
- 10,700 complaints resolved this way in 2008

Informal Complaints - Outcomes

- Approximately 10% of customer complaints regarding energy utilities found to be justified over the last two years
- Energy utilities have fewer justified complaints than other utilities

Formal Complaints

- If customer is not satisfied with outcome of informal complain, may file formal complaint
- CDS and ICC Staff generally not involved in this process