



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
Consumer Services Division
www.icc.illinois.gov

Illinois Commerce Commission

Consumer Services Division



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
Consumer Services Division
www.icc.illinois.gov

Consumer Services Division (CSD)

About Us

The Commission's Consumer Services Division is the agency's main contact with utility consumers in the state recording nearly 29,000 contacts in 2008.

Our staff is trained to understand laws and Commission rules concerning the rights and responsibilities of utilities and their customers.

Our counselors are skilled in answering inquiries regarding electricity, natural gas, water, sanitary sewer, telecommunications services and assisting consumers resolving utility disputes.

We record public opinion and those comments are made available to the Commission for review



Consumer Services Division Staff

The Division has a staff of 21 members consisting of a director, a manager, 2 administrative assistants, 2 program coordinators, 13 counselors, and 2 policy analysts.

Consumer Counselors and Program Coordinators

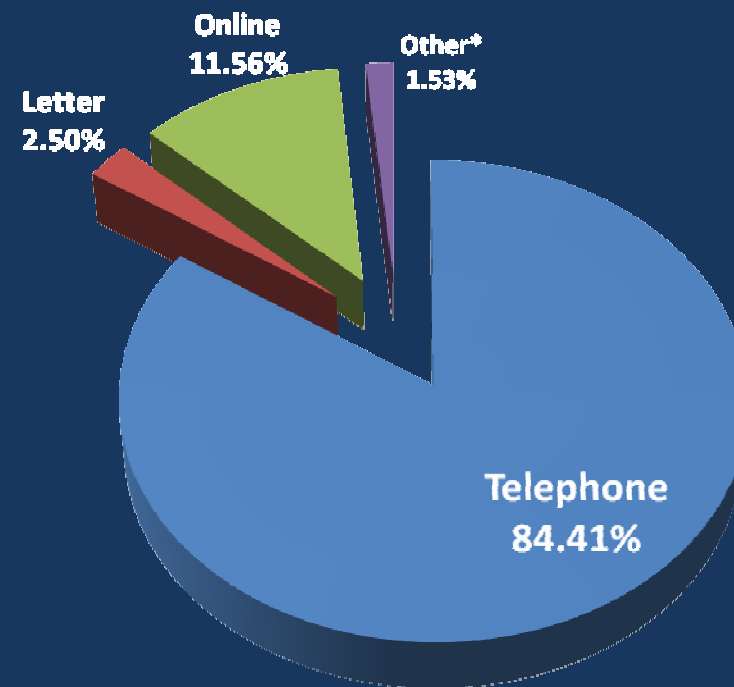
- Receive calls from utility customers
- Provide assistance to Illinois consumers in utility related disputes
- Ensure that the utility deals with the consumer in a fair manner consistent with Commission rules
- Record information in ACTS

Consumer Policy Analyst (2)

- Assists Director in the determination and implementation of Division policy initiatives
- Participate in :
 - Rulemaking
 - Formal cases regarding consumer issues
 - Review and drafting of proposed legislation
 - Consumer education.



Origin of Contacts



Most of the 28,947 cases recorded (84.41%) began with a telephone call to our toll-free number.

*Other contacts include those made via fax and teletypewriter.



Methods used by Consumer Services Division staff to resolve complaints

Automated Call Distribution System (ACD)

- Connects callers to a counselor for assistance with their problem or inquiry after a series of selected prompts.
- Consumers are offered recorded informational messages on a variety of topics
 - Utility Contact Information
 - Assistance Programs
- Monitoring, tracking, and reporting capabilities help management determine appropriate levels of staffing, facilitate scheduling, assist in training counselors, and identifying the needs of consumers.





Methods used by Consumer Services Division staff to resolve complaints

- Most consumers contact us by calling our toll-free number.
 - The counselor who answers the call listens to the consumer's description of the inquiry and determines how to assist the caller.
 - If the problem can be resolved with a conference call, the counselor contacts the utility with the customer and attempts to resolve the matter.
 - If the problem is more complex and requires investigation, the counselor will present an informal complaint to the utility for investigation.
- When the consumer inquiry is received by mail or referral, the counselor determines whether there is enough information to address the matter. If more is needed, the counselor contacts the consumer. The counselor then determines how to assist the customer.



Methods used by Consumer Services Division staff to resolve complaints

Three-Way Calling (conference call)

- Counselor contacts the utility while the consumer remains on the phone.
- Nearly one third of our calls are handled in this manner.
- Types of Complaints:
 - Requests for payment arrangements
 - Scheduling service repairs
 - Questions regarding notice of disconnection
 - Temporary suspension of disconnection when there is a medical need.
- This method is efficient:
 - All participants know the outcome at the end of the call
 - The results are often favorable to the customers.
- The counselor determines the customer's acceptance of the outcome and enters appropriate information to close the file.



Methods used by Consumer Services to resolve complaints

Investigative Complaints

When the dispute is complex or the nature the complaint requires research, the counselor files an informal complaint that includes the customer's contact information, a description of the complaint, and the relief the customer is seeking.

- The utility must investigate the complaint and typically contacts the customer during the investigation.
- Within 14 days, the company is required to furnish a report of the outcome along with supporting documentation.
- The counselor reviews the report to ensure that the company's action complies with Commission rules.
- CSD counselors may consult with other Divisions for technical advice
- After the review is complete, the counselor contacts the customer with an explanation of the results and determines the customer's acceptance of the outcome. The counselor enters appropriate information to close the file.



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
Consumer Services Division
www.icc.illinois.gov

Formal Complaints

If a resolution is not reached through the informal process, the consumer may file for a formal hearing. After the fully completed and notarized forms are submitted to the Commission, a hearing is scheduled. An Administrative Law Judge presides over the case in a manner similar to a court proceeding, considers testimony presented, reviews evidence and makes a recommendation to the Commission which renders a decision.





Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS)

ACTS is a computerized complaint tracking system that provides an accurate and readily available record of consumer contacts.

- Complaints are identified in such general categories as billing, credit and deposits, rates, service and termination; they are also identified in very specific terms.
- Reporting capabilities allow flexibility in searching the records created in individual cases and compiling data.
- Reporting functions allow us to track information, identify problems and analyze trends.





ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

Consumer Services Division

www.icc.illinois.gov

Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS) ACTS individual records

The basic screen

- Date received
- Complaint Number
- Consumer contact information
- Name of utility, service type, account number
- Problem code (one of five general categories)
- Description of complaint
 - provides specific details regarding the nature of the problem and the relief the customer seeks
- Origin of the Complaint

Notes and documents screens

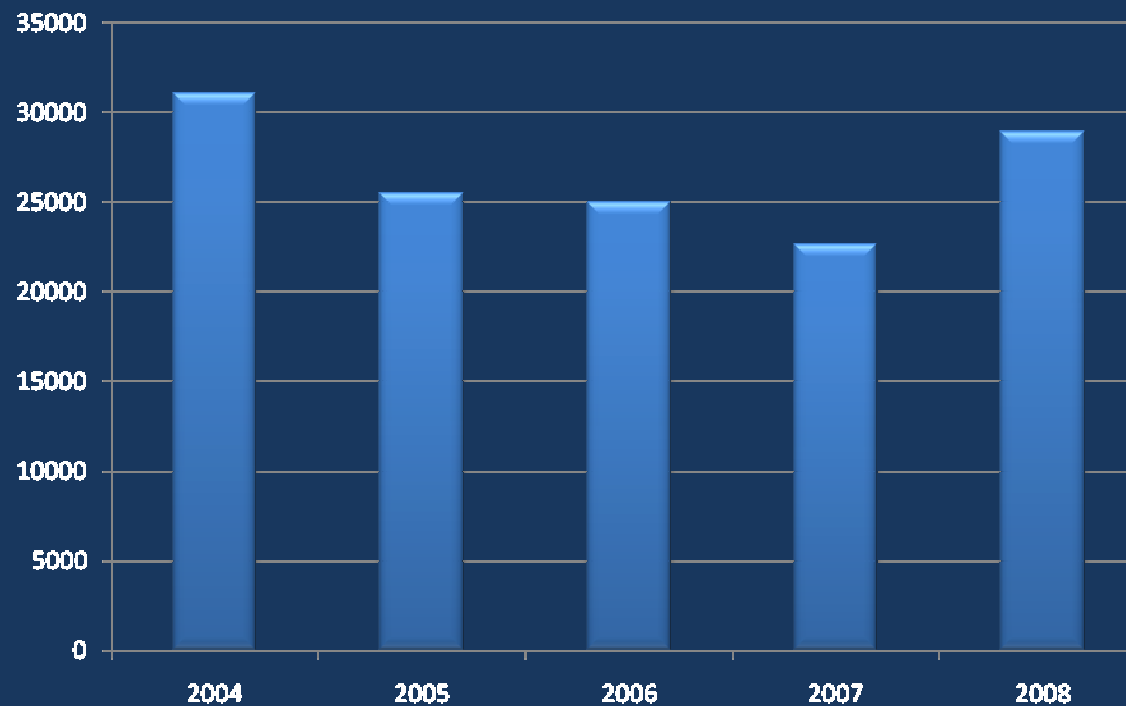
- Electronic interface
 - Messages to and from utilities
 - Message type identifiers
 - Time stamped tracking

Closing screen

- Closing Date
- Closing Codes
- Resolution of the Complaint
- Rule Violations
- Management Review



Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS)

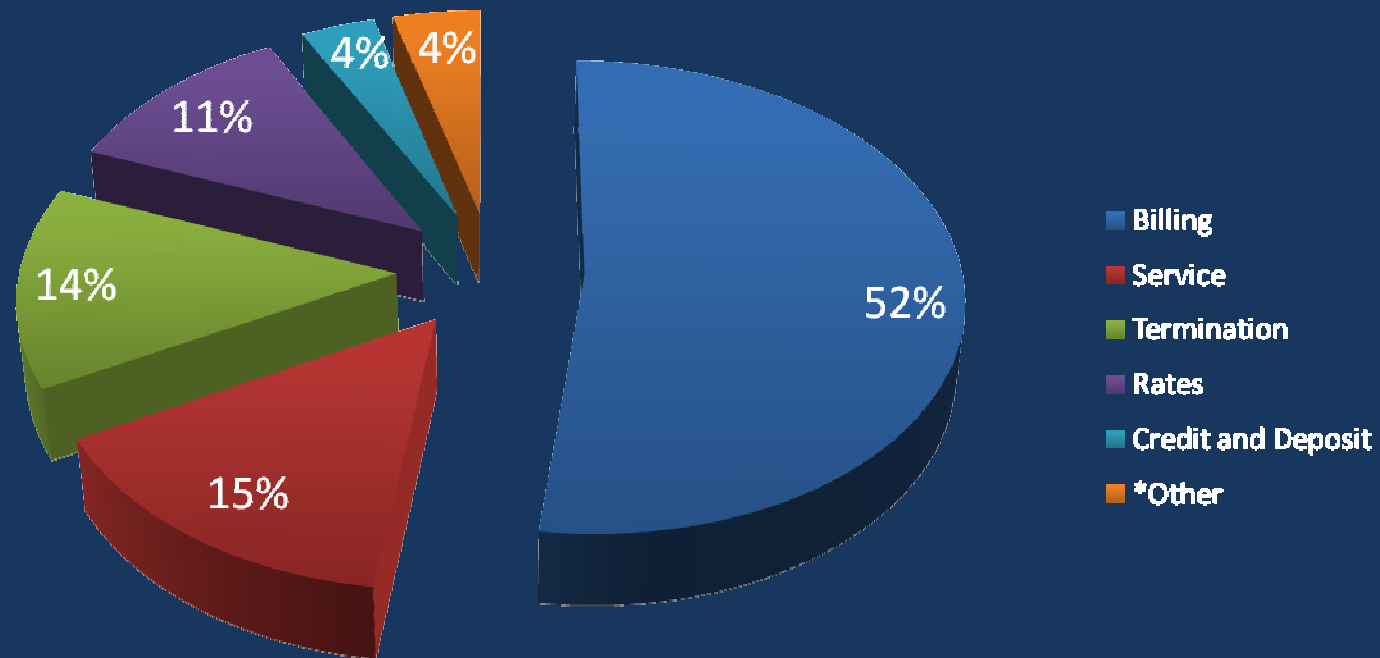


During 2008, CSD Staff recorded 28,948 contacts. The graph depicts the number of consumer contacts received from 2004 through 2008.



Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS)

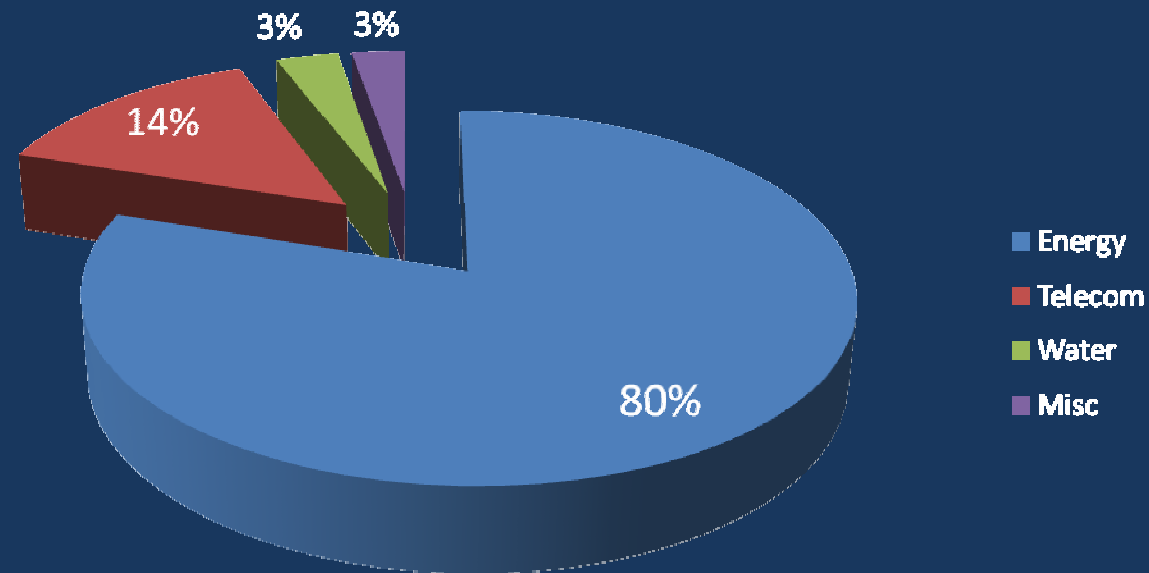
Problem Identification





Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS)

2008 Consumer Contact by Utility Type





Regulatory functions

Members of CSD analyze information recorded in our complaint tracking system. Each contact with a consumer offers the opportunity to test whether the practices of a utility comply with Commission rules. When staff identifies a pattern of non-compliance, management begins discussions with the utility with the goal of correcting the problem without the need for more lengthy formal action.

The data recorded allow us to identify issues or complaint trends related to a particular utility or a particular service type. It also allows us to track opinions expressed by consumers. Information gathered from consumers, utilities, and service providers and recorded in ACTS can be summarized and made available to other divisions within the Commission and to Commissioners.



Programs and Activities

Ongoing changes in the utility industry increase the need for the Division to provide assistance to consumers through policy initiatives, consumer education, and legislative initiatives. With the direction of management, policy staff is responsible for the following initiatives.

➤ Consumer policy initiatives

- Rulemaking activities
- Formal cases regarding consumer protection issues
- Review of utility tariffs and utility practices

➤ Consumer education

- Development of consumer education programs required by law including customer choice of competitive suppliers
- Commission's web site
- Consumer Information packets

➤ Legislative efforts

- Participate in review and drafting of proposed legislation
- Review and implementation of legislation