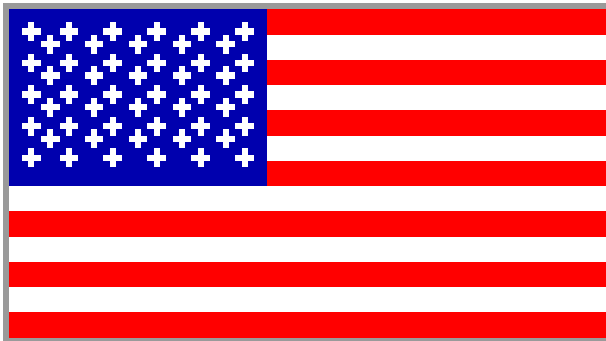
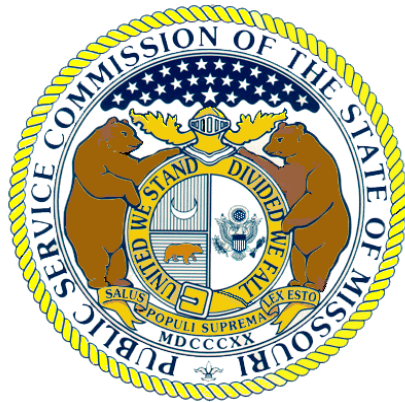


**Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA), National  
Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)  
and Missouri Public Service Commission (MPSC)**

**Regulatory Partnership Program**



Sponsored by US Agency for International Development (USAID)

**Missouri Public Service Commission**  
**Consumer Services Investigation**  
**(CSI) Department**  
**Wess Henderson**  
**October 26, 2004**  
**15:30**

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# Missouri Public Service Commission

## Consumer Bill of Rights

- The Missouri Public Service Commission will ensure that Missourians receive safe and reliable utility service at just, reasonable and affordable rates;
- We will provide public information that a consumer can use to make educated utility choices;
- We will provide an efficient regulatory process that is responsive to all consumers queries; and
- We will perform duties ethically and professionally when serving all consumers.



# Missouri Public Service Commission

## Consumer Responsibilities

- Plan Ahead
  - Request utility service at least 24 hours in advance
- Consumers must cooperate by providing key consumer information to the utility company:
  - Name and Proof of Identification
  - Location and mailing address
  - Contact information (e.g., phone number, work location or nearest relative's address or phone number)
  - Utility provider may request a security deposit that will need to be paid in advance that may be refunded at a later date.



# **Missouri Public Service Commission**

## **Consumer Responsibilities (cont.)**

- Consumers experiencing a dispute with an utility company are encouraged to contact the utility first, however, if no satisfaction is reached the consumer is instructed to call the Missouri Public Service Commission Consumer Services Hotline at 1-800-392-4211, mail a complaint letter or submit an email complaint.



# Consumer Class of Services

- Residential
- Commercial
  - Small
  - Industrial



# Two Types of Consumer Complaints

- **Informal Complaint**
  - Complainant shall state utility against whom the complaint is filed;
  - Nature of the complaint and complainant's interest in;
  - Relief requested and measures take by the complainant to resolve the complaint.



# Two Types of Consumer Complaints (cont.)

- **Formal Complaint**

- If complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal complaint, a formal complaint may be filed.
- The Commission may order, at any time after the filing of a formal complaint, an investigation by the staff as to the cause of the complaint. The staff shall file a report of its findings with the commission and all parties to the complaint case.
- The Commission will then determine if a hearing shall be held and shall fix the time and place of the hearing.



# Missouri Public Service Commission (MoPSC) Definitions

- **Consumer Inquiry:** An issue PSC staff can resolve without contacting the utility company. Inquiries also incorporate EFIS Quick Hits that include “referrals” to other information sources on matters over which the Missouri PSC has no jurisdiction (cable television, Internet, service providers, satellite dishes, etc.).
- **Informal Complaint:** An issue typically involving a utility billing, payment, service or safety issue that requires PSC staff to contact the utility company for mediation or resolution. It does not necessarily mean the utility has violated Commission rules and regulations or the company’s tariff.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Outage**
  - **Telecommunications**
    - A "Telecommunications Outage" is defined as a situation where at least 100 customers or several large commercial customers cannot place calls to a particular area(s) or conversely cannot receive calls because of the same network failure.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Outage**
  - **Natural Gas**
    - A "Natural Gas Outage" is defined as an event involving 100 or more residential customers, or an outage that is considered very significant (several large commercial outages or a combination of commercial and residential outages), even though it did not meet the 100 residential customer criteria.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Outage**

- **Electric**

- Electric utilities have two different types of outages - disruption of electric service to customers and electrical power plants that have had to shut down for various reasons. The regulated electric utility is required in 4 CSR 240-3.190(3) to report:

- (B) Forced outages of any nuclear generating unit that could reasonably be anticipated to last more than three days;



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Outage**

- **Electric (cont.)**

- (C) Forced outages of any fossil-fueled fired generating unit which constitutes twenty percent or more of the electrical corporation's accredited capacity that reasonably could be anticipated to last longer than three days when the unit(s) is forced out due to a common occurrence;

- (E) Loss of transmission capability that could limit the output of a generating plant.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Sewer**

- An unplanned event that results in a service outage that affects: (1) the lesser of – 100 or more residential customers, or more than 10% of the customers connected to a system serving 1,000 or fewer customers; (2) several large commercial customers; or (3) any combination of several large commercial customers and residential customers. A "Sewer Outage" is not intended to include service interruptions related to scheduled system expansion, maintenance or repairs.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Water**

- An unplanned event that results in a service outage, or in substantially reduced water flow, water pressure or water storage levels, and which affects: (1) the lesser of – 100 or more residential customers, or more than 10% of the customers connected to a system serving 1,000 or fewer customers; (2) several large commercial customers; or (3) any combination of several large commercial customers and residential customers. A "Water Outage" is not intended to include service interruptions related to scheduled system expansion, maintenance or repairs.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Incident:**

- **Natural Gas:**

- **4 CSR 240-40.020(4)** (A) Within two (2) hours following discovery by the operator, or as soon thereafter as practicable if emergency efforts to protect life and property would be hindered, each gas operator shall notify designated commission personnel by telephone of the following events within areas served by the operator:
      - 1. An event that involves a release of gas involving the operator's actions or facilities, or where there is a suspicion by the operator that the event may involve a release of gas involving the operator's actions or facilities, and involves:
        - A. A death;



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Incident:**

- **Natural Gas-**

- B. A personal injury involving medical care administered in an emergency room or health care facility, whether inpatient or outpatient, beyond initial treatment and prompt release after evaluation by a health care professional; or
    - C. Estimated property damage, including cost of gas lost, to the gas operator or others, or both, of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) or more; or

- 2. An event that is significant, in the judgment of the operator, even though it did not meet the criteria of paragraph (4)(A)1.



# MPSC Definitions (cont.)

- **Incident:**

- **Electric –**

- In addition, the regulated electric utilities have to contact us regarding the following "incidents" (also found in 4 CSR 240-3.190(3)):
    - (A) Details of any accident at a power plant involving serious physical injury or death or property damage in excess of fifty thousand dollars
    - (D) Reductions of coal inventory below a thirty-day supply and reduction of oil inventory below 50% of normal oil inventory.



# Consumer Protection Processes and Range of Work

- Receive, investigate, and respond to consumer informal complaints to ensure compliance with Commission rules and regulations and utility company tariffs. This involves:
  - Enforcing rules and regulations (state and federal level).
  - Assisting in the development of proposed rules and regulations and revision of existing rules and regulations, when appropriate.



## Range of Work (cont.)

- Improve the complaint/formal complaint appeal process for consumers by:
  - Educating consumers
  - Documenting all facts on any complaint/dispute or inquiry
  - Acting as the liaison between consumer and utility
  - Providing professional analysis (i.e., reviewing facts, bill analysis, verifying application of rules and regulations)
  - Mediating a fair and reasonable resolution for both consumer and utility



# Consumer Protection Workload Drivers

- Consumers/General Public
- Commission
- Legislature
- Federal agencies; i.e., FCC and FERC
- Utilities
  - Company Filings
    - Rate Cases
    - Merger Cases
    - Tariff Filings
- Weather



# Tracking Consumer Complaints/Inquiries

- Electronic central repository for all consumer complaints and inquiries for accessibility, reference and analysis which provides:
  - Status check information on complaint/inquiry
  - Assignments
  - Metrics
  - Reports (both static and ad hoc/query)



# Complaint Resolution Process

- Standardize list of complaint and resolution issues by utility type
- Identify Commission/federal violations by capturing the actual rule/statute violated
- Identify complaint timeline (date received and resolved)
- Provide resolution feedback to consumer and utilities involved via email or letter
- Capture metrics i.e., savings to the consumer, complaints by utility type, company and geographical area



## How Consumer Protection Benefits Consumer and Regulator

- Capture metric to identify trends by utility type, service quality, issue or geographical area, to react proactively rather than reactive.
- Improve inefficient processes to lower cycle time which in turn saves utilities and MPSC time and lowers the cost of doing business.
- Identify educational needs.
- Legislators, policy makers and constituents learn more about utility rates and issues with easy access to information through the consumer protection department.



# CSI Statistics FY 2004

## Complaints/Inquires:

- Complaints - 5,995
- Inquiries - 7,016
- Total - 13,011

Monthly Average – 1,084.25





# CSI Statistics FY 2004 (cont.)

Complaints/Inquiries by Utility  
Type in descending order:

Telephone	-	5,411
Gas	-	1,988
Electric	-	1,812
Water	-	661
Sewer	-	119



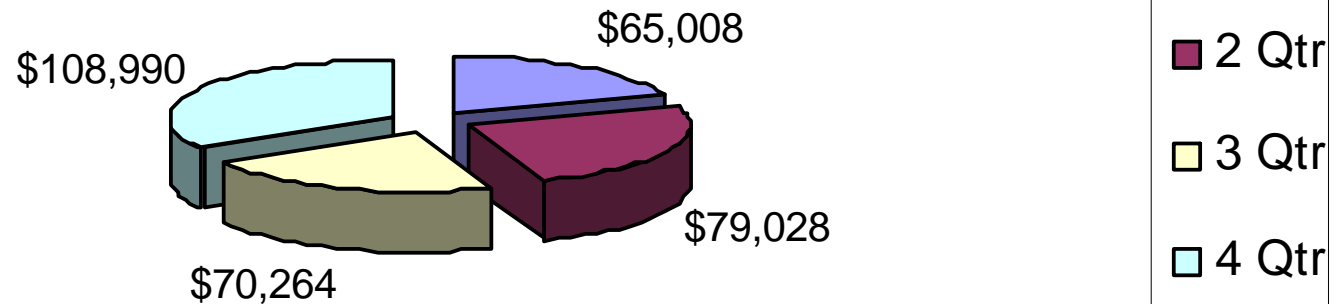
Non-jurisdictional – 3,020



# CSI Statistics FY 2004 (cont.)

Consumer Services Department  
Saved Consumers - \$323,290

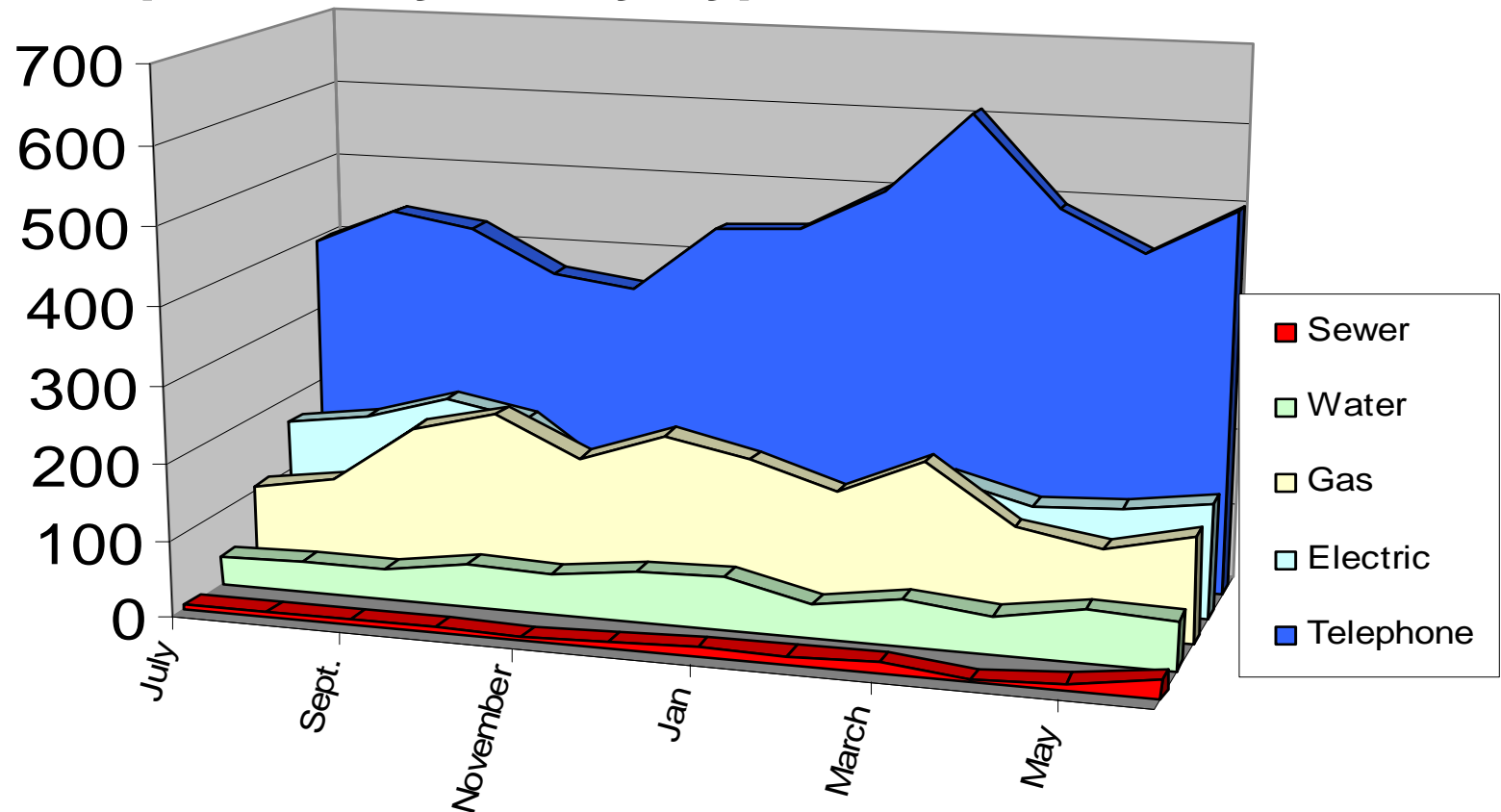
Consumer Savings - Fiscal Year 04





# CSI Statistics FY 2004 (cont.)

## Complaints by Utility Type For FY 2004





# CSI

## Statistics FY 2004 (cont.)

- FY 04—Top Ten Complaint Issues
- **Telephone**
  - Local Company Disputes
  - Incorrect Billing
  - Disconnection of Service
  - Inter/IntraLATA Rates
- **Gas and Electric (2)**
  - Incorrect Billing
  - Misapplication of Rules/Regulations
- **Water**
  - Incorrect Billing
  - Service Quality



## Internal Process To Address Consumers' Top 10 List

- Work jointly in a collaborative effort to educate Missouri consumers
- Place educational materials in community centers, post offices where consumers can get access to information and ask about assistance programs
- Share weighted average utility information by customer base to consumers, community action groups, OPC, Commission and utility companies



# How Utility Companies Can Help?

- **Educate Consumers**
  - On such issues as outages, inter-company processes, installation process, billing local vs. long distance, etc.
- **When responding to the MoPSC Consumer Services Dept. with information regarding a consumer complaint –**
  - Respond in a timely fashion
  - Provide as much detail as possible to avoid Consumer Services staff requesting additional information



# Top 10 Strategies to Consider for Joint Collaboration

- Open and Joint Communication

1. Complaints/Inquires
2. Rules and rule proposals
3. Tariff language and proposals
4. Up-front discussions on promotions that will benefit the consumer and how to work as a team to educate the consumer
5. Educate MoPSC and utility staff on new services, rule and regulation changes



# Top 10 Strategies to Consider for Joint Collaboration

- Open and Joint Communication (cont.)
  6. Share information between MPSC/OPC/Utilities/Other Consumer Interest Groups
- Meet Periodically
  7. Roundtables
  8. Site Visits
  9. Open door/drop-by visits
  10. Share Education Materials



# Local Public Hearings

- Why have them:
  - Consumers have an opportunity to voice their opinions on a rate case before the PSC
  - Consumers provide the Commission with information if they have service related problems



# Information Session

- Public Information and Education Department conducts information session prior to the actual local public hearing
- Consumers can ask questions and answers will be provided
- Time given to have one-on-one conversations to get information



# Information Session (continued)

- Open forum, much less restrictive than the local public hearing
- Go over the local public hearing process



# Information Session (continued)

- Information sheets and other consumer information materials are available
- Consumers will be encouraged to follow the case through hearings that are webcast or reading testimony through the EFIS system



# Questions?

