



PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS & TIPS FOR CONSUMERS FROM THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

PUC RATEMAKING PROCESS

THE PUC RATEMAKING PROCESS AND THE ROLE OF CONSUMERS

FILING FOR A RATE INCREASE
When the PUC investigates a rate increase, it must file a rate increase request with the PUC that shows the proposed new rate and effective date. The utility must provide the rate increase to be reviewed. The utility also must notify customers at least 45 days in advance of filing the request through billings sent to each and every customer. The notice must include the amount of the proposed rate increase, the proposed effective date, and how much more the consumer can expect to pay.

HOW THE PUC SETS RATES
The rate-making process ensures the lowest reasonable rate for consumers while maintaining the financial stability of utilities. Under the law, the utility is entitled to recovery of its reasonably incurred expenses and a fair return on its investment. The PUC evaluates each utility's request for a rate increase based on these criteria.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE
By Pennsylvania law, the rate request is suspended for up to seven months if the PUC does not act before the effective date for the rate increase proposed by the electric, natural gas, steam heat, water and/or wastewater companies. The PUC uses that time to investigate and determine what and if any of the requested rate increase is justified.

During the seven months, hearings are held before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) at which the evidence in support of the rate increase is examined and expert testimony is heard. In addition, consumers are offered several opportunities to voice their opinions and give testimony. When the record closes on all evidence, the ALJ issues a Recommended Decision to the PUC. Parties can file objections to the ALJ's decision if they do not agree with the ALJ's findings. Finally, the matter is brought before the PUC Commissioners for a vote and final decision.

Together with the 60-day notice period, the rate increase process takes nine (9) months. This is called a statutory deadline, and the PUC must act within that timeline or the rate increase automatically goes into effect.

HEARINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
When the PUC investigates a rate increase, it is assigned to an ALJ, who is an attorney with experience in administrative law. The ALJ presides at public hearings and at formal evidentiary hearings, which are open to the public, and conducted in a formal court proceeding.

The presiding ALJ will set a litigation schedule with the parties at a pre-hearing conference. This sets the stage for the rate case to move forward on a timeline that meets the statutory deadline of nine months.

Pennsylvania's "Statutory Advocates" are the PUC's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (BIE) and the Office of Consumer Advocacy (OCA) and the Office of Small Business Advocacy (OSBA). All three advocates represent the public and small business interests of consumers, customers, and small businesses throughout Pennsylvania. All three advocates are part of Pennsylvania's state government and are always present in rate case proceedings.

The ALJ's Recommended Decision may approve, disapprove or modify the original request. Parties may file objections to the ALJ's decision and may request a hearing. The ALJ will set a date for a public hearing of the PUC Commissioners.

The Commissioners make the final decision, and may authorize rates that (1) permit revenues that allow the utility to meet its reasonable operating and investment needs; (2) assign the proper rate of return; and (3) assign the proper rate of recovery for the utility's costs. The Order has the weight of law and the PUC is required to respond to a petition for reconsideration, or it is automatically challenged by appeal to the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania.

PA PUC PUBLIC INPUT HEARING TIPS (also in Spanish)



PA PUC PUBLIC INPUT HEARING TIPS

WHAT IS A PUBLIC INPUT HEARING ALL ABOUT?
Public Input Hearings are held as part of the public inquiry process. The public hearing process offers the opportunity for consumers, local government officials, industry representatives and others to bring their thoughts and concerns regarding utility rate cases, infrastructure construction and more to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PA PUC).

Public hearing proceedings provide interested parties with the opportunity to discuss and share concerns and expand on issues with the Commission in a public forum. Any person or organization can attend a Public Input Hearing, either to speak to a written testimony submission or simply to observe or listen to the proceedings. An Administrative Law Judge presides over the hearing, and a court reporter transcribes what people who testify state. Public Input Hearings are fundamental proceedings for Commissioners to reach the soundest judgment and decision as possible.

PA PUC Public Input Hearings are held telephonically, virtually or in person.

HELPFUL TIPS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC INPUT HEARING:
Come early. Try to arrive, call or connect 15 minutes ahead of the hearing time. Arriving, calling or connecting early allows you to hear introductions and get instructions for the hearing proceedings.

Sign in to testify when you arrive - In-Person Hearing. The judge will call witnesses to speak from the order they have signed in. An additional sign-up list will be available throughout the hearing.

PA PUC PUBLIC INPUT HEARING TIPS
If you have an opinion about a matter for consideration before the Commission, we would like to hear from you!

PUC COMPLAINT PROCESS & YOUR OPTIONS (also in Spanish)

Know the PUC Complaint Process and Your Options

What Does the PUC Regulate?
The PUC regulates more than 1,000 public utility providers that deliver the following services in Pennsylvania: electricity, natural gas, telephone, water and wastewater collection and disposal, steam heat, and transportation of passengers and property by motor coach, truck and taxi.

How Can the PUC Help?
Two types of public utility complaints can be filed with the PUC - an Informal Complaint or a Formal Complaint. Before filing any complaint with the PUC, consumers should always contact the utility company first to allow an opportunity to resolve the issue.

PUC Complaint Options

- Conduct Your Utility or Company
- Filing an Informal Complaint with the PUC
- Filing a Formal Complaint with the PUC
- Filing Comments on a Proposed Rate Increase with the PUC
- Filing a Formal Complaint to a Proposed Rate Increase with the PUC

PUC Complaint Checklist

- Did you call your utility first to discuss your complaint?
- Are you the utility customer?
- Are the service and the home with service in your name?
- Do you have legal authority? (Example: Power of Attorney or Legal Guardian)
- Do you have a Protection From Abuse (PFA) Order when filing the complaint?
- Giving the PUC permission to contact the utility to resolve your account information?
- Will you still pay all of your current bills with the utility while your complaint is under review.

What Information Do I Need?

- Your name (last, first and middle) and all required contact information
- Customer account number
- Billing and service address
- Telephone number and fax number (if available)
- The name of the utility company or transportation service provider you have a complaint against.
- Clear description of the facts leading to the complaint (you may attach supporting documents)

Informal Complaint Process
Consumers may file Informal Complaints with the PUC's Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS) against PUC-regulated electric, natural gas, telephone and water/wastewater companies, and transportation services, for example, taxis, limousines, household moving companies, trucking companies, transportation network companies or passenger companies. BCS will investigate the complaint, work with the parties to resolve the complaint and provide the outcome of the investigation to the customer and utility.

The PUC recommends that you use the Informal Complaint process first because many complaints are resolved sooner, are simpler, and take less time to solve compared to formal complaints. You also avoid the need for a legal proceeding. Informal Complaints are confidential and not available for public inspection.

To file an Informal Complaint, visit troubleshoot.puc.pa.gov or call 1-800-692-7380.



OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

NEED HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS? (also in Spanish)

NEED HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS?

The Public Utility Commission requires utilities to have programs and procedures that help low-income customers keep their utility service. These programs may help you to pay utility bills or lower the amount of electricity or natural gas you use.

The local electric or natural gas company may call them by different names, but each company has the following programs listed below. Here are some tips to help you stay warm, lower your heating bills, and tell you who to call when you need help.

- Budget Billing:** All residential customers may contact their electric or natural gas company to request budget billing at any time. This form of billing is based on the customer's past 12 months of energy usage to arrive at a fixed "average" amount to bill each month. The utility company can adjust this average four times a year higher or lower depending on the customer's usage.
- Customer Assistance Programs (CAP):** This program is set up between the utility company and a limited-income, payment-indebted customer to pay utility bills that are based on household size and gross household income. CAP customers agree to make regular monthly payments, which are usually less than the current bill, in exchange for continued utility service.
- Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Program (CARES):** The CARES program will help customers with special needs. Special needs customers are consumers who are experiencing family emergencies, divorce, unemployment, or medical emergencies. The program's goal is to provide support and direction to help customers pay their utility bill.
- Low-Income Energy Reduction Program (LEERP):** LEERP helps limited-income residential customers lower the amount of electricity or natural gas used each month. The utility company may provide free home weatherization. A utility company representative may come to your home to install energy saving features to help reduce your monthly bill.



ENERGY & UTILITY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

PAPUC ENERGY & UTILITY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities to ensure safe and reliable utility service at a reasonable rate; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's Office of Communications offers an online electric and gas shopping tool for consumers through www.puc.pa.gov. Both websites also consumers to enter their zip codes to see the competitive offers and prices available in their area. Other features include a Spanish language customer care, consumer alerts emails, weekly updates on suppliers and prices, a printable version of the zip code-searchable supplier fact sheets, and tips on ways to save energy. For consumers without internet access, this information can be mailed upon request. PUC fact sheets, brochures, speaking engagements, roundtable discussions and conferences are other successful ways to help consumers shop wisely for utility services or learn about energy assistance programs. These events are conducted by our Senior Communications Specialist - [Christina Chase-Peltis](mailto:Christina.Chase-Peltis@puc.pa.gov) and [Shadi A. Williams](mailto:Shadi.A.Williams@puc.pa.gov).

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For more information or to schedule an educational workshop, seminar, staff training, consumer education event, presentation or training program, please contact our associates directly.

To find more information on upcoming events, check out the Consumer Education Events Schedule on the PA PUC's website at www.puc.pa.gov.

For informal complaints or termination issues, please contact the PUC's Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS) Toll-Free Hotline at 1-800-692-7380.

