

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Mary Torres	:	
	:	
v.	:	C-2017-2629974
	:	
PECO Energy Company	:	

INITIAL DECISION

Before
F. Joseph Brady
Administrative Law Judge

INTRODUCTION

This Initial Decision dismisses the Complaint of Mary Torres against PECO Energy Company because she failed to appear for her hearing and prosecute her Complaint.

HISTORY OF THE PROCEEDING

On October 20, 2017, Mary Torres (Complainant) filed a formal Complaint (Complaint) against PECO Energy Company (PECO or Respondent) with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission). In the Complaint, the Complainant placed checkmarks in boxes indicating “[t]he utility is threatening to shut off my service or has already shut off my service” and “I would like a payment agreement.” The Complainant also alleged that PECO returned a disability form as incomplete that was in fact complete. The Complainant requests a payment arrangement.

On November 2, 2017, PECO filed an Answer denying all material allegations of fact in the Complaint. PECO also contends that the Complainant previously defaulted on a

Commission-issued payment arrangement on June 6, 2016. Thus, the Respondent requested that the Complaint be dismissed pursuant to 66 Pa.C.S. § 1405(d), because the Respondent has defaulted on a Commission-issued payment arrangement and has not demonstrated a significant change in circumstance or change in income.

By Hearing Notice dated November 14, 2017, a hearing was scheduled to be heard as part of a Call of the Docket on January 16, 2018, at 9:30 a.m., and the matter was assigned to me. I issued a Prehearing Order on November 21, 2017. Both the Hearing Notice and the Prehearing Order advised the parties of the location, date and time of the scheduled hearing, and warned in bold and underlined type: **“If you are not present and prepared to go forward with your case when it is called, your case will be dismissed by the Administrative Law Judge.”**

The Call of the Docket began on January 16, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. as scheduled. This matter was called to proceed at 10:13 a.m. Counsel for PECO was present and prepared to proceed. The Complainant was not present.

No witnesses were presented, and no exhibits were introduced into the record. Respondent’s Counsel moved that the Complaint be dismissed with prejudice for lack of prosecution pursuant to 52 Pa.Code § 5.245. In accordance with Commission policy, I am granting the Motion.

The record closed on February 2, 2018, upon my receipt of the transcript.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Complainant in this case is Mary Torres.
2. The Respondent in this case is PECO Energy Company.

3. On October 20, 2017, the Complainant filed a Complaint with the Commission against the Respondent.
4. The Respondent filed an Answer on November 2, 2017.
5. By notice dated November 14, 2017, the Commission scheduled this matter for an initial hearing on January 16, 2018, at 9:30 a.m.
6. The Commission sent the notice of the hearing to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint.
7. On November 21, 2017, a Prehearing Order was sent to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint.
8. Neither the Hearing Notice nor the Prehearing Order were returned as undeliverable.
9. The Complainant failed to appear at the January 16, 2018 hearing.
10. The Complainant did not settle or withdraw her Complaint.

DISCUSSION

Administrative agencies, such as the Commission, are required to provide due process to the parties appearing before them. *Schneider v. Pa. Pub. Util. Comm'n.*, 479 A.2d 10 (Pa.Cmwlth. 1984). This due process requirement is satisfied, however, when the administrative agency provides the parties notice and the opportunity to be heard.

On November 14, 2017, the Commission sent notice of the hearing in this case to the Complainant by regular first-class mail to the address stated on the Complaint. To my

knowledge, this piece of mail was never returned to the sender, the scheduling staff for the Office of Administrative Law Judge (OALJ) in Harrisburg.

In addition, I issued a Prehearing Order dated November 21, 2017, which, *inter alia*, warned both parties of potentially serious consequences if they failed to obtain a continuance and failed to attend the hearing. The Prehearing Order, which was mailed to the Complainant at the address shown on the Complaint, was never returned. Accordingly, I must presume that this mail, which was sent in the ordinary course of business, was received by the Complainant. *Berkowitz v. Mayflower Securities, Inc.*, 317 A.2d 584 (Pa. 1974); *Meierdierck v. Miller*, 147 A.2d 406 (Pa. 1959); *Samaras v. Hartwick*, 698 A.2d 71 (Pa.Super. 1997); *Judge v. Celina Mutual Insurance Co.*, 444 A.2d 658 (Pa.Super. 1982).

The Complainant did not appear for the hearing and has not contacted the Commission. Under these circumstances, the Complainant has had ample opportunity to appear and be heard in this proceeding. Therefore, the due process rights of the Complainant have been fully protected. *Sentner v. Bell Telephone Co. of Pa.*, Docket No. F-00161106 (Opinion and Order entered October 25, 1993); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245(a).

Finally, Section 332(a) of the Public Utility Code, 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a), places the burden of proof upon the proponent of any request for relief. As the party bringing this Complaint, the Complainant bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to relief. By failing to appear and proffer any evidence to support her Complaint, the Complainant has failed to meet this burden. Therefore, the Complaint should be dismissed with prejudice. *Jefferson v. UGI Utilities, Inc.*, Docket No. Z-00269892 (Opinion and Order entered December 26, 1995); *El-Ayazra v. West Penn Power Company*, Docket No. F-2015-2509292 (Opinion and Order entered June 30, 2016); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over the subject matter of and the parties to this proceeding. 66 Pa.C.S. § 701.

2. The due process rights of the Complainant have been fully protected in this proceeding. *Sentner v. Bell Telephone Co. of Pa.*, Docket No. F-00161106 (Opinion and Order entered October 25, 1993); 52 Pa.Code § 5.245(a).

3. By failing to appear for the hearing and proffer any evidence to support the Complaint, the Complainant has failed to meet her burden of proving that she is entitled to the relief that she seeks from the Commission. 66 Pa.C.S. § 332(a).

ORDER

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the motion of PECO Energy Company to dismiss the Complaint filed by Mary Torres at Docket No. C-2017-2629974 is granted;

2. That the Complaint of Mary Torres against PECO Energy Company at Docket No. C-2017-2629974 is dismissed with prejudice; and

3. That the record at Docket No. C-2017-2629974 be marked closed.

Date: February 21, 2018

_____/s/
F. Joseph Brady
Administrative Law Judge