

Pennsylvania Telephone Association

"The Communications
Leader in Pennsylvania"



June 15, 2020

Ms. Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Re: **M-2020-3020055**
COVID-19 Customer Service, Billing, and Public Outreach Provisions
Request for Utility Information
- *Citizens Telephone Company of Kecksburg*

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

In response to the Secretarial Letter dated May 29, 2020 at the above docket, please find the replies from the company noted above.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Samara
President

cc: Sarah Dewey (via email)
Tom Charles (via email)



June 8, 2020

I. COVID-19 Utility Consumer Service and Billing Policies and Procedures

Describe and report efforts to support customers through initiatives in customer service and billing policies and procedures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing recovery period. Explain how these initiatives differ from normal operations:

We have been following the Keep Americans Connected pledge put forth by the FCC on all of our services. We are not disconnecting or suspending service for any customers unable to pay their bill. We are also not putting any late fees or penalties on any customers bills during this period.

In regards to customer service, we have changed procedures to minimize contact between our staff and customers. We are asking customers to call ahead so that any needed equipment can be prepared and ready when they arrive. We are conducting as many transactions outside of the building as possible to limit close indoor contact. We are encouraging customers to pay their bill online if possible to limit contact as well. Customers were informed via our website, social media and bills about our policies during this time and what we would be doing in regards to those who are unable to pay. Notices were sent out to customers who normally would be terminated explaining that because of these policies no termination of service would be taking place and no late fees would be applied.

Termination of Utility Service

How does the utility plan to implement terminations and will it start the process with new termination notices?

We have informed customers that any of their June bills will not incur late fees or termination for lack of payment. With the July billing cycle we will begin our normal process for termination for non-payment. We will attempt to work with customers who may need to setup a payment arrangement to get their account in good standing.

Broken out by customer class, how many customer accounts may be subject to termination if the Commission's Emergency Order prohibiting terminations is rescinded and how does this number compare to the same time period in 2019?

2020	Residential	2019
March – 8 – Basic Telephone		March - 8 – Basic Telephone
April – 17 – Basic Telephone		April – 10 – Basic Telephone (Business-1 – Basic)
May – 25 – Basic Telephone		May – 16– Basic Telephone

Provide future projections if available.

None available

Is the utility currently assessing a “reconnection fee” to restore service? If yes, how is the fee billed and/or collected? Will this fee apply to customers reconnected under the Commission's Emergency Order that wish to pay any arrearage and stay connected?

Our typical reconnect fees are payment of the “past due” outstanding balance along with a \$15.00 reconnect fee. We will be waving this fee for those reconnected under Commission's Emergency Order that wish to pay any arrearage and stay connected.

Universal Service Programs:

Is the utility currently removing customers from CAP for non-payment or failure to recertify?

Citizens Telephone Company of Kecksburg has no participating customers in the CAP program.

What are the utility's current Hardship Fund payment requirements to qualify low-income customers for grants (e.g., waiving payment history “good faith payment”, or CAP participation criteria) and have these requirements been revised due to the pandemic?

No, revisions.

Other Assistance Initiatives:

- Describe any policies/procedures the utility has updated to assist customers impacted by the pandemic that go beyond provisions in PUC policies or regulations.

We are not imposing any late fees or additional penalties for non-payment during this time.

- Describe any proposed or anticipated changes in programs/practices/policies to assist customers impacted by the pandemic after the Governor's Emergency Proclamation and the PUC Emergency Order on Terminations expire or are lifted.

We are waving our typical \$15 reconnect fee that would be in place when re-establishing service. We are also working with customers to setup payment arrangements that work for them to repay any past due balance, including potential reductions in the amount owed.

II. Consumer Education and Outreach

- Descriptions and/or examples of how the utilities are educating their customers about their rights and responsibilities, assistance programs, energy efficiency and conservation, and/or COVID-19 recovery.

We include literature in customer's bills twice a year about assistance programs. We have used our website, social media and bills to communicate information to our customers about our policies during the COVID-19 recovery.

- Efforts to reach all utility consumers with information about income-qualified programs and resources and about non-income-qualified educational services, tools, and resources.

We include literature in customer's bills twice a year about assistance programs.

- Methods that utilities are using to make their customers aware of important proceedings that may include telephonic public input hearings and allowing consumers to be able to make their voices heard.

We currently do not have any outreach to customers on important proceedings.

- Description of utility outreach methods that could be used to inform eligible Pennsylvanians about changes related to COVID-19 in the Lifeline Program for Telephone and Broadband Internet Service.

We have used our website, social media and bills to communicate information to our customers about our policies during the COVID-19 recovery. (Please see the following pages for the consumer education.)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken S. Cutrell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ken Cutrell