



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

PUC RATEMAKING PROCESS

The PUC Rate Making Process and the Role of Consumers

Regulation

In order to provide economical and efficient service to a community, the state system electric distribution, natural gas distribution, sewer lines, sewer and wastewater collection and disposal, storm water and flood control, and public utility and economic districts that the construction of electric facilities by multiple utilities to the same location would be extremely costly and disruptive to communities. The utility is regulated by state commission to assure fair rates for safe and adequate service.

How Long It Takes

By operation of law, the rate request is suspended for 30 to 60 days. In the PUC case, it is before the proposed effective date of the rate increase for consumers. The PUC staff will review the request and determine what if any of the requested increase is justified.

During the investigation, hearings are held before the Administrator, Law Judge (LLJ) at which the evidence in support of the rate increase is examined and expert testimony (if any) is heard. Consumers are offered an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. The PUC staff will then prepare a report and recommendation to the PUC's staff by the LLJ. 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 about nine months.

Hearings and Recommendations

When the PUC investigates a rate increase, it is subject to a public hearing. The LLJ presides at the hearing, which is open to the public and conducted in a formal court proceeding.

As the formal hearing, the consumer's PUC Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (BIE) staff will appear and present their case. The PUC staff will also present their case and are subject to cross-examination. LLJ will render the consumer's request and their request and proposed to vote on what is in the public interest.

Individual consumers may become formal parties by filing a formal complaint form. Consumers may need to be represented, or an attorney may represent individual consumers, or groups of consumers. Consumers also can have their say informally by writing or calling the PUC, contacting the Information Services Bureau, contacting the Regulatory and Compliance Bureau, or providing a written statement to the LLJ. Public input hearings are conducted by the LLJ to the utility's service territory. Consumer testimony becomes part of the record in which the PUC will base its decision.

Filing for a Rate Increase

When a regulated utility seeks a base rate increase, it must file a request with the PUC that explains the proposed rate increase and the reasons for the increase. The utility also must notify its customers at least 60 days in advance. The notice must include the amount of the proposed rate increase, the proposed effective date, and how much more the customer can expect to pay.

How the PUC Sets Rates

The rate-making process reviews the financial condition of the utility, the utility's operating costs, and the utility's ability to pay for its investments. The PUC evaluates each utility's request for a rate increase based on these criteria.

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 request 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 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 proceeding.

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, storm water, 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

- Contact 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 or company?
- Are you the utility customer?
- Are the service and the name 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?
- Did you give the PUC permission to contact the utility to resolve your account information?
- Do you still need pay all of your current bills with the utility while your complaint is under review.

What Information Do I Need?

- Your name (account holder) 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)

Note: The same information must be provided by any person representing you.

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, taxicabs, limousines, household moving companies, trucking companies, transportation network companies or paratransit 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 informal complaints are resolved quickly 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 www.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 provisions 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 assistance 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.

