



NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Receives More Than 900 Consumer Contacts in 2014

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received 905 consumer contacts in 2014. The PSC takes an active role in protecting consumers by working to help resolve issues with utilities regulated by the Commission.

The PSC reinstated a Consumer Affairs Portfolio in 2014, which provides additional focus on consumer issues and complaints and on improving communication with the public through traditional public information channels, public meetings and social media. This is the first annual public contact report issued showing data and trends relating to complaints and input received about entities the Commission regulates. Commission Chairman Julie Fedorchak, who holds the Consumer Affairs portfolio, says that a focus on consumer affairs is vital to the success of the Commission.

“Service is in our name, so responding to consumers and helping them deal with issues involving our regulated businesses is a mission we take seriously at the PSC,” Fedorchak said. “These numbers show we helped more than 500 citizens last year get answers to their problems. We will continue to seek better ways to educate, inform and serve North Dakota citizens and businesses who count on the regulatory work of this agency.”

Of the 905 total contacts, 369 were received as part of an online petition regarding rail safety. Of the remaining 536 contacts, approximately 41 percent (218) were complaints received against utility companies, including electric, gas and telephone companies. Complaints ranged from billing problems to quality of service issues. Complaints are received and processed regarding any utility the Commission regulates, including certain aspects of telephone service, natural gas providers, and the three investor-owned electric companies in the state: Xcel, Ottertail and MDU.

The Commission also received 39 railroad-related complaints. When a complaint is received, a PSC staff member works as a liaison between the consumer and the company to resolve the problem.

“These statistics make it clear that North Dakotans in every walk of life are benefiting from the work and resources of this Commission,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann. “I encourage people to contact us when they have concerns because those contacts help us immensely.”

The Commission also receives many calls each year where people are looking for information or need to be referred to another agency. More than 200 “quick referrals” were received in 2014. In addition, 36 public input calls were received from consumers with specific comments or input relating to a case before the Commission.

“In addition to jurisdictional items, we also work with stakeholders in many areas that are not directly under our jurisdiction such as wireless coverage,” said Commissioner Brian Kalk. “I want to compliment the PSC staff for their work in this area.”

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, grain elevators, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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2014 Consumer Contact Report Summary

2014

Auction/Clerk	2
Grain Buyer	0
Grain Warehouse	0
Railroad	*408
PU-Electric	43
PU-Electric/Gas	60
PU-Gas	11
PU-Pipelines	29
PU-Siting	6
PU-Telecom	104
PU-Other	0
Reclamation	0
T&S Complaints	4
T&S Consumers	12
Pipeline Safety	1
Quick Referrals	225
Total	905

*369 railroad contacts were due to online petition regarding railroad safety

<u>Directly regulated entities</u>	2014	*Approx # of ND Customers
MDU	33	Electric - 85,594 Gas - 102,138
Xcel/NSP	58	Electric - 90,823 Gas - 50,615
Ottetail	18	Electric - 57,915
CenturyLink/Qwest	72	75,670 (total lines)

*Note: Some customers may have both electric and gas service from company.
Electric/Gas utility customer numbers obtained from 2013 annual report filed with the Commission
CenturyLink number includes consumer, business and wholesale lines (end of 2014)