



NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Receives More than 630 Consumer Contacts in 2015

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received 639 consumer contacts in 2015. These contacts include complaints against regulated entities, public input submitted as part of an open case and referrals to other agencies.

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. Of the 639 contacts, 182 (28.5%) were complaints against companies regulated by the Commission. Complaint numbers for the three electric companies were all slightly lower compared to 2014. In contrast, there was an increase in complaints recorded for CenturyLink.

The Commission continues to see an increase in the amount of public input received, with 148 (23%) of contacts recorded in 2015 being public input received for cases being considered by the Commission. This is in contrast to 36 public input contacts regarding PSC cases received in 2014.

“While complaint numbers for many companies were down compared to last year, we continue to see an increase in the amount of public input for cases being received,” said Commission Chairman Julie Fedorchak. “Our efforts to increase awareness, better engage the public and increase transparency are paying off. The public is increasingly engaged in our work.”

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 second annual public contact report issued showing data and trends related to complaints and input received by the Commission. The Commission received 905 consumer contacts in 2015. However, 369 were petitions calling for increased crude oil conditioning which didn’t fall under PSC jurisdiction.

“The PSC continually strives to be open and accessible as possible for the public, and the information we receive is enormously helpful when we make tough decisions,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann.

The Commission also received 22 railroad-related complaints. These complaints focused on issues such as blocked crossings and problems with fences. When a complaint is received, a PSC

staff member works as a liaison between the consumer and the company to resolve the problem within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Often, the complaint is outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and needs to be referred to another agency or the caller simply needs information. These calls are recorded as "quick referrals." The Commission received 253 quick referrals in 2015.

"Open dialogue with the public is critical to our regulatory process," said Commissioner Brian Kalk.

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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Note to the Media: A summary sheet for the 2015 consumer contact report is included on the next page. A copy of the detailed report is available upon request. The detailed report breaks each category down by subject and company.

2015 Consumer Contact Report Summary
(Includes complaints, public input and quick referrals)

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| AML | 0 | 2 |
| Auction/Clerk | 2 | 0 |
| Grain Buyer | 0 | 1 |
| Grain Warehouse | 0 | 5 |
| Railroad | *408 | 22 |
| PU-Electric | 43 | 95 |
| PU-Electric/Gas | 60 | 8 |
| PU-Gas | 11 | 51 |
| PU-Pipelines | 29 | 87 |
| PU-Siting | 6 | 1 |
| PU-Telecom | 104 | 101 |
| PU-Other | 0 | 0 |
| Reclamation | 0 | 1 |
| T&S Complaints | 4 | 10 |
| T&S Consumers | 12 | 2 |
| Pipeline Safety | 1 | 0 |
| Quick Referrals | 225 | 253 |
| Total | 905 | 639 |

*369 railroad contacts were due to online petition regarding railroad safety (2014)

| <u>Regulated Entities/Complaints filed</u> | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| MDU | 33 | 27 |
| Xcel/NSP | 58 | 51 |
| Ottetail | 18 | 15 |
| CenturyLink/Qwest | 72 | 89 |
| Total | 181 | 182 |

*Note: numbers included in above chart reflect only complaints;
 Does not reflect public input related to cases