

# Florida Public Service Commission

## Consumer E-Newsletter

February 2006

### CHAIRMAN



**Lisa Polak Edgar**

Prepaid phone cards are a great way to purchase long distance telephone service before actually placing the long distance calls.

They are usually sold at convenience stores, discount stores, large retail stores, service stations, and airports. They are typically sold in \$5, \$10, or \$20 denominations, and look like a credit card. These cards may also be called "phone cards," "prepaid debit cards," "telecards," "prepaid telephone cards," or "prepaid calling services."

For more information on buying and using prepaid phone cards, read Chairman Edgar's Consumer Bulletin "Prepaid Calling Cards" on the Florida Public Service Commission's Web site at [www.floridapsc.com](http://www.floridapsc.com).

### FPSC Studies Ways to Strengthen Electric Infrastructure

The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) conducted a workshop on January 23 to explore options for designing and building electric utility facilities to minimize future storm damage and resulting outages to customers. Workshop objectives included identifying both short-term actions which can be implemented before the next hurricane season and longer-term actions requiring a more in-depth inquiry.

Technical experts on electrical system design and operations provided presentations on their area of expertise. Presenters included representatives from three Florida cities, Florida electric utilities, the Edison Electric Institute, electric infrastructure suppliers and consultants, and experts on hurricanes and electric infrastructure from the University of Florida and the University of South Florida.

You can read a transcript or listen to a recording of the workshop on the PSC's Web site at

[http://www.floridapsc.com/industry/electric\\_gas/ei\\_project.cfm](http://www.floridapsc.com/industry/electric_gas/ei_project.cfm)

### Electric Transmission Lines - What Authority Does the Public Service Commission Have?

The Florida Legislature, recognizing that the routing of electric transmission lines has a significant impact upon the welfare of the citizens of Florida, the location and growth of industry, and the use of the natural resources of the state, enacted the [Transmission Line Siting Act](#) (the Act). The Act applies to any electrical transmission line extending from an existing or proposed substation or power plant to an existing or proposed transmission network or rights-of-way or substation to which the applicant intends to connect which defines the end of the proposed project and which is designed to operate at 230 kilovolts or more. Transmission lines that are less than 15 miles in length or do not cross a county line are exempt from the Transmission Line Siting Act.

The Legislature determined that the efficiency of the permit application and review process at both the state and local level would be improved with the implementation of a process whereby a permit application would be centrally coordinated and all permit decisions could be reviewed on the basis of standards and recommendations of the deciding agencies. The [Florida](#)

### What Does The Public Service Commission Do?

The Florida Public Service Commission oversees telephone service in Florida and also sets the rates utility companies may charge for natural gas and electricity. The PSC sets the price consumers pay for water in 36 Florida counties.

#### Need Discounted Phone Service?



Learn More About Lifeline Assistance & Link-Up Florida

#### Utility Problems? File An Online Complaint



#### Have Questions? Visit our FAQ's



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[Department of Environmental Protection](#) acts as the lead agency in coordinating review of the recommendations submitted by other state and local agencies, and is responsible for determining whether the proposed transmission line complies with applicable environmental laws.

The Florida Public Service Commission determines whether the transmission line is needed to ensure adequate electric service and whether the cost of the transmission line is justified by the expected need for transmission capacity. The role of the Florida Public Service Commission (Commission) in the process is limited by the Act to the following:

- Determining whether the transmission line is needed for electric system reliability and integrity, and abundant, low-cost electrical energy to assure the economic well-being of the citizens of this state;
- The appropriate starting and ending point of the line, and;
- Other matters within its jurisdiction deemed relevant to the determination of need.

More specific information about the process of approving electric transmission lines is available on the Internet at the [Florida Department of Environmental Protection Electric Transmission Line Siting Page](#).



### **Are You Being Charged The Correct Taxes On Your Telephone Bill?**

In October 2001, the [Communications Services Tax Simplification Law](#) took effect. This law replaced a myriad of state and local taxes with the Communications Services Tax. The Communications Services Tax appears on the bill as:

- Local Communications Services Tax - This tax replaces what used to be billed as city/local taxes, and franchise fees.
- State Communications Services Tax - This tax replaces what used to be billed as the Florida Gross Receipts Tax, state sales tax, and the local option tax.

While this makes the telephone bill less complicated, it does not allow the customer to review his bill to see if the correct taxes are being charged. For instance, a customer may be getting billed a city tax when he does not live in the city. The Florida Department of Revenue has an answer to this concern. The customer can go online at: <http://geotax.state.fl.us/dorPubldx.jsp>, insert his address and find out the proper Communications Services Tax rate.

For more information about the Communications Services Tax, visit the Florida Department of Revenue's website at: <http://sun6.dms.state.fl.us/dor/taxes/cst.html> To speak with a Department of Revenue representative, call Taxpayer Services, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., ET, at 1-800-352-3671 (in Florida only) or 850-488-6800.

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### **When To Call the Public Service Commission**

Most citizens of Florida have heard of the Public Service Commission but the specific responsibilities of the FPSC are sometimes confusing to the general public.

To help consumers receive responsive action to their concerns, a basic guide identifying when to contact the FPSC for help on various utility service issues has been prepared and is available on-line at [http://www.floridapsc.com/consumers/When\\_to\\_Call\\_the\\_PSC.pdf](http://www.floridapsc.com/consumers/When_to_Call_the_PSC.pdf)

The FPSC has a professional staff who can assist consumers in resolution of particular concerns with their utility service. The FPSC Consumer Assistance number is 1-800-342-3552. Consumer assistance can also be obtained via e-mail at: [contact@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:contact@psc.state.fl.us) or through the PSC web site at [www.floridapsc.com](http://www.floridapsc.com).