

What You Need to
Know About Your

Electric & Natural Gas SERVICE



Florida Public Service Commission

FLORIDA Public Service Commission

The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) regulates investor-owned electric and natural gas companies throughout the state to set reasonable and compensatory rates and ensure adequate service. The Commission has five members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. FPSC staff is ready to answer questions about the regulation of public utilities.

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What You Need to
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*What does the
FPSC regulate
in the Electric
and Natural Gas
Industries?*

- ◆ Investor-owned electric and natural gas companies
- ◆ Rates and charges
- ◆ Meter and billing accuracy
- ◆ Electric lines up to the meter
- ◆ Reliability of electric service
- ◆ New construction safety code compliance for electric transmission and distribution
- ◆ Territorial agreements and disputes
- ◆ Need for certain power plants and transmission lines
- ◆ Gas service issues
- ◆ Pipeline safety issues including operations and construction

Customer Rights

As a customer of an investor-owned utility, you have certain rights and obligations. Each utility must provide service without unreasonable delay to anyone who requests it. Some utilities may require that service be requested in writing. The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) approves the utility's rates, charges, and conditions for service. The utility's tariffs contain all rate schedules, charges, rules, and regulations. As required, a copy of the utility's tariffs are kept in its office for public inspection.

Customer Deposits

When you apply for electric or gas service, the utility can ask you to establish credit by furnishing a cash deposit, a guarantor to secure payment of bills, a letter of credit from a bank, or a surety bond. If you provide a cash deposit, the utility is required to pay two percent interest on the deposit if service is not terminated within six months. Residential deposits must be refunded after 23 months of service, provided that a prompt payment record has been established.

To create a prompt payment record, you *cannot* have any of the following:

- ◆ made more than one late payment for the preceding 12 months paid with a bad check
- ◆ been disconnected for nonpayment
- ◆ tampered with the meter
- ◆ used unauthorized service

Under certain circumstances, such as repeated late bill payments or continued bills that exceed the current deposit amount, the utility may require an additional deposit. The total requested deposit, however, cannot exceed the average service charge for two billing periods during the last 12 months. The company must give a 30-day written notice to request an additional deposit. When an account is closed, the deposit can be credited to the final bill, and any balance must be refunded within 15 days.

Billing Practices

In most cases, the utility is required to read your meter and send bills monthly. You have 20 days from the postmark date or delivery date to pay the bill. If payment is not made by the due date on the bill, service may be discontinued, but the company must send a five working-day written notice that the account is delinquent and subject to service interruption. Residential service may not be discontinued for bill nonpayment between noon on Friday and 8:00 a.m. the following Monday, or between noon on the day before a holiday and 8:00 a.m. the next work day. Also, service cannot be discontinued or withheld because a previous occupant did not pay the bill, as long as the current customer did not benefit from the previous unpaid service.

Each customer has the right to request and receive an explanation of the utility's rates applicable to the customer's class of service and information about the method used to read meters and compute bills. Upon customer request, the utility must assist the customer in obtaining the rate which is most advantageous for the customer's service requirements. If you have a billing complaint and cannot resolve it with the utility, call the FPSC's Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach for assistance at **1-800-342-3552**.

Meter Problems

If you suspect your meter is not accurate, you can request that the utility test it at no cost to you, if the meter has not been tested within the last 12 months. You may also request to witness the test, and you may request that an FPSC representative witness the test as well. If you are not satisfied with the test results, the utility can make arrangements for the meter to be tested at an independent testing facility of your choice. If you request an independent test, however, you are responsible for negotiating with and paying the test facility. You are also responsible for any utility costs associated with facilitating the independent test procedure. If the meter is found to be running in excess of the limits established by Commission rules, the testing cost will be refunded.

Service Interruptions

For scheduled service interruptions, the utility will usually provide notice to the affected customers. If service is interrupted due to circumstances beyond the utility's control, the utility is not required to notify customers, but will attempt to restore service within the shortest time possible, consistent with safety concerns. Check with your utility for a service hotline number for reporting interruptions and receiving information on service restoration.

Consumer Complaints

FPSC's consumer complaint analysts are available to assist consumers. Here are some examples when the FPSC can help you:

- ◆ Improper termination of your utility service
- ◆ Incorrect or unauthorized charges on your utility bill
- ◆ Problems with reading your meter
- ◆ Customer deposits for utility services
- ◆ Poor quality of service
- ◆ Bill complaints
- ◆ Problems with delayed service connection
- ◆ Problems with back billing

Contact your utility, explain the problem, and try to get a resolution in a timely manner. If you do not hear from the utility within a reasonable time or if you are not satisfied with the utility's action, contact the Florida Public Service Commission.