

DOCKET NO. 160186-EI Petition for rate increase by Gulf Power Company.

WITNESS: Direct Testimony of Rhonda L. Hicks, Florida Public Service Commission; Appearing on Behalf of the Staff of the Florida Public Service Commission.

DATE FILED: January 13, 2017

1 DIRECT TESTIMONY OF RHONDA L. HICKS

2 Q. Please state your name and address.

3 A. My name is Rhonda L. Hicks. My address is 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard;
4 Tallahassee, Florida; 32399-0850.

5 Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?

6 A. I am employed by the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC or Commission) as
7 Chief of the Bureau of Consumer Assistance in the Office of Consumer Assistance &
8 Outreach.

9 Q. Please give a brief description of your educational background and professional
10 experience.

11 A. I graduated from Florida A&M University in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree
12 in Accounting. I have worked for the Florida Public Service Commission for 30 years,
13 and I have varied experience in the electric, gas, telephone, and water and wastewater
14 industries. My work experience includes rate cases, cost recovery clauses,
15 depreciation studies, tax, audit, consumer outreach, and consumer complaints. I
16 currently work in the Bureau of Consumer Assistance within the Office of Consumer
17 Assistance & Outreach where I manage consumer complaints and inquiries.

18 Q. What is the function of the Bureau of Consumer Assistance?

19 A. The Bureau's function is to resolve disputes between regulated companies and their
20 customers as quickly, effectively, and inexpensively as possible.

21 Q. Do all consumers, who have disputes with their regulated company, contact the Bureau
22 of Consumer Assistance?

23 A. No. Consumers may initially file their complaint with the regulated company and
24 reach resolution without the Bureau's intervention. In fact, consumers are encouraged
25 to allow the regulated company the opportunity to resolve the dispute prior to any

1 Commission involvement.

2 Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

3 A. The purpose of my testimony is to discuss/outline the number of consumer complaints
4 logged with the Commission against Gulf Power Company under Rule 25-22.032,
5 Florida Administrative Code, Consumer Complaints, from January 1, 2013, through
6 December 31, 2016. My testimony will also provide information on the type of
7 complaints logged and those complaints that appear to be rule violations.

8 Q. What do your records indicate concerning the number of complaints logged against
9 Gulf Power Company?

10 A. From January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2016, the Florida Public Service
11 Commission logged 1,866 complaints against Gulf Power Company. Of those, 1,781
12 complaints were transferred directly to the company for resolution via the
13 Commission's Transfer-Connect (Warm-Transfer) System. This system allows the
14 Commission to directly transfer a customer to Gulf Power Company's customer
15 service personnel. Once the call is transferred to Gulf Power Company, it provides the
16 customer with a proposed resolution.

17 Q. What have been the most common types of complaints logged against Gulf Power
18 Company during the period January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2016?

19 A. During the specified time period, approximately eighty-five (85%) percent of the
20 complaints logged with the Florida Public Service Commission concerned billing
21 issues, while approximately fifteen (15%) of the complaints involved quality of service
22 issues.

23 Q. Do you have any exhibits attached to your testimony?

24 A. Yes. I am sponsoring Exhibit RLH-1, which is a summary listing of customer
25 complaints logged with the Commission against Gulf Power Company under Rule 25-

1 22.032, Florida Administrative Code. The complaints listed were received between
2 January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2016, and were captured in the Commission's
3 Consumer Activity Tracking System (CATS). The summary groups the complaints by
4 Close Type and within each Close Type, the complaints are segregated by Pre-Close
5 Type. The first grouping consists of Pre-Close types such as outages, repair, and
6 improper bills, that are still pending. The remaining groupings are categorized by
7 Close Type codes such as EB-24, ES-50, GI-02, etc.

8 Q. What is a Pre-Close Type?

9 A. A Pre-Close Type is an internal categorization that is applied to each complaint
10 upon receipt. A complaint is assigned a Pre-Close category based solely on the initial
11 information provided by the consumer.

12 Q. What is a Close Type?

13 A. A Close Type is also an internal categorization code. It is assigned to each complaint
14 once staff completes its investigation and a proposed resolution is provided to the
15 consumer. In some instances, the Pre-Close category will differ from the Close Type
16 because staff's investigation reveals facts that were not available upon receipt of the
17 complaint.

18 Q. A great majority of complaints were resolved as Close Type GI-02, Courtesy
19 Call/Warm Transfer. Can you explain this Close Type?

20 A. Yes. As previously stated, Gulf Power Company participates in the Commission's
21 Transfer-Connect (Warm-Transfer) System. This system allows the Commission to
22 directly transfer a customer to the company's customer service personnel. Once the
23 call is transferred to Gulf Power Company, it provides the customer with a proposed
24 resolution. Customers who are not satisfied with the company's proposed resolution
25 have the option of recontacting the Commission. While the Commission is able to

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assign a Pre-Close Type to each of the complaints in this category, a specific Close Type is not assigned because the proposed resolution is provided by Gulf Power Company. Consequently, the GI-02 Close Type only allows staff to monitor the number of complaints resolved via the Commission's Transfer-Connect System.

Q. How many of the complaints summarized on your exhibit has staff determined may be a violation of Commission rules?

A. Of the 1,866 complaints logged against Gulf Power Company during the period January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2016, staff determined that two complaints appear to be violations of Commission rules.

Q. What was the nature of the apparent rule violations?

A. The apparent rule violations were related to billing the wrong customer and failure to provide complaint resolution prior to the established deadline.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

A. Yes, it does.

Exhibit _____



FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
COMPLAINTS BY CLOSE TYPE FOR SINGLE COMPANY
RECEIVED BETWEEN 01/01/2013 AND 12/31/2016
FOR GULF POWER COMPANY

Docket No. 160186-EI
Summary of Complaints
Exhibit RLH-1, Page 1 of 2

TYPE: EB-24 BILLING WRONG CUSTOMER

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For Type EB-24 1

TYPE: ES-50 FAILURE TO PROVIDE RES TO CUST IN 15 WD

Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE 1

Total Cases For Type ES-50 1

TYPE: GI-02 COURTESY CALL/WARM TRANSFER

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DELAY IN CONNECTION 14

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DEPOSIT 3

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 62

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER DISCONNECTS 27

Total Cases For PreClose Type: OUTAGES 15

Total Cases For PreClose Type: PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT 1467

Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE 170

Total Cases For PreClose Type: REPAIR 19

Total Cases For PreClose Type: SAFETY ISSUE 4

Total Cases For Type GI-02 1781

TYPE: GI-05 HIGH BILL

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For Type GI-05 1

TYPE: GI-15 OUTAGES (ALL INDUSTRIES)

Total Cases For PreClose Type: OUTAGES 4

Total Cases For Type GI-15 4

TYPE:	GI-17	SAFETY ISSUES	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	SAFETY ISSUE		4
Total Cases For Type	GI-17		4

TYPE:	GI-25	IMPROPER BILLING (ADDED 7/03)	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	IMPROPER BILLS		8
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	IMPROPER DISCONNECTS		1
Total Cases For Type	GI-25		9

TYPE:	GI-29	DELAY IN CONNECTION (ADDED7/03)	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	DELAY IN CONNECTION		2
Total Cases For Type	GI-29		2

TYPE:	GI-32	PROCESS REVIEW CASE	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	IMPROPER BILLS		1
Total Cases For Type	GI-32		1

TYPE:	GI-72	72 HOUR RULE	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	DELAY IN CONNECTION		1
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	IMPROPER BILLS		36
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	IMPROPER DISCONNECTS		6
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	OUTAGES		9
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	QUALITY OF SERVICE		4
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	REPAIR		3
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	SAFETY ISSUE		2
Total Cases For Type	GI-72		61

TYPE:	NJ-04	DAMAGE CLAIM	
Total Cases For PreClose Type:	REPAIR		1
Total Cases For Type	NJ-04		1

Total Complaints Late Responding: 0
Total Complaints Infraction: 2
Grand Total: 1866

****Category**
***I = INFRACTION**
***C=NON-INFRACTION**

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition for rate increase by Gulf Power Company.

DOCKET NO. 160186-EI

In re: Petition for approval of 2016 depreciation and dismantlement studies, approval of proposed depreciation rates and annual dismantlement accruals and Plant Smith Units 1 and 2 regulatory asset amortization, by Gulf Power Company.

DOCKET NO. 160170-EI

DATED: JANUARY 13, 2017

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the testimony of Rhonda L. Hicks on behalf of the staff of the Florida Public Service Commission was electronically filed with the Office of Commission Clerk, Florida Public Service Commission, and copies were furnished to the following by electronic mail on this 13th day of January, 2017.

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