



Public Service Commission

-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-

DATE: April 5, 1999
TO: Blanca S. Bayó, Director, Division of Records & Reporting
FROM: Tiffany R. Collins, Attorney, Division of Legal Services
Grace A. Jaye, Attorney, Division of Legal Services *AK RVE*
RE: Docket Nos.:
990334-EI -- Petition by Florida Power Corporation for Approval of Revisions to General Rules and Regulations and Tariff Pertaining to Medically Essential Service
990336-EI -- Petition by Tampa Electric Company for Approval of Revisions to General Rules and Regulations and Tariff Pertaining to Medically Essential Service
~~990333-EI~~ -- Petition for Approval of Revision to Florida Power & Light Company's General Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Medically Essential Service
990317-EI -- Petition for Approval of Proposed Changes to Sheet No. 4.20, 4.21, of Retail Tariff Regarding Medically Essential Service by Gulf Power Company

Attached is a letter dated March 22, 1999, that was received by Mr. David Ging, Division of Electric and Gas, from Mr. Tony Giorgio, President of Compassion National Children's Foundation. Please insert this letter into the file for this docket. Thank you.

GAJ/js
cc: David Ging, Division of Electric and Gas
Attachment
I:\medesrd.gaj

DOCUMENT NUMBER-DATE

~~04449~~ APR-6 9

FPSC-RECORDS/REPORTING



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March 22, 1999

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David Giang
Florida Public Service Commission
Division of Electric and Gas
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear David,

I have looked over the proposed Tariff that we discussed in Bev Demello's office. As suggested, I have sent you some ideas for the Tariff, other than what was in the original documents. The original does not give much consideration to Florida's Certified Medically Fragile Electric Consumer.

As I state in my conclusion of the Tariff review, Florida's major Utility Companies are some of the largest in the World, with revenues in the billions. They seem to think they should not be held accountable to the people they serve (only stockholder) especially the Medically Essential Service Customer. I do understand that in today's market, Service is not profitable. But, again, I emphasize disconnecting service to Certified Medically Essential Service Customers may cause more than just the service to Die. This proposed Tariff is extremely one sided.

Thank you for the opportunity to give my suggestions.

Sincerely,

Tony Giorgio, President

cc: Governor Jeb Bush
Chairman Joe Garcia, FPSC
Bev DeMello, Director DCA

Listed below are some of the reasons why, the proposed Tariff does not help the Medically Essential Service Customer.

Paragraph 1: Tariff

"Service is Medically essential if the customer has continuously operating electric-powered medical equipment."

Suggestion:

This statement eliminates any person with a life threatening disease, other than those on life support 24 hours a day. What happens to the customer who needs electric powered treatment 4 or 5 times a day? The Company Tariff discriminates against children and adults with Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Severe asthma, Cancer patients, Spina Bifida, and Organ Transplants, who, also, have been certified by their Physician to need Medically Essential Service. The Physician should not have to conform to the Company Tariff but should be respected for his expertise.

Paragraph 2: Tariff

"The Company shall provide Medically Essential Service Customers with a limited extension of time, not to exceed 30 days."

***Note: (The 30-day extension does little to help when the Company adds additional deposits to an already financially stressful situation.)**

Suggestion:

The Company does not take into consideration the long term financial effects on a Medically Fragile Customer. For the short-term situation this is fine, but if the Medically Essential Service is for a long-term situation, the 30-day extension is only putting a Band-Aid over the problem. To solve it, you would have to work out long-term payment arrangements to fit the budget of the Customer, and give references to agencies that can assist Financially. Also, change the criteria of the assisting to include other than low-income families. This leaves out most of the Medically Fragile Customers, who are trying to make a living and take care of the person with Medical needs. Customer Service Representatives are not trained to handle the needs of

(Cont. from page 1)

the Medically Fragile Customer. In the past we have found these representatives to be less than helpful in assisting with Energy Fund information, and they are rude and discourteous.

The following are some examples of other States and how they work the extensions:

**New Hampshire: "30-days with renewal every 30 days with no limit on renewal. Medical emergencies do not relieve the customer's obligation to pay the utility bill."*

**Massachusetts: "30-days with Physician's Certificate. Extensions can be renewed monthly or INDEFINITELY FOR CRONIC SITUATIONS."*

**Oregon: "Up to 12 Months extension for Chronic Cases. ONLY THE PSC CAN DETERMINE IF CUSTOMER IS ULTIMATELY DISCONNECTED."*

The "Where to Find Help in Florida" should be given to every Medically Essential Customer in the Utility's File.

When energy funds are not available to Medically Essential Customers, Special Consideration should be given to work out a payment plan, as a Physician deems the Electric a matter of survival.

Note:

(Most of the other States do not allow the Service to be disconnected.)

Paragraph 3: Tariff

"Representative sent to resident no later than 4pm on the day prior to disconnection."

Suggestion:

(A.) Medically Fragile Customers travel back and forth to Medical Facilities, and this disrupts their daily routine, including bill paying. Also a notice to contact the Utilities

should be left with a neighbor. More times than not the neighbor would know where the family is.

(B.) A Representative should be at the residence no later than 12 noon on the day before disconnect. Many Medically Fragile Customers who need Medically Essential Service may be away at the Hospital for treatment. And may not have received the notice on time and would need the better part of the day to make arrangements or to make a payment.

Paragraph 4: Tariff

"In the event that a customer is certified as a Medically Essential customer, the customer shall remain solely responsible for any backup equipment and/or power supply and a planned course of action in the event of a power outage. The Company does not assume, and expressly disclaims, any obligation to insure continuous service."

Suggestion:

Medically Essential Customers usually do have backup equipment. But, if there is a power outage the Company should have an obligation to warn, if possible the Customer with the Medically Essential Service of the problem in the area. The physician has placed the person in this category because it is a matter of survival. As a SERVICE COMPANY this should be a priority to help the Medically Fragile. There should be a list of Customers needing service in a Crisis. The company should not be able to take such a cavalier approach to people who have special medical needs. Does giving to the United Way clear Big Business of their responsibility to the Customer? The Company should be made accountable for their Medically Essential Customer.

The Following is one of many examples of other States:

****NEW YORK: Consolidated Edison has a Life Sustaining Equipment Survey, once a year. "It is important that we have a record of our customers who use electrically operated support systems so we can help in CASE OF AN EMERGENCY." Con Edison Spokesperson.***

CONCLUSION:

Florida's major Utility Companies are some of the largest in the World, with revenues in the Billions. They seem to think they should not be held accountable to the people they serve, especially the Medically Essential Service Customer. We understand, that in today's market, Service is not profitable. But, in the needs of the Medically Fragile having the service disconnected, may cause more than just the service to Die.

Please reconsider the tariff. It does not help the Medically Essential Customer. It is extremely One sided.

Thank you.

***Tony Giorgio
President
Compassion National Children's Foundation
407- 426 8951***

Foot Note: Who is going to take care of the Medically Essential Service Customer in the Y2K situation?