

Public Service Commission

• *Mission and philosophy*

The mission of the Public Service Commission (PSC) is to protect the public interest of utility consumers. Since almost every Wyoming resident uses one or more utility products or services which are regulated by the PSC, including telecommunications, natural gas, electricity, water and intrastate pipeline products, it follows that the PSC serves directly or indirectly almost every Wyoming resident. As state and federal legislation and utility regulatory policy move toward a more competitive environment, the mission of the PSC will continue to focus more directly on the areas of customer education, complaint resolution and the assurance that safe, adequate and reliable utility services are delivered to consumers. More importantly, the PSC must insure that the gradual transition from traditional rate of return regulation to a more competitive regulatory environment is smooth and efficient and that the benefits of competitive industry developments are made equally available to all utility customers.

• *Results of outcomes*

During FY98, the PSC received and docketed a total of 760 utility filings and applications. The PSC decided by final written order, 181 certificates for authority to serve; 16 general rate case matters; 44 commodity cost changes (pass-on increases from wholesale suppliers); 154 rule, regulation and tariff cases; 14 securities issuances and other financial matters; 10 formal complaints resulting in orders; two PSC investigations; two federal filings; and 18 contract cases. In addition, the PSC issued 372 letters accepting the registrations and rate schedules of interexchange telecommunications resellers. The PSC held 59 formal hearings during this time period. Each of the PSC orders was issued on or before the applicable deadline. (Strategy A.1)

The PSC Consumer Advocate Staff is authorized by statute at the discretion of the commission to act as a party in utility proceedings and to promote the best interest of the residents of Wyoming. During FY98, the consumer advocate staff intervened and presented public interest testimony in each general rate case hearing conducted by the commission. In addition, the consumer advocate staff presented public interest testimony in other types of cases including rate/tariff and rule/regulation matters. In total, the consumer advocate staff intervened and testified in 23 proceedings during FY98. (Strategy A.2)

The PSC did not initiate any new rule-making proceedings in FY98. The PSC did issue orders during this reporting period in two previous rule-making proceedings (General Orders 75 and 76) which were opened prior to FY98. The order in General Order No. 76 has been rescinded due to a defect in the notice and it will be reissued at a later time. (Strategy A.3)

General information

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Year established and reorganized

Established 1915, reorganized 1919, 1963,
1968, 1991

Statutory references

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 15 of Title 37 of the
Wyoming Statutes

Number of authorized personnel

Full-time 32, part-time 1

Organization structure

Administration, Legal, Rates and Pricing,
Complaint Processing, Facilities
Engineering

Clients served

Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, municipal and governmental customers of public utilities, and the regulated utilities themselves which provide service to the residents of Wyoming. In addition, up to January 1, 1998, the Public Service Commission served all residents of and travelers across Wyoming through its administration of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Program grant for transuranic waste shipment across Wyoming.

Budget information

Utility assessment funds	\$2,047,473
Federal funds	220,069
Total	\$2,267,542

The PSC is committed to informing Wyoming's governor and congressional delegation on a monthly basis about utility issues which affect Wyoming residents. During FY98, the PSC made 12 monthly written reports to the governor and nine reports to Wyoming's congressional delegation. (Strategy B.1)

The PSC is actively involved in the legislative process and is frequently called upon by the State Legislature to testify about issues pertaining to public utility service. During FY98, the PSC and its staff participated in approximately 33 meetings called by the state Legislature to discuss topics within the jurisdiction or competence of the commission and staff; all subcommittee and work group meetings in which the PSC was directed by the Legislature to attend (especially the Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development Interim Committee and the Corporations Committee); and all legislative committee hearings and conferences concerning the PSC's budget, pending utility legislation and other matters as directed by the Legislature. This does not include a listing of the numerous conferences with legislators and reports prepared by the commission for the Legislature (in and out of session) regarding utility matters. (Strategy B.2)

The PSC is committed to informing and educating Wyoming residents through consumer and utility awareness activities. The PSC maintains an educational Internet Web site; and during FY98, it hosted eight educational or collaborative events in various cities throughout Wyoming to discuss issues related to the telecommunications Universal Service Fund, general topics in the telecommunications industry and electric industry restructuring. (Strategy B.3)

The PSC is also committed to informing and educating its employees. During FY98, four PSC attorneys attended continuing education classes and accumulated more than 60 CLE credits; 10 PSC employees were assigned to complete 21 various computer classes; three employees traveled to Seattle for specialized database training on utility complaint matters; six PSC employees attended a total of nine workshops/seminars on various topics; and two PSC engineers attended a workshop which was acceptable as training required for renewal of their Professional Engineering licenses. In addition, PSC employees attended each of the monthly board of director meetings of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association in Denver. (Strategy B.4)

The PSC engineering staff conducts safety, reliability and service quality investigations of regulated utilities in Wyoming. During FY98, the PSC accomplished 153 person-days of field time inspecting natural gas distribution systems, intrastate natural gas pipelines and other facilities used to provide natural gas utility service. (Strategy C.1) In addition, the PSC accomplished 73 person-days of field time inspecting electrical distribution systems, electric transmission lines, substation facilities and other electric utility equipment. (Strategy C.2)

The PSC is required by state law to issue a report to the governor, the Legislature and the Telecommunications Council each year regarding the

status of the telecommunications industry in Wyoming. The report in FY98 was issued on January 10, 1998, and includes a description of the central office capabilities of each local service provider in Wyoming, a chronology of significant events in the telecommunications industry in 1997, a list of the regulatory actions and decisions by the PSC involving telecommunications companies, a general description of the telecommunications industry in Wyoming and the status of compliance with the Wyoming Telecommunications Act of 1995. (Strategy C.3)

The PSC engineering staff assures that the plans, drawings and specifications of major utility facilities are signed and sealed by a licensed Wyoming professional engineer pursuant to state law. During FY98, the PSC engineering staff reviewed and analyzed eight applications for major utility facilities in Wyoming, and each of them were signed and sealed by a licensed professional engineer. (Strategy C.4)

During FY98, the PSC received 1,077 new complaints from utility customers regarding billing and service issues with public utilities in Wyoming. Nearly 80 percent of these formal complaints concerned telecommunications service providers, and a significant percentage of these were related to slamming, which is the unauthorized change of a customer's long distance carrier. Each complaint received by the PSC is unique, requiring individual attention. Therefore, it is customary for some complaint issues to take longer to resolve than others. The PSC resolved 77 percent of the pending customer complaints within 60 days of receipt and 96 percent of the pending complaints within 180 days. (Strategy D.1)

Of the 1,077 complaints received in FY98, 14 of the complaints requested a formal hearing. The PSC held hearings on six of the requests (three orders have been issued and three are pending). Of the remaining requests for hearing, four were dismissed by the commission for various reasons and four are scheduled to be heard in the near future. (Strategy D.2)

The PSC is committed to developing a strong national presence with regard to utility issues which may affect Wyoming residents. Wyoming is unique in many circumstances, and the decisions which are made on utility industry matters for urban or densely populated regions may not be what is best for Wyoming. To enumerate Wyoming's position and concerns, the PSC participates in the work of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), the Western Conference of Public Service Commissioners (WCPSC), the US WEST Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) and other national organizations. During FY98, the PSC devoted 409 person-hours to the work of NARUC at committee and subcommittee meetings. In addition, the PSC spends considerable time working on national matters in preparation for the meetings of this association. Further, the PSC spent 15 person-days participating in WCPSC and its work. Finally, the PSC devoted 12 person-days to the work of ROC. (Strategy E.1)

Another effective way for the PSC to represent Wyoming's interest on a national scale is to respond to

proposed federal rate and/or rule-making proceedings at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). During FY98, the PSC filed with the FCC four individual petitions for reconsideration or comments concerning various matters having a direct impact on Wyoming. In addition, the PSC was active in two additional matters at the FERC and one additional matter before the Western Area Power Administration. Finally, the PSC has been active in national FERC policy issues through the work of NARUC concerning the potential actions of Congress and the FERC regarding restructuring and competition in the electric industry. (Strategy E.2)

Executive Order 1990-4 gave the PSC responsibility for the administration of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Transportation Safety Program (WIPP) which governs the safe transportation through Wyoming of transuranic nuclear waste destined for storage in Carlsbad, N.M. From July 1, 1997, through December 31, 1997, the PSC accomplished all the necessary accounting transactions in fulfillment of its responsibility under Executive Order 1990-4 and a contract with the Western Governor's Association and the U.S. Department of Energy. Effective January 1, 1998, responsibility for the grant in Wyoming was transferred by direction of the governor to the Wyoming Emergency Management Agency (WEMA). During the six-month time period from July 1, 1997, through December 31, 1997, there were three meetings of the Nuclear Waste Working Group held, and there were no radiological materials transportation accidents to be reviewed. Much time was spent in planning for transportation exercises and the smooth transition of the program from the PSC to WEMA. (Strategy F.1 and F.2)

• Strategic plan changes

Due to the governor's reassignment of the administration of the WIPP Program from the PSC to WEMA effective January 1, 1998, the PSC has eliminated Objective F from its strategic plan which was the administration of the state's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) grant. All other elements of the PSC's strategic plan remain unchanged.

Public Service Commission organization chart

