

# 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 that 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 competitive environment, the mission of the PSC will continue to expand in 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 transition from traditional rate of return regulation to a more competitive utility environment is smooth and efficient and that the benefits of competitive industry developments are made equally and equitably available to all utility customers.

## ❖ *Results of outcomes*

During FY00, the PSC received and docketed a total of 874 utility filings and applications (an increase of 3.4 percent from the previous year). The PSC decided by final written order 125 certificates for authority to serve; nine general rate case matters; 30 commodity cost changes (pass-on increases from wholesale suppliers); 141 rule, regulation and tariff cases; nine securities issuances and other financial matters; five formal complaints resulting in orders; 28 PSC investigations; six general orders; and 45 contract cases. In addition, the PSC issued 563 letters accepting the registrations and rate schedules of interexchange telecommunications resellers, 67 of which were new registrations to do business in Wyoming. Each of the PSC orders was issued on or before the applicable statutory deadline.

The PSC Consumer Advocate staff is authorized by statute at the discretion of the commission to act as a party in utility proceedings and promote the best interest of the residents of Wyoming. During FY00, the Consumer Advocate staff intervened and presented public interest testimony in five general rate case hearings, including the PacifiCorp general rate case and Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power gas and electric general rate cases. In addition, the Consumer Advocate staff presented public interest testimony in the U S WEST/Qwest merger, the Cheyenne Light sale to Northern States Power and several other types of cases including rate/tariff and rule/regulation matters.

During FY00, the PSC initiated six General Order proceedings, including five sub-parts of General Order 72, which relates to aspects of the Wyoming Universal Service Fund. Pursuant to a recent Supreme Court Order, PSC

### **General information**

Agency Directors  
Steve Ellenbecker, Chairman  
Steve Furtney, Deputy Chair  
Kristin H. Lee, Commissioner

### **Agency contact**

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### **Year established or reorganized**

Established 1915; reorganized 1919, 1963, 1968 and 1991

### **Statutory references**

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

### **Number of authorized personnel**

32 full-time

### **Organizational structure**

Administration, Legal, Rates and Pricing,  
Consumer Complaints, Facilities Engineering

### **Clients served**

Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, municipal and governmental customers of public natural gas, electric, telephone and water utilities, and the regulated utilities themselves who provide service to residents of Wyoming

### **Budget information**

Utility assessment funds	\$1,998,600
Federal funds	76,095
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,074,695</b>

General Order 75-1 is a proceeding regarding the repeal of rules that require some telecommunications companies to impute rates charged to others for the use of local exchange facilities.

The PSC informs and educates Wyoming residents through consumer and utility awareness activities. In FY00, the PSC hosted the Mountain West Regional Field Hearing in Cheyenne, which was one of six regional hearings conducted around the nation to explore and encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications services. In addition, the PSC maintains an educational Internet Web site that includes access to educational brochures published by the PSC on issues such as telephone slamming, 1+ equal access and "call before you dig" utility location services. The public may also track the status of utility applications and orders through the PSC Docket Management System, which is linked to the PSC Web site.

The PSC engineering staff conducts safety, reliability and service quality investigations of regulated utilities in Wyoming. During FY00, the PSC accomplished 152 person-days of field time inspecting natural gas distribution systems, intrastate natural gas pipelines and other facilities used to provide natural gas utility service. In addition, the PSC accomplished 77 person-days of field time inspecting electrical distribution systems, electric transmission lines, substation facilities and other electric utility equipment. As a result of these inspections, the PSC issued 76 citations for natural gas safety violations and 97 citations for electrical safety violations. Also, during FY00, the PSC engineering staff reviewed and analyzed five applications for major utility facilities in Wyoming and each of them were signed and sealed by a licensed professional engineer pursuant to state law.

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 FY00 was issued on Jan. 10, 2000, and among other things, it 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 1999, 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.

During FY00, the PSC received and processed a total of 2,018 complaints, four of which resulted in hearings before the PSC. There were 353 complaints received by the PSC concerning utility service, 427 complaints regarding billing and payment, 413 complaints on rate and tariff issues, 144 complaints concerning telecommunications "slamming," 37 complaints on "cramming," 47 construction-related complaints, 37 service delay (held order) complaints, 89 complaints for disconnection of service, 25 complaints on deposits, 170 complaints regarding company

procedures, 71 complaints regarding utility attitudes, 201 complaints regarding other issues and four complaints over safety violations. There were also 218 requests for information that were not adversarial in nature. On average, the PSC Consumer Complaint Section receives and responds to more than 609 calls from the public each month.

The PSC represents Wyoming residents in national issues through a strong national presence in federal policy-making venues. Wyoming is unique in many circumstances, and the decisions that 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 U S WEST Regional Oversight Committee (ROC), the Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation (CREPC), the Gas Research Institute (GRI) and other national organizations.

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 FY00, the PSC continued to focus on telecommunications federal universal service fund issues that are critically important to Wyoming residents. The PSC filed a series of comments with the FCC that covered matters pertaining to the computation and distribution of federal universal service funds, filings describing the special circumstances in rural Wyoming and a request for reconsideration of FCC decisions. The PSC has also joined US WEST in an appeal of an FCC decision, and the PSC continues to work closely with the Rural Task Force on universal service. Finally, the PSC met several times in FY00 with the Wyoming Congressional delegation concerning the lack of appropriate federal universal service funding support for Wyoming.

The PSC has also monitored FERC proposals and mandates concerning Regional Transmission Organizations (RTO). The PSC filed comments in rule making proceedings before the FERC, and PSC personnel have attended a number of organizational meetings regarding the establishment of RTOs.

### ❖ *Strategic plan changes*

The Department of Audit reviewed the PSC Strategic Plan and issued its report on June 30, 1999. The audit report included several recommendations for improving the outcome measures used by the PSC and as a result, the PSC has significantly modified its strategic plan. The PSC goal will remain unchanged, which is to regulate public utilities as directed by state and federal law. However, measuring the outcome of this goal will be based upon the number of PSC orders that are successfully challenged in state or federal court, a comparison of Wyoming gas and

electric rates to other states in the nation and the number of people who receive support payments from the Wyoming Universal Service Fund. It will not be reasonable to compare Wyoming telephone rates to other states in the nation as a measure of success because Wyoming law has resulted in limited PSC regulatory authority over telephone rates, which are now among the highest in the nation. The revised PSC Strategic Plan is available on the PSC Web site at <http://psc.state.wy.us>.

## Public Service Commission organization chart

