

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Friday, February 29, 2008**

**Commissioners Wefald, Cramer and Clark**

**\*\*For Immediate Release\*\***

**Phone 701-328-2400**

**Commission urges Otter Tail customers to use alternate payment options  
during period of high prices**

The Public Service Commission is encouraging Otter Tail Power Co. customers to sign up for Even Monthly Payment (EMP), a billing plan that helps average out their bills. The program works by averaging a customer's usage and billing them approximately the same amount each month of the year.

The Commission has received dozens of complaints in the past few weeks because the price of electricity provided by OTP increased after an outage at one of the company's power plants. Although utilities are allowed to pass on their cost of electricity to their customers, the Commission is taking a closer look at all of the factors that lead to the sudden spike in prices.

"Enrolling in EMP reduces the sticker shock of large, unexpected increases in electricity prices like the one Otter Tail Power customers recently experienced," Wefald said. "This program can help by spreading high heating costs out over a longer period of time."

Normally, OTP does not allow customers with severely past due amounts to sign up for EMP, but OTP is relaxing this policy and will allow customers to also include their past due amounts in the EMP plan. This plan is available to both residential and commercial customers.

"We asked Otter Tail to be more sensitive to their customers during these difficult times," said Commissioner Kevin Cramer. "It's only fair that Otter Tail relaxes some of their policies to lessen the hardships people are facing."

Enrolling in EMP is not customers' only option. They can also call OTP at 1-800-257-4044 and ask for special payment arrangements if they can't pay their entire bill at once. If people are not able to negotiate a payment arrangement with the company, they can call the Commission at 701-328-2400 for help negotiating with the company.

"The Commission is here to help people who may not know how to negotiate a payment plan with utilities, or who feel they have not been treated fairly," said Commissioner Tony Clark.

Customers began calling the Commission after noticing that the Energy Adjustment portion of their bills increased to 3.5 cents a kilowatt-hour on bills issued in February. That's an increase of almost 2 cents a kilowatt-hour over bills dated in January. In December, the total energy adjustment was less than a cent. The rates are expected to remain high for three more months.

Many OTP customers were hit especially hard because they heat their homes with electricity. Some residential customers have reported using around 4,000 kilowatt-hours in January.

For more information call the Commission at 328-2400 or go to the Commission's website at [www.psc.state.nd.us](http://www.psc.state.nd.us) where information about the issue will be posted.

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