

You should know..



North Dakota Public Service Commission

Issue GO-1, Jan. 2011



About the ND Public Service Commission (PSC)

HISTORY & FUNCTION

Dakota Territory established a Board of Railroad Commissioners in 1885, with general jurisdiction over railroads, sleeping car companies, express companies, and telegraph companies. At statehood, the Constitution of ND provided for election of a Board of Railroad Commissioners with powers and duties prescribed by law. In 1940, its name was changed to Public Service Commission (PSC).

The Legislature has significantly broadened the duties of the PSC. Today, the Commission has varying degrees of jurisdiction over electric and natural gas utilities, telecommunications companies, weights and measures, grain elevators, auctioneers, reclamation of mined lands, the siting of energy plants and electric and natural gas transmission facilities, and, to a lesser degree, railroads. The Commission does not have jurisdiction over the rates of rural electric or telephone cooperatives or small telephone companies.

COMMISSIONERS

ND has three Public Service Commissioners, each elected to six-year terms. One Commissioner is up for election every two years.

The Commissioner's workload is divided among the Commissioners into portfolios to facilitate the handling of cases. Regardless of portfolio assignments, the Commissioners exercise equal authority and share equal responsibility for every decision. Present Commissioners and their portfolios are:

Kevin Cramer: administration, IT, mining, pipelines.

Tony Clark: electric generation and transmission, licensing (grain and auctioneers), railroads and weights and measures.

Brian P. Kalk: distribution utilities (retail gas and electricity), telecommunications and pipeline safety.

ORGANIZATION

The Commission has 41 full-time employees. The staff is divided into support services groups and five divisions that provide direct regulatory oversight and consumer assistance.

Executive Secretary: is appointed by the PSC to coordinate operations and communications. (Darrell Nitschke, Executive Secretary/Director of Administration)

General Counsel: The Attorney General is the Attorney for the Commission, but based on Commission recommendation appoints General Counsel to act as a legal advisor to the Commission. (Illona Jeffcoat-Sacco, General Counsel)

Accounting: administers federal grants and provides accounting, budgeting, data processing, and other support services. (Mike Diller, Director)

Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Division: administers a federal program to remove hazards and environmental problems associated with abandoned mines. It investigates AML sites, designs reclamation projects, submits applications for federal funds, and manages construction projects under public contracts. (Jim Deutsch, Director)

Licensing Division: licenses and handles complaints associated with grain elevators, grain and hay buyers, auctioneers, and auction clerks. It also helps the Commission represent ND's rail interests before federal agencies and Congress. (Sue Richter, Director)

Public Utilities Division (PUD): provides technical and administrative assistance to the Commission in regulating electric and natural gas

North Dakota Public Service Commission

Commissioners:
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utilities and telecommunications companies. It also makes recommendations on applications for the siting of energy conversion and transmission facility applications and enforcement.

This division also responds to complaints, inquiries, and requests for information about public utilities within the Commission's jurisdiction. It promotes consumer understanding of the regulatory process and facilitates public participation.

Reclamation Division: is responsible for the administration and enforcement of state law regarding surface coal mining and reclamation operations. It also administers Commission authority under the Surface Owner Protection Act.
(James Deutsch, Director)

Testing and Safety Division: promotes

a fair basis for commercial transactions by testing the accuracy of commercial weighing and measuring devices. These tests protect both buyers and sellers. It also administers the gas distribution and intrastate pipeline safety program.

(Al Moch, Director)

INQUIRIES

General correspondence may be addressed to the Executive Director. Specific inquiries may be addressed to the respective division directors.

Requests for hearing, ruling, or participation in rulemaking should be addressed to the Executive Secretary unless the public notice directs otherwise.