



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE
Jan. 25, 2022

For Immediate Release, Contact:
Julie Fedorchak, (701) 498-2859
Randy Christmann, (701) 328-4096

PSC Receives More Than 1,000 Consumer Contacts in 2021

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received more than 1,000 consumer contacts in 2021. These contacts include informal complaints against regulated entities, public input submitted as part of an open case, referrals to other agencies and/or requests for information.

Informal complaints are received and processed regarding utilities the Commission regulates, including certain aspects of telephone service, natural gas providers, and the three investor-owned electric companies in the state: Xcel, Otter Tail and MDU. Of the 1,030 contacts, 72 (7%) were informal complaints against public utility companies regulated by the Commission. Informal complaint numbers overall were slightly higher for 2021 than the previous year. The most frequent reasons for complaints are billing issues, disconnects and phone outages.

“Being accessible and responsive to North Dakota citizens is a top priority at the Commission. We have a good system in place that allows people to contact us and participate in our processes in a variety of ways,” said Commission Chair Julie Fedorchak, who holds the Consumer Affairs Portfolio. “Hearing from the public really helps us make the best, most effective decisions, so I’m really grateful to all of those who attend our meetings or contact our office throughout the year.”

In addition to recording complaints and concerns, the Commission also receives public input for cases being considered by the Commission. Public input is most often received for siting cases where the Commission is looking at permitting new transmission projects like pipelines, electric transmission lines and wind farms or for rate cases. The comments can be either in support or opposition of the project. Due to COVID-19 concerns throughout the year, the Commission used a variety of different methods to ensure everyone the ability to comment on projects, including accepting written comments and the ability for the public to call into hearings via telephone to provide comments. In 2021 there were 400 public input contacts recorded or 39 percent of the total contacts. The majority of these comments were submitted for rate cases.

“This Commission takes public input seriously,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann. “It provides us with the information we need to make the best possible decisions, so we urge North Dakotans to contact us.”

The PSC reinstated a Consumer Affairs Portfolio in 2014, which provides additional focus on consumer issues and complaints and on improving communication with the public through traditional public information channels, public meetings and social media. This is the eighth annual public contact report issued showing data and trends related to complaints and input received by the Commission. The Commission launched a new public comment tracking system in January 2020 that allows more flexibility to record comments from the public and generate statistics and reports.

When a complaint is received, a PSC staff member works as a liaison between the consumer and the company to resolve the problem within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Often, the complaint is outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and needs to be referred to another agency or the caller simply needs information. These calls are recorded as "referrals." The Commission recorded 211 referrals in 2021.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

###

Find us on Twitter: twitter.com/ndpsc or [@NDPSC](https://twitter.com/NDPSC)

Note to the Media: A summary sheet for the 2021 consumer contact report is included on the next page.

2021 Consumer Contact Report Summary by Jurisdiction

(Includes informal complaints, public input, information requests,
general comments and offsite referrals)

Jurisdiction	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Auction	3	2	1	51	84
Common Pipeline Carrier	35	0	26,088 ¹	2	1
Electric Utility	87	161	228	151	230
Gas Utility	24	29	9	14	249
Grain	3	9	11	14	0
Mining - AML	2	5	5	23	10
Mining - Reclamation	0	0	0	2	11
Safety Regulation - Railroad	10	13	35	17	25
Siting	7	4	5	204 ²	8
Telecommunications	93	44	37	51	34
Weights & Measures	11	14	8	96	167
Offsite Referral	255	209	212	194	211
Total	530	490	26639	819	1030
¹ 26,086 petition signatures for DAPL Emmons Co. Pump Station Project ² 162 Northern Divide Wind Project-Public Input					

Informal Complaints (Public Utilities)

Regulated Entity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
CenturyLink Communications, LLC	88	33	37	28	27
Dakota Natural Gas	0	0	0	0	1
Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.	11	19	12	16	11
Otter Tail Power Company	11	14	38	7	7
Xcel Energy Inc.	31	34	17	13	26
Total	141	100	104	64	72