



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Receives More Than 800 Consumer Contacts in 2023

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received 851 consumer contacts in 2023. 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.

“One of our top priorities at the Commission is to hear from the public and consumers. Hearing from the public is essential to providing input in the development of effective rules, regulations, and decisions we make,” said Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, who holds the Consumer Affairs portfolio. “The system we have in place is very effective in dealing with the day-to-day issues and concerns that arise, so we can respond accordingly.”

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 851 contacts, 73 (8.6%) were informal complaints against public utility companies regulated by the Commission. Informal complaint numbers overall were slightly lower for 2023 than the previous year. The most frequent reasons for complaints are billing issues, disconnects and phone outages. The most common billing complaints include customers wanting to investigate if their bill is correct, higher than normal bills, and payment plans to avoid disconnections.

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. Siting hearings are held in a community close to where the project is proposed to be built. The comments can be either in support or opposition of the project. In 2023 there were 172 public input contacts recorded or 20% percent of the total contacts. Public input was submitted for a variety of different cases throughout the year with the majority submitted for the Summit Carbon Solutions Pipeline Project and MDU’s Electric Rate Increase case.

"This Commission takes public input seriously," said Commission Chair 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. An annual public contact report is 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.

“Listening to and serving the public is literally in our name,” said Commissioner Julie Fedorchak. “Our staff works hard to address questions from the public and help simplify complicated utility matters. Likewise, public input has a direct impact on our decisions and helps ensure that they address, as much as possible, the concerns of North Dakota citizens.”

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 243 referrals in 2023.

This report does not include any docketed information that is part of formal cases before the Commission. During the 2021-23 biennium, there were 840 formal cases filed with the Commission.

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, 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.

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Note to the Media: A summary sheet for the 2023 consumer contact report is included on the next page.

2023 Consumer Contact Report Summary by Jurisdiction

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

Jurisdiction	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Abandoned Mine Lands	5	23	10	5	13
Auction	1	51	84	83	75
Common Pipeline Carrier	26,088 ¹	19	1	0	0
Damage Prevention	0	0	0	4	2
Electric Utility	228	316 ²	230	84	91
Gas Utility	9	14	249	134	11
Grain	11	14	0	0	0
Railroad Safety	35	17	25	26	16
Reclamation	0	2	11	0	1
Siting	5	22	8	86 ³	⁵ 226
Telecommunications	37	51	34	37	34
Weights & Measures	8	96	167	344 ⁴	139
Offsite Referral	212	194	211	224	243
Total	26639	819	1030	1027	851

¹26,086 petition signatures for DAPL Emmons Co. Pump Station Project

²162 Northern Divide Wind Project-Public Input

³47 related to Summit Carbon Solutions Pipeline Project

⁴187 related to Notices of Noncompliance

⁵180 related to Summit Carbon Solutions Pipeline Project

Informal Complaints (Public Utilities)

Regulated Entity	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
CenturyLink Communications, LLC	37	28	27	36	32
Dakota Natural Gas	0	0	1	0	0
Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.	12	16	11	12	12
Otter Tail Power Company	38	7	7	4	7
Xcel Energy Inc.	17	13	26	33	22