



Florida Public Service Commission

Consumer Bulletin

Lila A. Jaber, Chairman

EFFECTIVE COMPLAINING

At some point and time, many of us have complained about a service or a product. If you are dissatisfied with a service rendered by your utility, it is imperative that you seek assistance because the problem can't be corrected unless the company is aware that one exists.

The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) regulates the rates and services of investor-owned, electric, telephone and natural gas utilities. We also regulate privately owned water and wastewater utilities where the Board of County Commissioners has officially transferred jurisdiction to the PSC.

If you believe you are not receiving the quality service you deserve, call or write the company and explain your problem. Make sure to provide all the facts necessary to support your complaint. The utility company should investigate your complaint and give you an explanation of the action it will take. If you are dissatisfied with the utility's response or if you don't receive a response from the utility, contact the PSC.

The PSC's Division of Consumer Affairs has a group of qualified analysts to provide assistance when you call us with a question or a concern. Our complaint analysts

handle approximately 50,000 calls a year, saving Florida consumers more than \$1 million over the past six years.

When calling the PSC, make sure you have the information you provided to the utility and the utility's response to you. It will also help if you provide us with personal information, including your name, address, the name(s) of the utility, the name(s) of company personnel with whom you spoke and a brief explanation of what you would like to see happen to resolve your complaint.

Most complaints our consumer affairs division receive are resolved by mediation or in an informal manner. Normally, a resolution involves discussions with the customer, the company and a representative from the PSC. A consumer may request a formal hearing before the commission if the outcome of the informal investigation is unacceptable.

If you have questions about our process or would like more information on effective complaining, please call the PSC at **1-800-342-3552** and request a copy of our free brochures on utility education. You may also visit us at contact@psc.state.fl.us or visit our Internet home page at www.floridapsc.com.

EFFECTIVE COMPLAINING TIPS

If you are calling to file a complaint with the PSC or with any other agency or company, consider these basic guidelines or tips to plan what you will say. They will also help to expedite your complaint.

Call us. To effectively voice your complaint, you should first contact your utility for a resolution. If, after speaking with your utility, you have further questions, please call the PSC at **1-800-342-3552** and a complaint analyst will be happy to serve you. You may also visit us at contact@psc.state.fl.us or visit our Internet home page at www.floridapsc.com for more information. You may also file a complaint on-line 24 hours a day at <http://www.psc.state.fl.us/consumers/complaint/index.html>. One of our analysts will contact you after your complaint has been received by the PSC.

We can help you. Listed below are examples of the types of problems the PSC can assist you with:

- ◆ incorrect or unauthorized charges on your utility bill
- ◆ meter reading
- ◆ improper termination of your utility service
- ◆ customer deposits
- ◆ delaying connection of service
- ◆ quality of service
- ◆ billing complaints
- ◆ backbilling

Know and show what you want. Know what you want before you make your telephone call. For instance, do you want a resolution or some form of refund? Also, it helps if you know your basic rights. Consider calling the company and asking for its customer standards or customer rights policies before you consider filing a complaint.

Go to the right person. First, contact your utility customer service representative about what action you would like taken. If you can't resolve the situation with the representative, ask to speak with a supervisor.

Be business-like. You will get better results if you remain calm and avoid the temptation to take your frustration out on the person who may be able to help you. Remember, the person handling your complaint did not cause your problem, but may be able to provide a solution.

Have your facts ready. It is helpful for you to have copies of all bills, receipts, cancelled checks, letters, disconnect notices or anything else that supports your claim. If these documents are requested, be sure to send copies and not the originals.

Keep good records. If you write a letter, keep a copy of it for your records. If you file your complaint in person or by telephone, be sure to get the name of the person with whom you spoke. Keep all documents related to your complaint in a safe place.

Lila A. Jaber is the Chairman of the Florida Public Service Commission. The PSC sets the rates utility companies charge for natural gas, electric and telephone service within the state. In 35 counties, it sets the price you pay for the water you drink, if your water company is privately owned. Chairman Jaber is also a member of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and the state chair of the Federal-State Joint Conference on Advanced Telecommunications Services.