

# Public Service Commission

## ❖ *Mission and philosophy*

The mission of the Public Service Commission (PSC) is to protect the public interest of utility consumers. Because almost every Wyoming resident uses one or more utility products or services that are regulated by the PSC, including telecommunications, natural gas, electricity, water and intrastate pipeline products, it follows that the PSC serves directly or indirectly almost every Wyoming resident. As state and federal legislation and utility regulatory policy move toward a more competitive environment, the mission of the PSC will continue to focus more directly on the areas of customer education, complaint resolution and the assurance that safe, adequate and reliable utility services are delivered to consumers. More importantly, the PSC must ensure that the transition from traditional rate of return regulation to a more competitive utility environment is smooth and efficient and that the benefits of competitive industry developments are made equally and equitably available to all utility customers.

## ❖ *Results of outcomes*

During FY99, the PSC received and docketed a total of 844 utility filings and applications (an increase of 11 percent from the previous year). The PSC decided by final written order 86 certificates for authority to serve; 14 general rate case matters; 31 commodity cost changes (pass-on increases from wholesale suppliers); 173 rule, regulation and tariff cases; 13 securities issuances and other financial matters; 17 formal complaints resulting in orders; seven PSC investigations; eight general orders; and 34 contract cases. In addition, the PSC issued 288 letters accepting the registrations and rate schedules of interexchange telecommunications resellers and 68 new registrations to do business in Wyoming. Each of the PSC Orders was issued on or before the applicable deadline. (Strategy A.1)

The PSC Consumer Advocate Staff is authorized by statute at the discretion of the commission to act as a party in utility proceedings and promote the best interest of the residents of Wyoming. During FY99, the Consumer Advocate Staff intervened and presented public interest testimony in 12 general rate case hearings including the high profile PacifiCorp/Scottish Power merger, two U S WEST Price Plan cases and the United Telephone Price Plan case. In addition, the Consumer Advocate Staff presented public interest testimony in several other types of cases including rate/tariff and rule/regulation matters. (Strategy A.2)

The PSC initiated eight general orders including one new rule-making proceeding in FY99. General Order 72, 72-4, 72-5, 72-6, 72-8 and 72-10 all relate to various aspects of the Wyoming Universal Service Fund, which was established

### **General information**

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### **Year established and reorganized**

Established 1915; reorganized 1919, 1963, 1968, 1991

### **Statutory references**

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 15 of Title 37 of the Wyoming Statutes

### **Number of authorized personnel**

32 full-time

### **Organizational structure**

Administration, Legal, Rates and Pricing,  
Consumer Complaints, Facilities Engineering

### **Clients served**

Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, municipal and governmental customers of public natural gas, electric, telephone and water utilities, and the regulated utilities themselves who provide service to residents of Wyoming.

### **Budget information**

Utility assessment funds	\$2,014,293
Federal funds	74,127
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,088,420</b>

by the Wyoming Telecommunications Act of 1995. General Order 76 establishes new rules concerning telecommunications interconnection, unbundling and resale. General Order 83 relates to telecommunications subscriber carrier selection charges. (Strategy A.3)

The PSC is committed to informing Wyoming's governor and congressional delegation on a monthly basis about utility issues that affect Wyoming residents. During FY99, the PSC made 12 monthly written reports to the Governor and 11 reports to Wyoming's Congressional delegation. (Strategy B.1)

The PSC is actively involved in the legislative process and is frequently called upon by the Legislature to testify about public utility issues. In addition to the legislative meetings and presentations required for all agencies regarding budget matters, during FY99 the PSC and its staff participated in approximately 56 meetings called by the Wyoming Legislature to discuss topics of legislative interest within the jurisdiction of the commission and with respect to subjects on which the commission and its staff are informed; and with respect to these matters, the PSC and its staff participated in 100 percent of all subcommittee and working group meetings that the PSC was directed by the Legislature to attend (most generally the Joint Corporations, Elections and Political Subdivisions Interim Committee and the Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development Interim Committee) and 100 percent of the legislative committee hearings and conferences concerning pending utility matters, the PSC budget and other matters as directed by the Legislature. This does not include numerous conferences with legislators and reports prepared by the commission for the Legislature (in and out of session) regarding utility matters (Strategy B.2).

The PSC is committed to informing and educating Wyoming residents through consumer and utility awareness activities. The PSC maintains an educational Internet Web site that includes access to educational brochures published by the PSC on issues such as telephone slamming, 1+ equal access and "call before you dig" utility location services. The public may also track the status of utility applications and orders through the PSC Docket Management System, which is linked to the PSC Web site. In FY99, the PSC helped organize the Rocky Mountain Restructuring Conference in Denver, which was hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy. In addition, the PSC conducted several educational "town meetings" in Wheatland, Douglas, Guernsey and Deaver to discuss, in an informal setting, issues related to natural gas, telecommunications and the electric industry that may impact Wyoming residents (Strategy B.3).

The PSC is also committed to informing and educating its employees. During FY99, three PSC attorneys attended continuing education classes and accumulated over 43 CLE credits; four PSC employees attended the state's new employee orientation program; 21 PSC employees attended a total of 11 work-

shops/seminars on various topics; and two PSC engineers attended conferences that provided continuing education required for renewal of their professional engineering licenses. In addition, PSC employees attended each of the monthly board of directors' meetings of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association in Denver (Strategy B.4).

The PSC engineering staff conducts safety, reliability and service quality investigations of regulated utilities in Wyoming. During FY99, the PSC accomplished 150 person-days of field time inspecting natural gas distribution systems, intrastate natural gas pipelines and other facilities used to provide natural gas utility service (Strategy C.1). In addition, the PSC accomplished 78 person-days of field time inspecting electrical distribution systems, electric transmission lines, substation facilities and other electric utility equipment (Strategy C.2). As a result of these inspections, the PSC issued 835 citations for safety violations.

The PSC is required by state law to issue a report to the Governor, the Legislature and the Telecommunications Council each year regarding the status of the telecommunications industry in Wyoming. The report in FY99 was issued on Jan. 10, 1999, and among other things, it includes a description of the central office capabilities of each local service provider in Wyoming, a chronology of significant events in the telecommunications industry in 1998, a list of the regulatory actions and decisions by the PSC involving telecommunications companies, a general description of the telecommunications industry in Wyoming and the status of compliance with the Wyoming Telecommunications Act of 1995 (Strategy C.3).

The PSC engineering staff assures that the plans, drawings and specifications of major utility facilities are signed and sealed by a licensed Wyoming professional engineer pursuant to state law. During FY99, the PSC engineering staff reviewed and analyzed six applications for major utility facilities in Wyoming, and each of them were signed and sealed by a licensed professional engineer (Strategy C.4).

During FY99, the PSC received more than 8,000 calls from utility customers that resulted in the filing of 1,804 new complaints regarding billing and service issues with public utilities in Wyoming. This is an increase of more than 65 percent compared with complaints filed in FY98. Approximately 80 percent of the formal complaints filed with the PSC concern telecommunications service providers, and a significant percentage of these were related to slamming, which is the unauthorized change of a customer's long distance carrier. Each complaint received by the PSC is unique, requiring individual attention and, therefore, it is customary for some complaint issues to take longer to resolve than others. On average, the PSC resolved 50 percent of the pending customer complaints within 30 days of receipt and 90 percent of the pending complaints within 90 days (Strategy D.1).

Of the 1,804 new complaints received in FY99, 17 requested a formal hearing. The PSC held hearings and issued orders in all 17 complaint matters, which included complaints from customers against their utility service providers as well as complaints among utilities (Strategy D.2).

The PSC is committed to developing a strong national presence with regard to utility issues that may affect Wyoming residents. Wyoming is unique in many circumstances, and the decisions that are made on utility industry matters for urban or densely populated regions may not be what is best for Wyoming. To enumerate Wyoming's position and concerns, the PSC participates in the work of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), the Western Conference of Public Service Commissioners (WCPSC), the U S WEST Regional Oversight Committee (ROC), the Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation (CREPC), the Gas Research Institute (GRI) and other national organizations. During FY99, the PSC devoted 328 person-hours to the work of NARUC at committee and subcommittee meetings. In addition, the PSC spends considerable time working on national matters in preparation for the meetings of this association. Further, the PSC spent 14 person-days participating in WCPSC and its work. Finally, the PSC devoted 21 person-days to the work of ROC. (Strategy E.1)

Another effective way for the PSC to represent Wyoming's interest on a national scale is to respond to proposed federal rate and/or rule-making proceedings at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). During FY99, the PSC filed comments with the FCC concerning Truth-In-Billing, the Federal-State Joint Board decision on Universal Service, Inter-Carrier compensation and implementation of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, which all have a direct impact on Wyoming. In addition, the PSC was active at several meetings of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and the Rural Task Force in which the PSC made proposals for universal service support for local basic service rates in rural states like Wyoming. The PSC also actively participated in responding to the FERC's proposed rule making on Regional Transmission Organizations by coordinating comments through the NARUC Committee on Electricity and through direct testimony by Chairman Ellenbecker to the FERC at a regional hearing. Finally, the PSC has been active in national electric reliability policy issues through the work of the Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation. (Strategy E.2)

### ❖ *Strategic plan changes*

Only minor grammatical corrections were made to the PSC's strategic plan for 1999. The PSC goal remains: Provide for the regulation of public utilities in the State of Wyoming pursuant to W.S. §37-1-101.

## Public Service Commission organization chart

