



# Quarterly Rules

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## CONSUMER SERVICES

HOLLY TUBBS  
501-682-5868

### AUDITOR

LESA STRANGE  
501-682-5867

Glenna Hooks

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5701

*Kathy Young*

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5862

Connie Moss

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5719

Reba Barrow

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5988

Becky Tyrrell

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5863

Sherry Enoch

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5430

Aaron Mills

**REPRESENTATIVE**  
501-682-5722

### SECRETARY

BARBARA HILL  
501-682-5869

### TOLL FREE LINE

1-800-482-1164

### FAX

501-682-5882

## Purpose and Scope Rule 1.02

- A.** These Rules set forth standards for service by each utility. These Rules are intended to ensure adequate service, prevent discrimination and unfair practices, and protect both the consumers and utilities from unreasonable demands.
- B.** Any general utility service regulation, policy, procedure, rule or service application, except those approved in special contracts by this Commission that conflict with these Rules is void and unlawful, unless the utility files a formal application for an exemption and the Commission approves it. These rules are not intended to, and do not, affect or replace any

Commission-approved general service regulation, policy, procedure, rule, or service application of any utility which addresses items other than those covered in these Rules.

**C.** Unless the context otherwise requires, wherever the masculine gender is used in these Rules, it shall include the feminine gender.

**D.** Unless the context otherwise requires, wherever the singular form of a word is used in these Rules, it shall include the plural form, and wherever the plural form is used, it shall include the singular

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This is the rule that explains why we have rules and how they are to be followed. It is not uncommon in our office to explain to your customers that discrimination of any kind is NOT allowed! It does not matter if they have lived at their location for twenty years, twenty months, or twenty days, the Rules are the same for everyone.

We hear from many of you that doom and gloom overtakes some when the Public Service Commission (PSC)

is calling your office. With that in mind, I felt it was time to take a look at the Rule that explains WHY we are a part of your world. Let's start with information straight from our web site about the history of the Commission and how we came to be:

*The Arkansas Public Service Commission was created by the general Assembly, which delegated to the commission the power to regulate the service and rates of those utilities subject to its jurisdiction. The commission's primary responsibilities involve ensuring that service is safe and adequate and that rates are just and reasonable.*

If you are reading this today, you can be assured that the utility you work for is under our jurisdiction. The goals are the same for all of us. We want adequate service at reasonable rates and for your company to be paid for those services rendered!!!

Many of you tend to feel these Rules tie your hands and prevent you from achieving outcomes you view as justified. If you could spend a day with us in Consumers services, you would discover that we support the decisions you make in 80% of the calls we take.

The calls become more educational on our end. We try to explain the actions ( or lack of) that led to the situation your customer is upset about and the rule you are following that gives you the right to deny service, raise a deposit, refuse a second Deferred Payment Arrangement (DPA), etc. After we do some education, we discuss any options left for the customer. We always hope that you have already done that though.

We must ensure the action you have taken is within the rules and it is because of this that we make requests for copies of bills, work orders, test results and yes, sometimes even to listen to recorded phone calls.

When we ask for documentation, we always begin from the position that the companies we regulate **follow** the rules. That is why I ask all of you to pick up the phone and call us when in doubt.

Many times if given a clear understanding of the situation, we can direct you to a rule that will help you stay within regulation and still obtain the outcome you are trying to achieve. That doesn't mean customers are always happy with the rule applied, and many times educating them is hard because they have made up their mind that ALL of us are wrong.

When there is nothing that either of us can do to satisfy the customer, we must offer them the option of filing a “formal complaint”. In this situation, they are unhappy with the company, but they are also unhappy with us for supporting your decision.

All of us in this office know that if a complaint goes to a formal hearing, we must have the documentation to back up our findings. We do not ask for these things to make your life harder; we do it to ensure that the rules you are governed by are being followed, and the decision you made (and we concurred with) relied on facts that support the rule applied to those facts!

It is always better to resolve a complaint without a formal hearing, but the option must be given. We always tell them that we have made a thorough examination of company actions to ensure the rules have been followed. If they wish to file the formal, they understand that both the reasoning behind the company’s actions and our review will be presented at the hearing.

The only position we take is in support of the rules you are bound by and the policies that you have for your company. You might be surprised to know that many of your customers believe we work for you!

Of course you have discretion to make exceptions in some circumstances. You **MUST** use that discretion with all customers who have the same set of circumstances.

If you want a pre-approved exemption from a certain rule, looking through other companies' exemptions might be very helpful. For instance, the gradual escalation of deposit amounts Entergy first requested and was granted is now an exemption that many of you use. Or the one in which you **CAN** transfer old debt from one customer to another with their permission. We are not opposed to exemptions.

The next time we have to make a call to research a situation, I hope this description has given you a better understanding of the “**WHY**” behind the call and request!

# Melting pot **Melting pot**

Our office gets a large number of calls from many customers who say they were promised a “call back” from their utility company that never happened.

Please review your company policy that addresses this issue and ensure you are following your procedures on communication with ratepayers. A little customer service goes a long way, and getting on top of the customer complaint could mean that they never contact us.

As I end this Spring Newsletter we are trudging through five inches of snow in Little Rock! Mother Nature has a mind of her own this year. Review Rule 7.07 and follow the reporting procedures for outages and until the next newsletter, stay warm and safe!

# That's All Folks! **That's All Folks!**