



April 2018

The formal utility complaint

If you have contacted the company to resolve a utility problem but continue to disagree with the company’s decision, you may contact the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) staff for help. Should you remain dissatisfied, even after the staff has completed its review of the situation, you may consider filing a formal complaint with the MPSC.¹ MPSC’s Administrative Rules provide specific instructions regarding the formal complaint and hearing process.² The information provided below is not to be construed as legal advice.

Filing a formal utility complaint and requesting a hearing

To request a formal hearing, prepare a letter of complaint explaining the problem. Then send the original and three copies of the letter/complaint to the Commission at the following address:

**Executive Secretary
MPSC
P.O. Box 30221
Lansing, MI 48909**

The written complaint must contain the following information:¹

- your name, address, telephone number, and signature;
- the name and address of the utility company with whom there is a disagreement;
- the location/address of the disputed action(s);
- the time and dates of the disputed action(s);
- a description of exactly what happened – include all details, names and addresses of any persons involved, disputed charges and costs;

- a statement of what you want done about the matter.

Next action

When the MPSC receives a written request a hearing and a summary of the problem, its legal staff will review it to determine that required standards have been met. If it meets the standards, the MPSC sends a copy of it to the utility company, asking for an answer, and sets a date for hearing. You and the utility company will receive notice by mail of the time and place of the hearing.

Hearing process

A formal utility complaint hearing is heard in a trial-like proceeding. This means that you, the utility company, and MPSC staff will come before an administrative law judge.

You must prove your case. A formal complaint proceeding is separate from any informal proceeding related to the problem that may have taken place. Lawyers always

represent the utility company. You may hire a lawyer, represent yourself (excluding some businesses), or bring anyone you want to help you. The MPSC cannot provide you a lawyer or pay any legal fees.

MPSC staff may also become involved in the formal hearing by taking a staff position on the issue(s).

After the hearing has ended, the judge will recommend a decision to the Commission. The Commission will then review the hearing record and issue its decision. Also, the Commission will review any proposed settlement(s) filed before an order is issued. Appeals of Commission decisions must be made in the appropriate court within 30 days after the decision.

Common Problems and Results

The most common residential customer problem reported to the MPSC involves a bill from the utility company that

seems too high. This problem sometimes means that the utility company may have estimated the bills. Other common problems are related to service, installation of utility equipment, and the rules that govern the utility company.

The MPSC may allow certain kinds of relief. For example, it can order that your account be credited, direct the company to repair equipment, or require the removal of certain charges.

The MPSC does not have the authority to award you money for injury or for damage to your property. For example, if a storm causes a break in service, the MPSC cannot order a utility company to repay you for spoiled food. Your homeowners insurance or a court of law must address this type of claim.

¹Mich Admin Code R 792.10441

²Mich Admin Code R 792.10401-792.10448