



Public Service Commission Chairman Lane's Column



April 27, 2020

Joining the Fight Against the Coronavirus

By Charlotte R. Lane, Chairman, Public Service Commission of West Virginia

The Public Service Commission of West Virginia takes its role during the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously and has taken many steps to keep our citizens and our employees safe. The Commission acted early, urging all utility companies operating in the state to suspend utility service terminations except where necessary as a matter of safety or where requested by the customer. It was gratifying to see utilities throughout the state comply with this request; putting the needs of their customers first during these difficult days.

The Commission sent out the *PSC Pandemic Preparedness Guide* to every utility doing business in West Virginia. It was written to address the needs of public utilities, but many of the recommendations also apply to other businesses. It is posted on the PSC website at www.psc.state.wv.us.

The Commission has extended all Administrative Law Judge due dates in cases not subject to statutory deadlines by two months in order to comply with the Governor's stay at home order and give parties an opportunity to fully participate in Commission cases. The Commission has also temporarily waived requirements that electric, gas and water utilities perform readings of meters located inside homes that require manual meter reads.

Concerned that trash collectors would be spread thin because of employee absences, the Commission temporarily waived the requirement that trash collectors pick up bulky goods, which involves additional collection trips and the use of special equipment. The Commission also authorized those who hand-collect waste to limit collection to waste placed in closed bags. The focus at this time must be on the regular and timely collection of general household waste and the safety of the workers.

In order to observe good social distancing practices and limit the number of people visiting the PSC headquarters, the Commission is allowing and encouraging online filings during this time. We continue to work every day to serve the people of West Virginia by processing cases, assisting customers with problems and patrolling the state highways looking for overweight and dangerous trucks and buses. If you are having a problem or question concerning a regulated utility, the Commission's Consumer Affairs Technicians stand ready to assist. You can reach them at our toll-free number 1-800-642-8544. The Public Service Commission stands ready to serve West Virginia's citizens during this pandemic and always.

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