



Public Service Commission Chairman Lane's Column



June 8, 2020

Thanking Some Unsung Heroes During the Pandemic

There is a group of workers who have continued to report to work during the Covid-19 Pandemic that we have not heard much about. They were designated as essential personnel by the Department of Homeland Security and we all rely on and enjoy the benefits of their labor all day, every day. I am referring to utility field personnel. I would like to take the opportunity in this column to recognize and thank them for their sacrifices, service and contributions.

We have all heard of, and probably participated in, the many great gestures thanking the essential workers who keep our lives running including truck drivers, delivery people, grocery and pharmacy workers, sanitation workers and, of course, our dedicated doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. But I believe our utility field personnel deserve some special recognition and praise as well.

We can take hot showers and flush our toilets because the water is running. We are able to heat our homes and cook our meals because the gas is flowing. We are able to work from our air conditioned houses, watch TV, and use our electronic devices because the electricity is on. And we are able to use our phones because of the phone lines. We can keep our families comfortable, fed, and working because of the hidden utility workers that keep these services on line and running.

The field employees of our utility companies who are running the natural gas compressor stations, the water and wastewater plants, maintaining and clearing the electric and cable lines and performing many other jobs have not had the luxury of working from home during this pandemic. They are out there; often in close proximity to people they don't know.

We tend to forget about these essential workers. Each and every one of them that leaves their home every day to make sure our utility services are working are unsung heroes that deserve the same "thank yous" as grocery workers and truck drivers. Worldwide pandemic or not, we still need them to investigate the smell of gas, fix water and sewer leaks and make sure the lights work, ensuring the safety and comfort of the rest of us who can stay home and be safe.

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