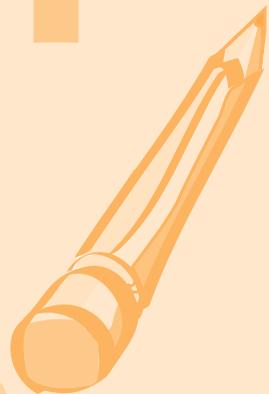


Tips for Making a Complaint



Act quickly. Report a problem right away.

Talk to someone in a position to help you. Ask to speak with the person in charge of handling consumer complaints.

Speak calmly. Clearly state the problem you are experiencing. Be prepared to give the name and address as they appear on the utility bill, and the utility account number.

Document every step. Keep records of telephone calls and letters. Write down the full name of every person you talk with. Keep copies of bills, notices, cancelled checks and receipts that relate to the dispute.

Tips

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About The Maryland Office of People's Counsel

The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) is an independent state agency that represents residential consumers of natural gas, electricity, telephone, water and transportation services before the Public Service Commission, certain federal agencies and the courts.

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How to make
a complaint
about your

LOCAL UTILITY SERVICE



A consumer's
guide from the
**Maryland
People's Counsel**

Consumers sometimes have disputes with their electricity, natural gas, local telephone or private water utility

Meter reading – a utility company is not reading your meter or is reading your meter incorrectly.

Disputed bill – you are charged for utility service that you do not think you have used, or your utility is attempting to hold you responsible for a bill that is not in your name.

Unaffordable bill – you are unable to pay your utility bill or bills on time.

Denial of service – a utility company refuses to provide service to you when you apply for that service, or requires a large deposit before they will turn on your service.

Termination – a utility company has sent you a shut-off notice or has turned off your utility service.

To start the process:

If you have a dispute with your local utility company concerning your bill, denial of a service application or service termination, you should first contact the utility to register your concerns.

If you are not able to solve the problem with your utility and wish to file a complaint, contact the Maryland Public Service Commission's Office of External Relations:

410-767-8028

Toll free 1-800-492-0474

web site www.psc.state.md.us/psc

Did you know...

If you suspect that your meter is not registering your usage correctly, you have the right to request that the utility test your meter for accuracy.

A utility may not shut off your service for the disputed portion of a bill while your complaint is being investigated.

You can request that a utility allow you to pay any deposit over \$50 in installments.

A utility company may not shut off service to your home if an occupant has a serious illness and/or is using life support equipment, if disconnecting the utility service will aggravate the condition. To prevent the service termination, you must send a written certification from a doctor about the condition to the utility.

Dispute Procedures

1. Contact the utility company to explain your concerns.
2. If you cannot resolve the dispute with your utility, call the Office of External Relations at the Public Service Commission or visit their web site to file a complaint within seven days of the utility's response.
5. If the Office of External Relations believes that your complaint has been satisfactorily resolved, you will be advised that no further action will be taken and that the file will be closed unless you request further review.
6. You have the right to appeal the decision of the Utility Affairs Specialist and request further review by the Assistant Manager of External Relations within 10 days of receiving the written disposition. You must include in your appeal an explanation of the need for further review, the action or relief requested and any new information.

The Office of External Relations may take your complaint over the telephone or ask you to submit a written complaint.

The Office of People's Counsel recommends that you always file your complaint in writing.

3. The Public Service Commission will assign your complaint to a Utility Affairs Specialist. The Utility Affairs Specialist will investigate your complaint, obtain information from the utility, review applicable laws, regulations and tariffs, and may request further information from you.
4. Once the Utility Affairs Specialist has thoroughly reviewed your complaint, he or she will provide you with a written disposition, or summary, of the findings and conclusions concerning your dispute.
7. The Assistant Manager will review the file, investigate further if necessary, and may schedule an informal conference to try to resolve the dispute. If you are unhappy with the Assistant Manager's decision, you have the right to appeal to the Public Service Commission and request a hearing.

You can contact the Maryland Office of People's Counsel if you have questions about the law, regulations, or process for filing consumer complaints.