

MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



*Utility Consumer Complaints
2013 Semi-Annual Review*

The Consumer Assistance Program is located within the Legal Division of the Montana Public Service Commission. The program consists of one program manager, one consumer representative, and one half-time compliance specialist.

In addition to processing complaints and inquiries received by the Public Service Commission, staff in the Consumer Assistance Program also participate in formal dockets that have consumer impact, attend National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI) teleseminars, attend National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) webcasts, participate in State National Action Plan (SNAP) and National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) conference calls and meetings, participate on boards and committees that have utility consumer impact, and monitor activity both at the state and federal level to keep informed of issues that affect Montana consumers.

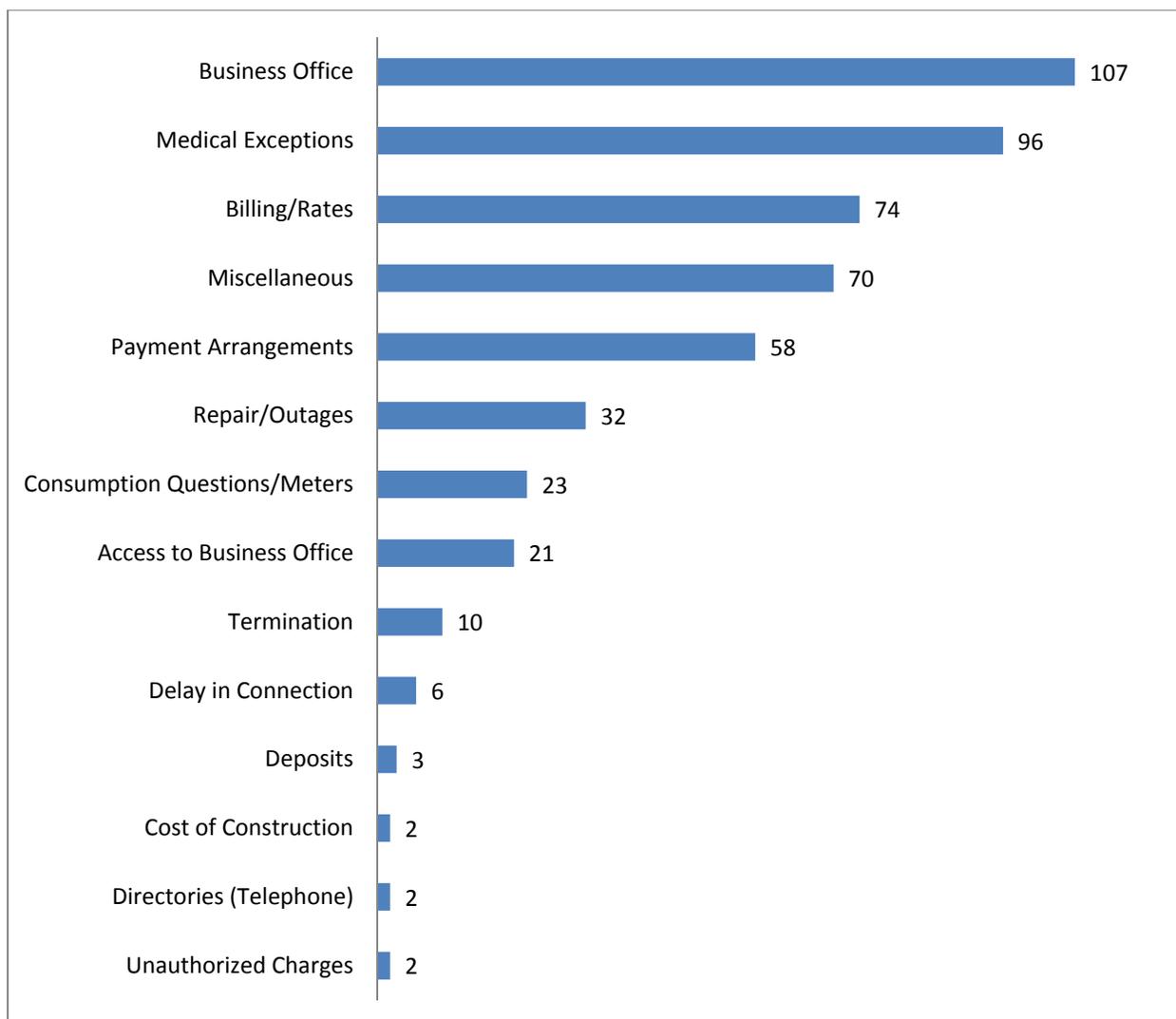
During the first half of 2013, incoming calls to the toll-free complaint line totalled 2624. Consumers are also able to contact our office by other means, including using the online complaint form on our website (55 complaints were received using this method), direct e-mail to a staff person (8 complaints), US postal service (36 complaints), and walk-ins (3 complaints). Of the 2726 documented contacts made to this office through the end of June, 506 resulted in complaints being entered into the tracking database; 282 were regarding energy (this total includes 96 requests from NWE to proceed with disconnect on an account noted with a medical exception), 151 were regarding telecommunications, 69 were miscellaneous, and 4 were water/sewer.

If staff contacts a utility company to attempt resolution of a consumer's issue, the matter is entered into our tracking database and is considered a complaint for reporting purposes. If an inquiry comes in that doesn't require utility company contact but does require research and response it is entered into the database as a "miscellaneous" contact for tracking purposes. If an inquiry can be answered without utility contact or research it is not entered into the tracking database.

The reports that follow provide a further analysis of the calls and complaints received by the Consumer Assistance Program staff in the first half of 2013.

---Tina Shorten, Manager
Consumer Assistance Program

January – June 2013 Complaints by Category Total 506



Explanation of top five categories:

Business Office: Company personnel, misinformation, anything that doesn't fit elsewhere

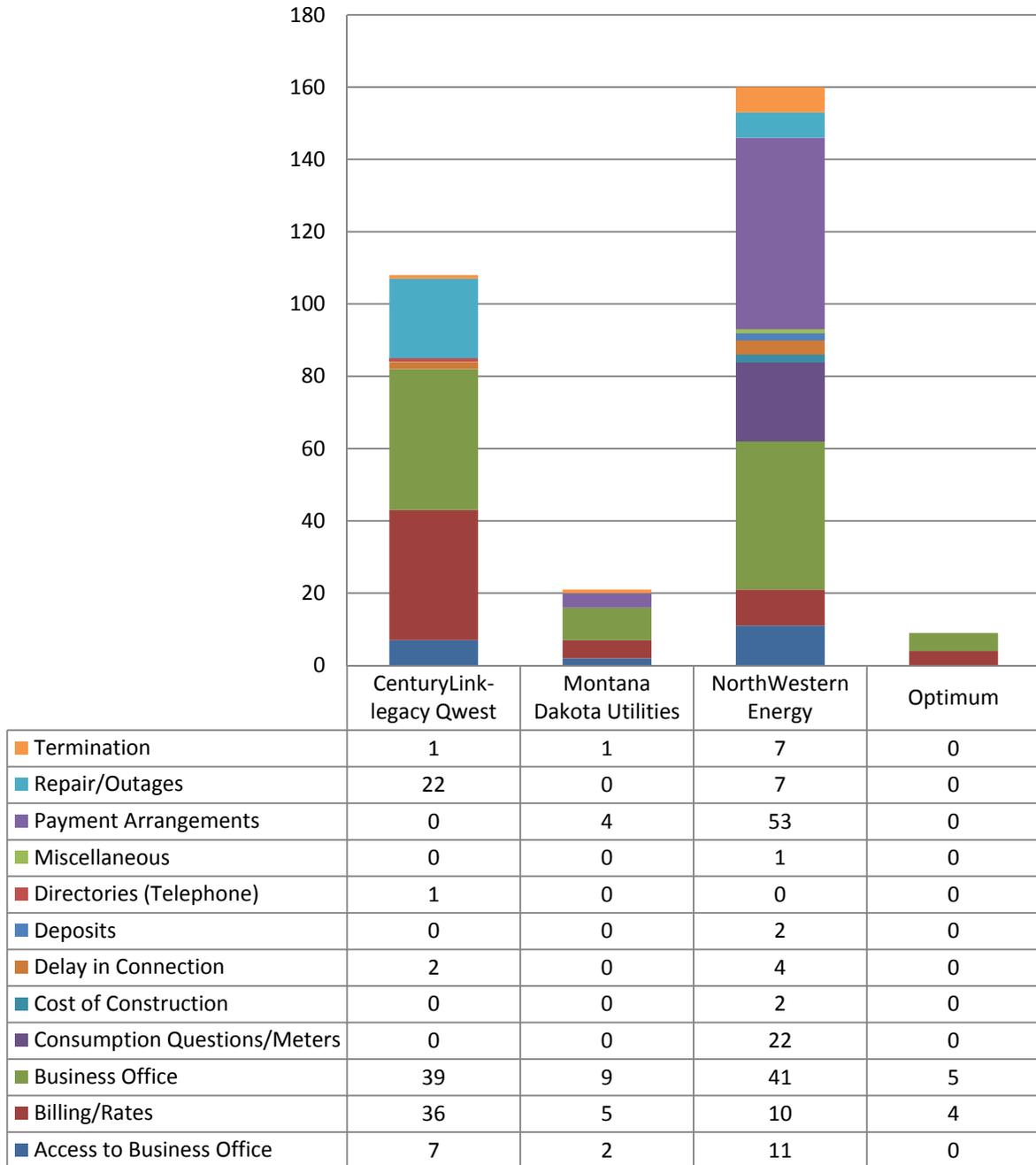
Medical Exceptions: Requests from a utility company to proceed with disconnect on an account noted with a medical exception

Billing/Rates: Incorrect billing, billing questions, collect call charges, calling plans, inmate calls

Miscellaneous: Requests for information that require research and response but do not require utility contact; and referrals on non-regulated products or to a non-regulated company

Payment Arrangements: Arrangements to avoid disconnect or to get service reinstated

Breakdown by Category for Companies with Highest Complaint Volume

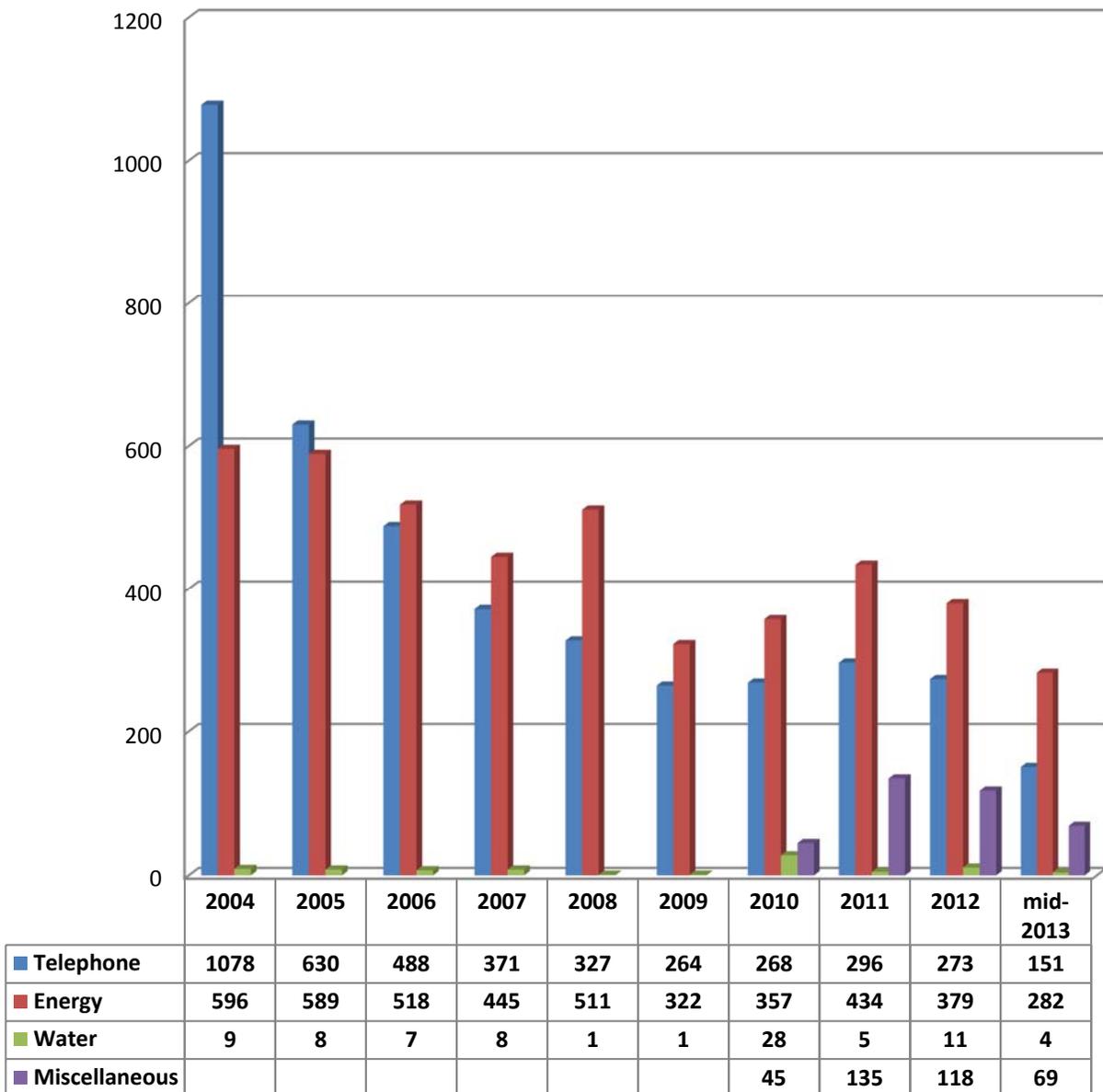


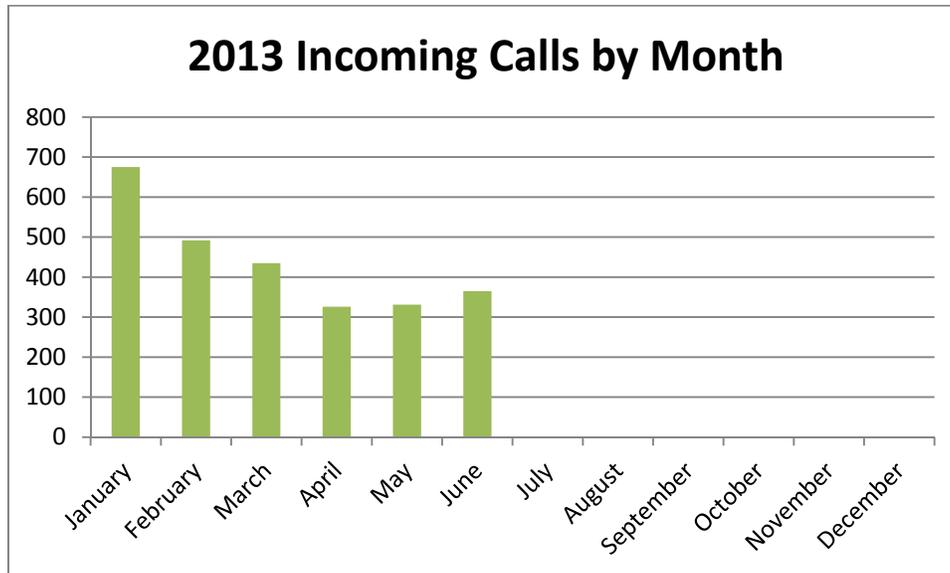
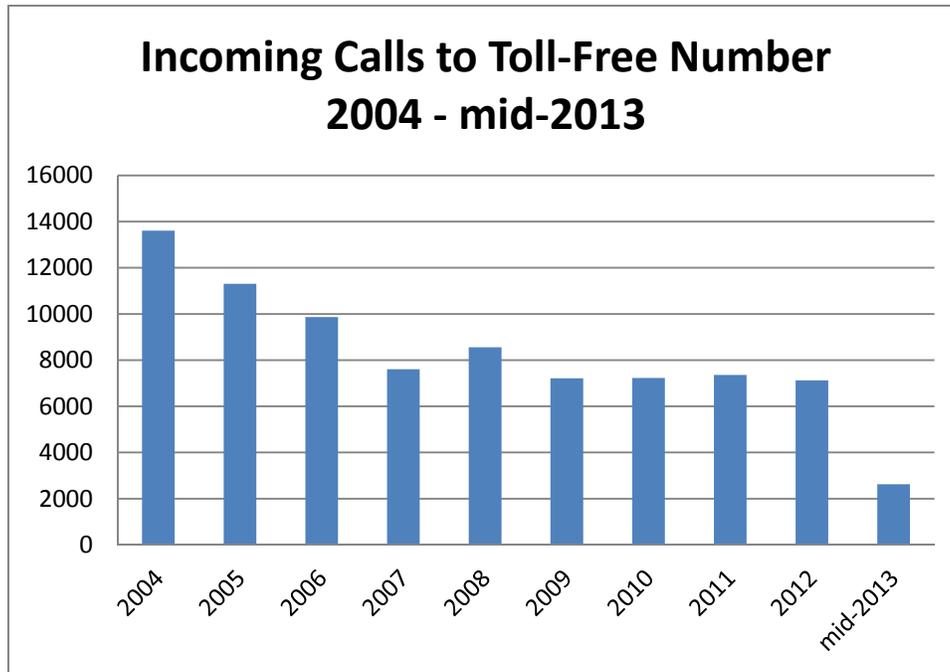
Complaint percentage when compared to total customers and/or access lines:

*Montana Dakota Utilities - .023% *CenturyLink-Legacy Qwest - .066%

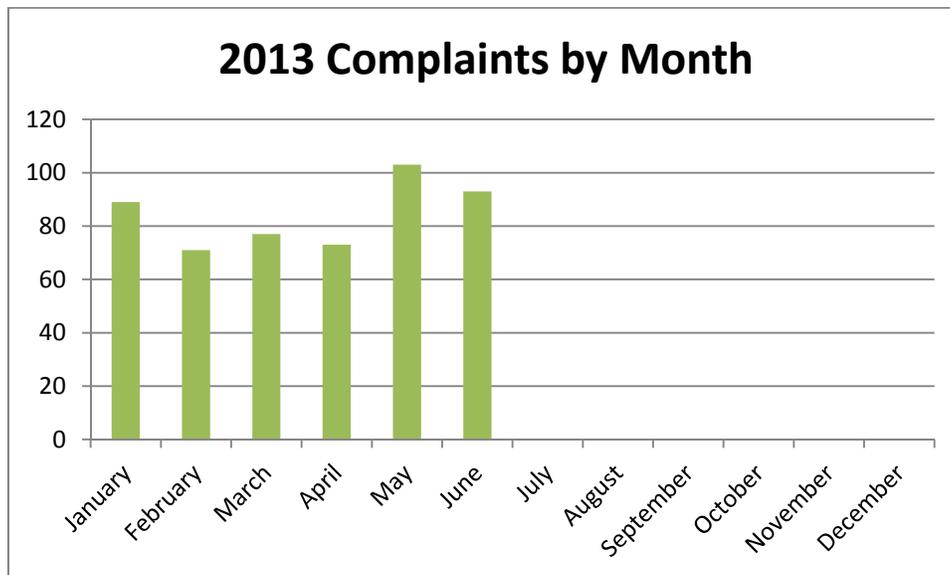
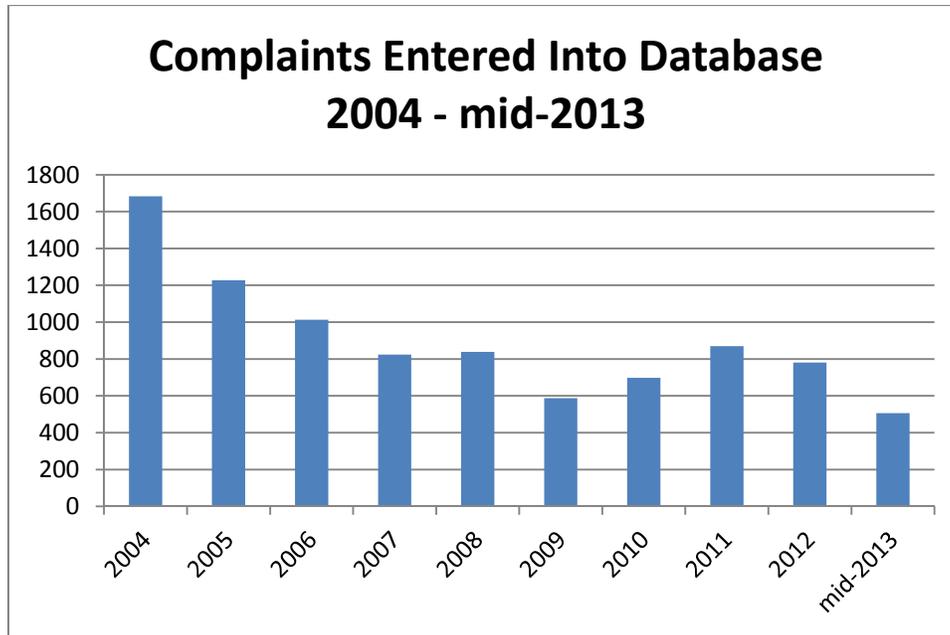
*NorthWestern Energy - .042% *Optimum - .012%

Complaints by General Service Type 2004 - mid-2013





** Actual call data for the period February 25 through March 24 was unavailable due to a software error so an average figure was used for that period.





Commissioner District 1 - Travis Kavulla
 Commissioner District 2 - Kirk Bushman
 Commissioner District 3 - Roger Koopman
 Commissioner District 4 - Bob Lake
 Commissioner District 5 - Bill Gallagher

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