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PSC TO HOLD HEARING ON PACIFIC POWER'S PLAN
FOR TRANSITION TO ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER CHOICE

The state Public Service Commission will hold a hearing on PacifiCorp's electric restructuring proposal beginning Monday, September 21, at 1 p.m., in the Remington Room of the Outlaw Inn, 1701 Highway 93 S, in Kalispell. The hearing will start at 9 a.m. at the same location on subsequent days that week.

A hearing for the convenience of the general public will be held Tuesday, September 22, at 7 p.m. at the same location in Kalispell. In addition, Commissioner Bob Rowe will conduct an informational meeting in Libby on Monday, September 21 at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 925 E. Spruce. Representatives of PacifiCorp and of the Montana Consumer Counsel, which represents residential and small business consumers before the PSC, will participate at both events.

Issues to be addressed at the hearing include PacifiCorp's plans for customer education and protection during the transition to electricity supplier choice; methods to choose electricity suppliers; a customer choice pilot program; determination of the amount and recovery of any transition costs; and the universal system benefits charge to fund low-income assistance and weatherization, renewable energy and conservation.

Another hearing will be held by the PSC in November or December to address issues that have arisen because of PacifiCorp's decision to sell its electric distribution facilities in Montana.

"Making electric supplier choice work for residential and small business customers is one of the biggest challenges the PSC has faced," according to Rowe. "To succeed, customers need to become informed and get involved. I hope to see many PacifiCorp customers at the evening meetings in Kalispell and Libby."

PacifiCorp filed its plan to restructure its electric operations in July 1997 pursuant to the Electric Utility Industry Restructuring and Customer Choice Act passed by the 1997 Montana Legislature. The law provides for deregulation of the generation and sale of electricity to Montanans while electricity transmission and distribution will remain regulated. The new law required PacifiCorp to offer its large industrial customers in Montana the opportunity to choose their electricity supplier by July of this year and to begin pilot supplier choice programs for residential and small commercial customers.

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