



Montana Public Service Commission

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PSC Evaluating NorthWestern Energy's USB Programs

The Public Service Commission (PSC) will be further evaluating NorthWestern Energy's (NWE's) bill assistance, energy conservation and related programs at a hearing July 16-17. The programs under review are paid for by the utility's customers through Universal System Benefits (USB) charges. The result of the proceeding will be the Commission's direction to NWE concerning the specific allocation of those USB funds to the various public purposes for which they were collected.

Montana law requires that utilities collect USB charges and use the funding for public purposes designated in the statute, including energy conservation, renewable resources, and low-income energy assistance. Previously the PSC has directed NWE to utilize more of their USB funds for low-income assistance programs.

"NWE collects close to \$12 million in USB funds annually. During this hearing, the PSC is gathering information to determine if NWE's distribution of the funding among their different USB programs is meeting the needs of NWE customers as well as the intent of the law," explained PSC Chairperson Greg Jergeson.

The July 16 hearing is at the PSC office, 1701 Prospect Avenue in Helena, beginning at 9 am, and continuing on the 17th if needed. It can be viewed live via the Internet at <http://psc.mt.gov/eDocs/#Calendars> and will also be archived for viewing later on the same site.

Made up of 5 elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.

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