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Public Service Commission will meet in Miles City this spring to consider MDU's request to increase rates for MT electricity customers

The Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) will meet in Miles City this spring to determine if Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU) will be allowed to increase rates for their 24,000 electricity customers in the state. The hearing was scheduled to begin February 28, but will be postponed because the company and parties in the case are near agreement, or settlement, on contested issues. The parties, known as intervenors, include the large industrial customer group and the Montana Consumer Counsel.

MDU originally requested a 13+% increase for a typical household electric customer and slightly lower increases for business customers.

During the upcoming hearing, Commissioners will hear testimony from MDU and the intervenors about the rate increase plan MDU says is necessary for investment in new energy sources, including renewables. In particular if a settlement is reached, the parties will be discussing the details of the agreement. The PSC must then either approve or reject the settlement.

PSC Chairman Bill Gallagher observed, "in rate hearings, the role of the Commission is very much like a judge at trial, we hear the evidence, apply the law, and make a decision. Just as occurs in the court system, sometimes the parties settle their issues. If that happens in this case, it is important for MDU customers to know that the PSC will reschedule a hearing, in Miles City, to review the terms of the settlement and provide opportunity for public comment to ensure that customers get safe and reliable service at fair and reasonable rates."

MDU electricity service is available in eastern Montana, including in the towns of Forsyth, Glendive, Miles City, Sidney, and Wolf Point; the company is headquartered in North Dakota.

On February 8, the Commission approved a temporary 6.28% increase in MDU electricity rates. If the Commission ultimately determines that an increase of that size is not warranted, MDU electricity customers will be awarded rebates for any overcharge plus 10.25% interest.

Detailed information related to the rate case can be found under Docket D2010.8.8 on the PSC website, <http://psc.mt.gov/>. Those wishing to submit comments about the case can do so at <http://psc.mt.gov/Consumers/comments/>. Hard copy remarks can be sent to the Commission at PO Box 202601; Helena, MT 59620-2601.

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PSC Chairman Bill Gallagher (District 5) can be reached at 406.444.6169

The counties in District 5 are *Flathead, Glacier, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Pondera, and Teton.*

PSC Vice Chairman Brad Molnar (District 2) can be reached at 406.444.6165.

The counties in District 2 are: *Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, Prairie, Rosebud, Treasure, and Yellowstone.*

PSC Commissioner Travis Kavulla (District 1) can be reached at 406.444.6166.

The counties in District 1 are: *Blaine, Cascade, Chouteau, Daniels, Dawson, Fergus, Garfield, Hill, Judith Basin, Liberty, McCone, Petroleum, Phillips, Richland, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Toole, Valley, and Wibaux.*