

Montana Public Service Commission



Brad Johnson, Chairman
Bob Lake, Vice Chairman
Roger Koopman, Commissioner
Tony O'Donnell, Commissioner
Randall Pinocci, Commissioner

March 20, 2020

Notice of Operational Changes **in Response to Coronavirus**

Whereas, the novel coronavirus ("COVID-19") constitutes a public health emergency, the Department of Public Service Regulation and the Public Service Commission ("Department") considers the health and safety of Montana public utility consumers, regulated utility employees, interested parties, and Department staff to be of paramount importance.

At a public work session on March 17, 2020, the Department held initial discussions on how to balance the Department's obligation to continue to oversee and process filings by regulated entities consistent with Montana law while ensuring the health and safety of Department employees, utility customers, utility employees, and others that interact with the Department. The Department acted to adopt measures consistent with guidance provided by local, state, and federal health care officials. In addition, the Department has been informed by regulated entities regarding steps that they are taking to protect their employees and customers.

Effective immediately, and until further notice, the following initial changes to the Department's operations and practices are established:

Business Meetings: The Department's Business Meeting for the week of March 23rd has been cancelled and the meeting for the week of March 30th will likely be cancelled or rescheduled and conducted as a remote participation business meeting. If it becomes necessary for the Department to act during these two weeks the Department will schedule an out of cycle work session and notify interested

persons through the agenda email notification list. The Department will evaluate setting subsequent work session dates as more information becomes available. During the Business Meeting on March 17th the Commission delegated authority to the Department staff to address any matters that arise in the next two weeks that require action to meet statutory deadlines, subject to review and reconsideration by the Commission.

Currently Scheduled Hearings: The Department has not cancelled any currently scheduled contested case hearings, however, the Department will be closely watching developments over the next few weeks to determine if hearings need to be rescheduled, set up as remote hearings, or adjusted as necessary.

Electronic Filings: All filings must be made electronically through the Department's case management system, EDDI. Hard copies are not required. CDs containing supporting materials, such as electronic work papers and data, must still be provided if those files are not uploaded to the EDDI system.

Consumer Assistance: The Department's Consumer Assistance Hotline will continue to be staffed during regular business hours. Please call 1-800-646-6150 and leave a voicemail message with your contact information if your call is not answered and your message will be returned as soon as possible. The Department will temporarily discontinue the process of sending a response letter to individuals that file public comments with the Department. If an email address is provided with the public comment, the Department will respond by email.

Office Closed to the Public: To help ensure the health and safety of Montana public utility consumers, utility employees, interested parties, Department employees, and the general public, the Department will be temporarily closing its office to the public and any non-employees. To date no cases of Covid-19 have been identified among the Department staff, or parties that regularly appear in front of the Department. Staff and Commissioners can still be contacted by phone, email, through the Department's website, and by mail. The Department is transitioning many of its employees to remote working situations to help ensure the continued health of its employees and to help minimize the potential spread of Covid-19 among its employees, entities that participate in proceedings in front of the Department, and the public at large. This will help ensure that the Department is available to meet the needs of the public during the upcoming weeks while minimizing the risk of disruption to agency operations.

Mail: The Department will be continuing to receive, review, and respond to mail. However, if possible, please contact the Department by the appropriate email addresses on its website for a quicker response. The Department would request that all applicants and intervenors in contested cases and litigation cases involving the Department, email those documents to the appropriate certificate of service list for that docket or legal case.