

MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



*Utility Consumer Complaints
2012 Annual Review*

During 2012, the Compliance and Public Information Bureau was restructured into the Consumer Assistance Program. 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 this office, staff in the Consumer Assistance Program also participate in formal dockets that have consumer impact, attend National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI) teleseminars, participate in State National Action Plan (SNAP) and National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) conference calls and meetings, and monitor activity both at the state and federal level to keep informed of issues that affect Montana consumers.

In 2012, incoming calls to the toll-free complaint line totalled 7124. Consumers are also able to contact our office by other means, including using the online complaint form on our website (90 complaints were received using this method), direct e-mail to a staff person (24 complaints), US postal service (82 complaints), and walk-ins (10 complaints). Of the 7330 documented contacts made to this office, 781 resulted in complaints being entered into the tracking database; 379 were regarding energy, 273 were regarding telecommunications, 118 were miscellaneous, and 11 were water/sewer.

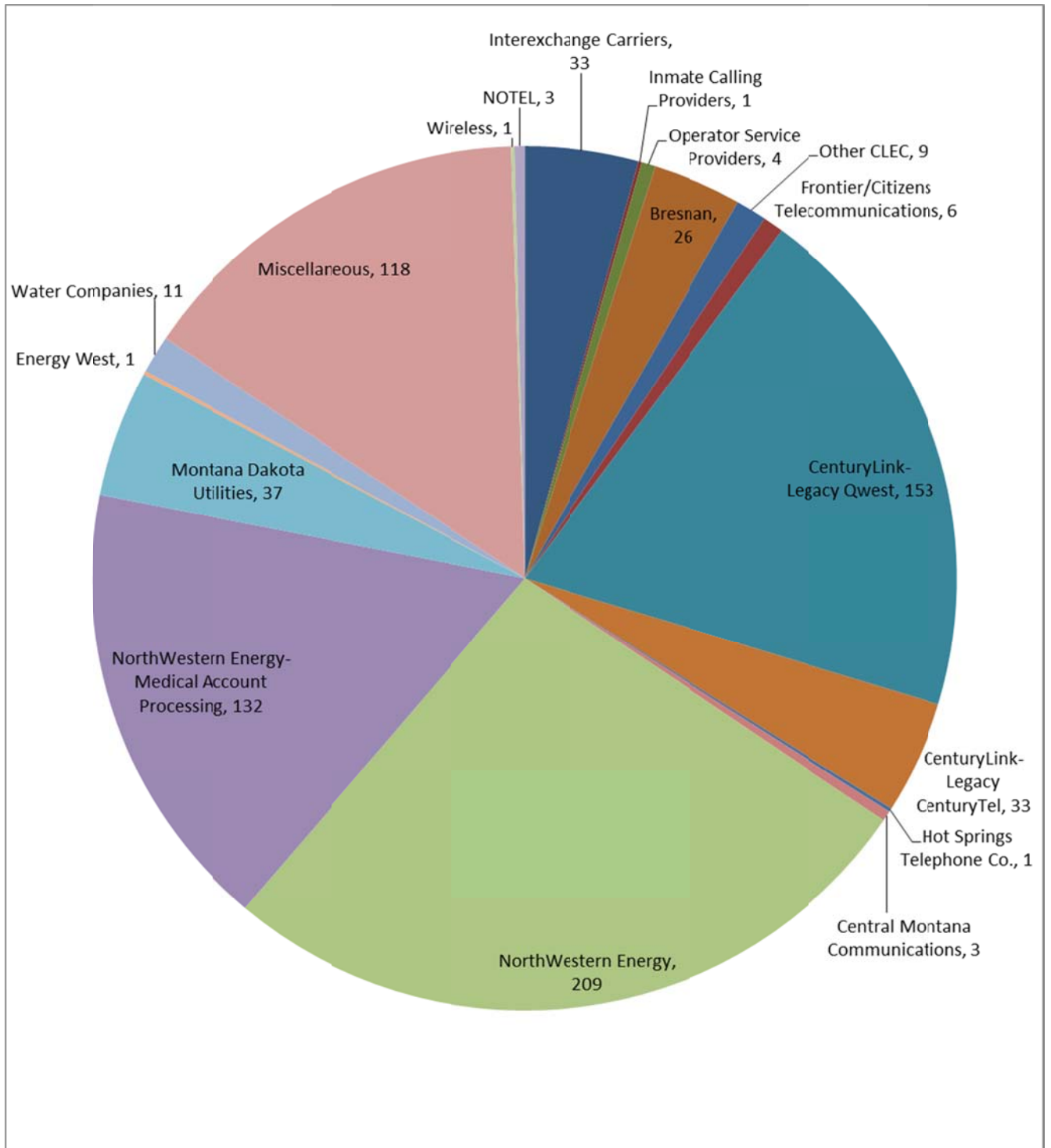
If staff contacts a utility company to attempt resolution of a consumer's issue, the matter is entered into our tracking database and is considered a complaint for reporting purposes. If an inquiry comes in that doesn't require utility company contact but does require research and response it is entered 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.

We process requests from utility companies to proceed with disconnect on medically-protected accounts. NorthWestern Energy – the only utility to submit requests in 2012 - submitted 132 requests throughout the year to disconnect medically-protected accounts. These requests were for 66 separate accounts because some account holders would resolve the issue but then would be back in the process a short time later. There is an Administrative Rule that spells out the procedure that must be followed, in addition to a Public Service Commission policy.

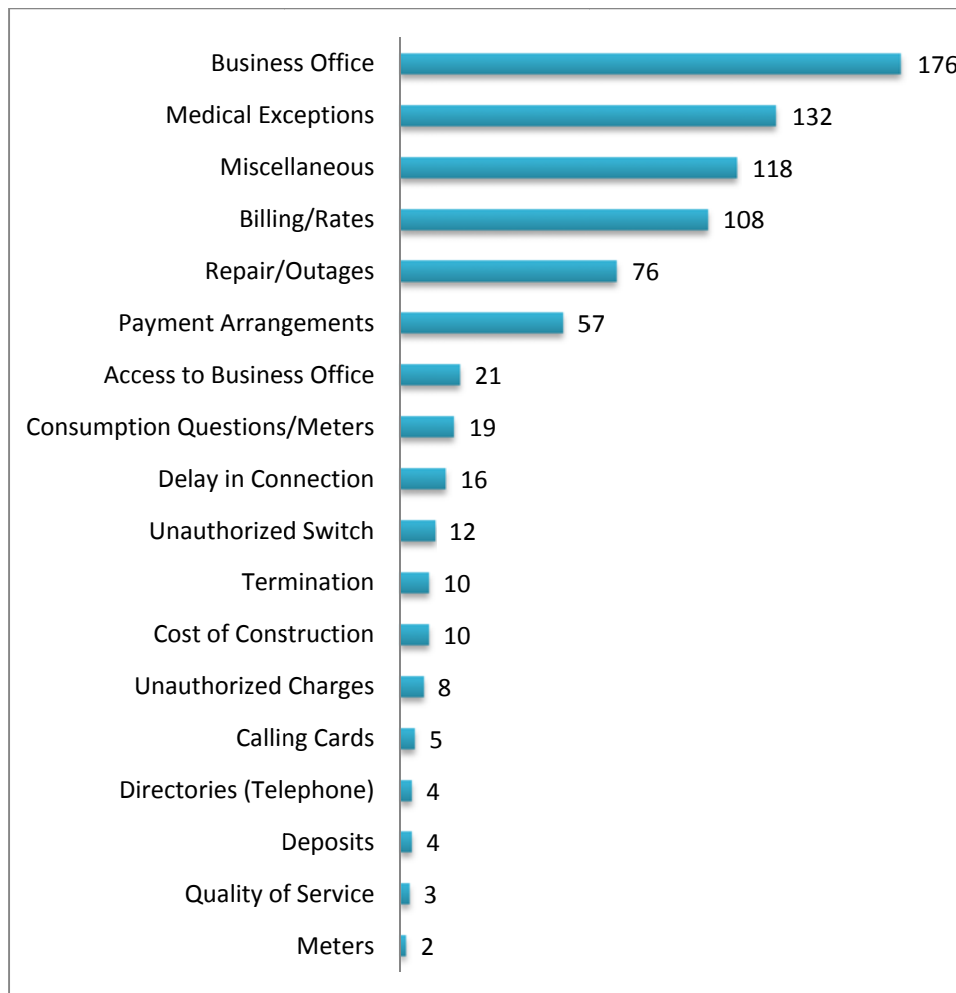
The reports that follow provide a further analysis of the calls and complaints received by the Consumer Assistance Program staff in 2012.

---- Tina Shorten

**January – December 2012
Complaints By Utility
Total – 781**



January – December 2012
Complaints By Category
Total 781



Explanation of top five categories:

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

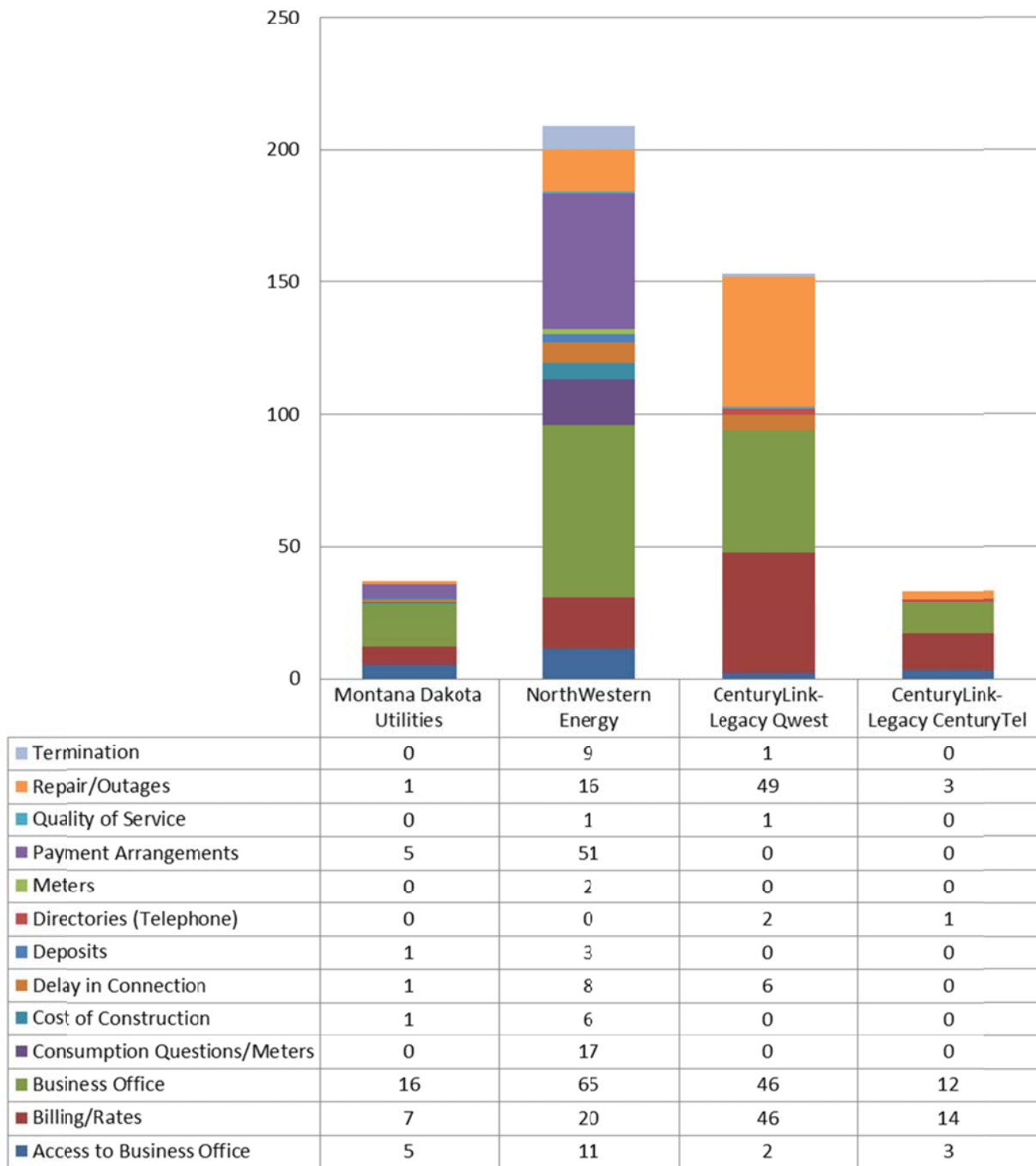
Medical Exceptions: Requests from a utility company to proceed with disconnect on a medically-protected account

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

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

Repair/Outages: Outages or repair issues

Breakdown by Category for Companies with Highest Complaint Volume

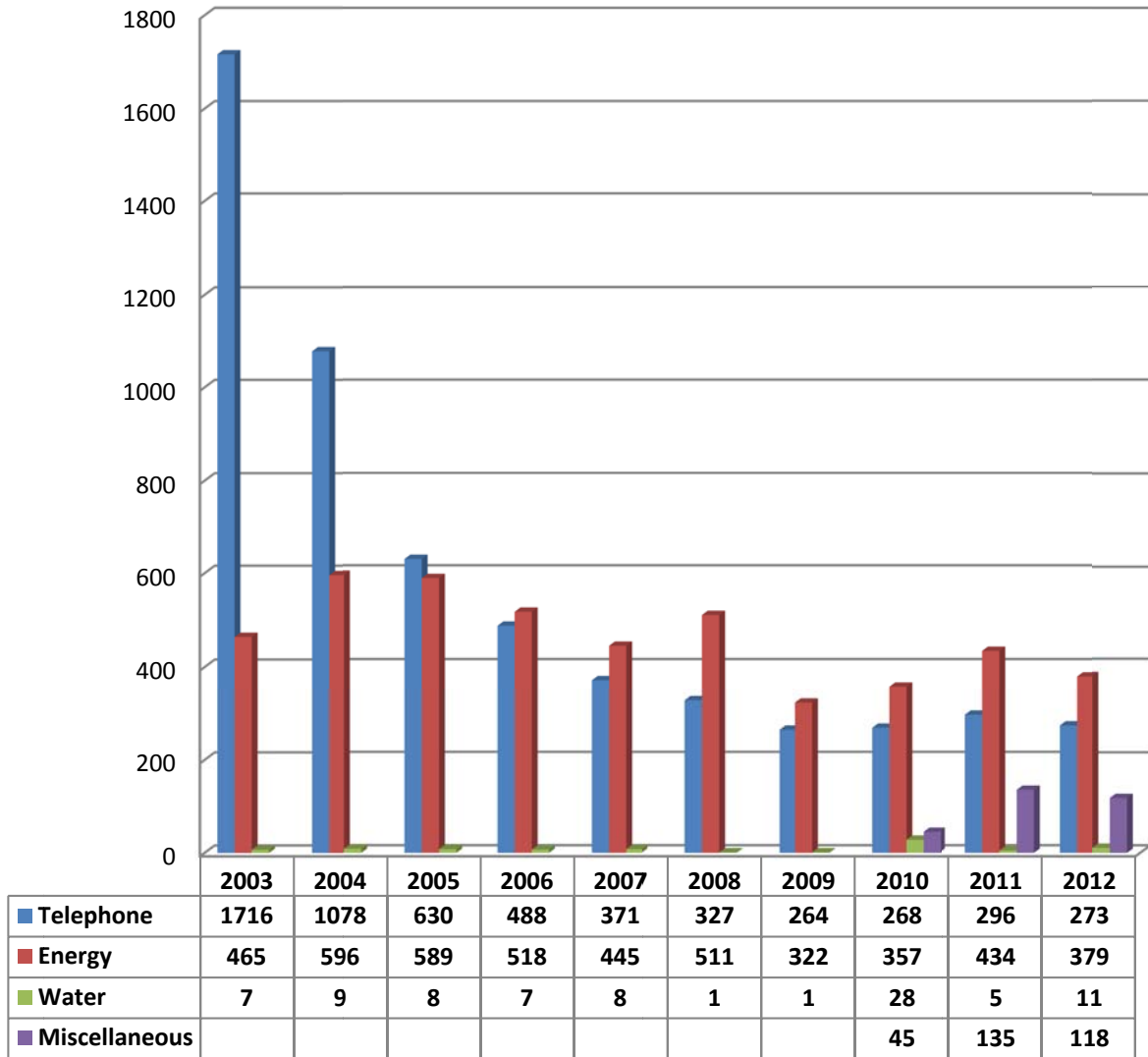


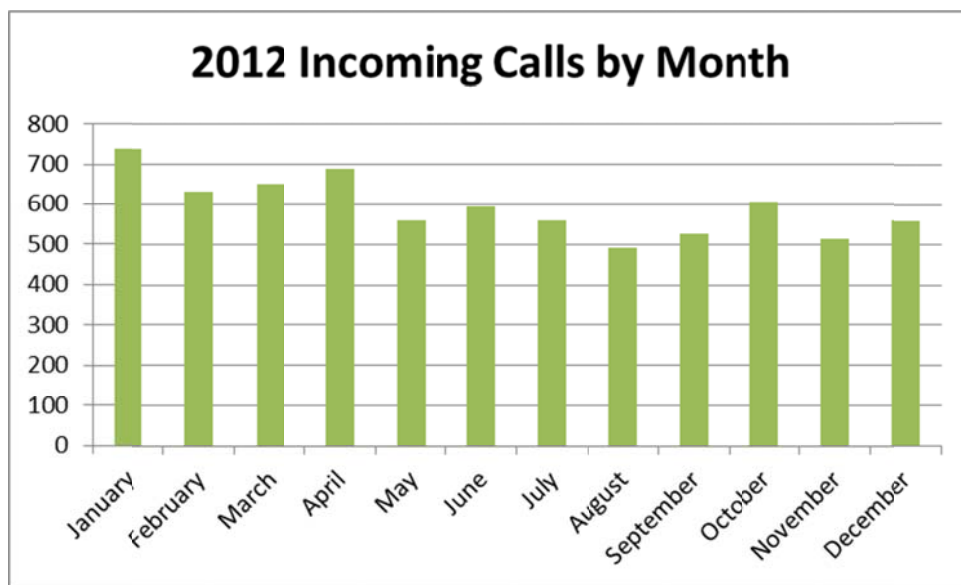
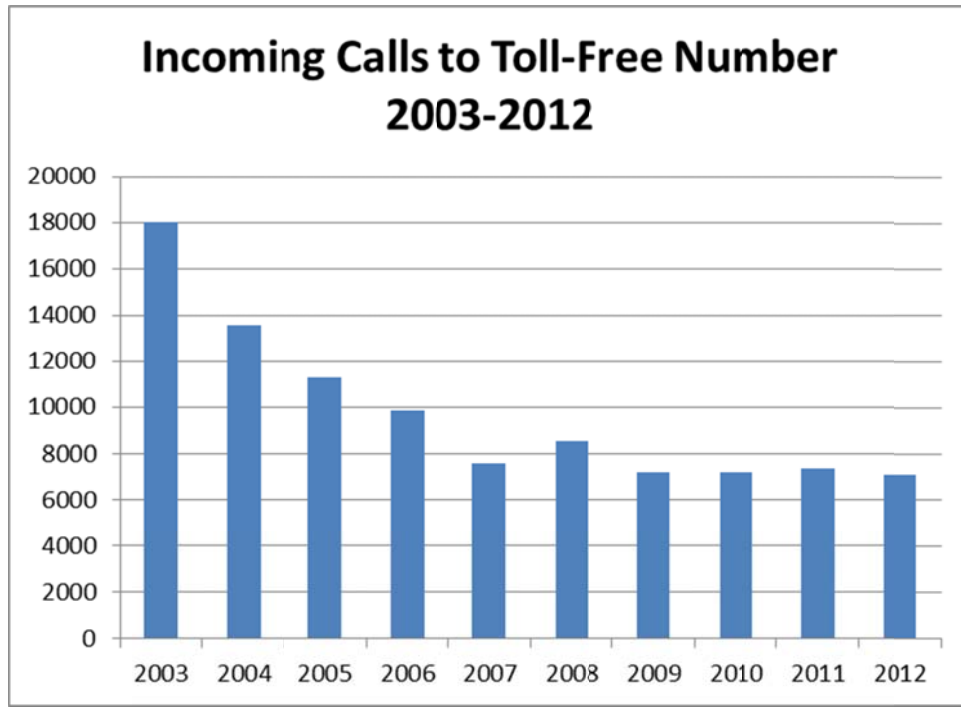
Complaint percentage when compared to total customers and/or access lines:

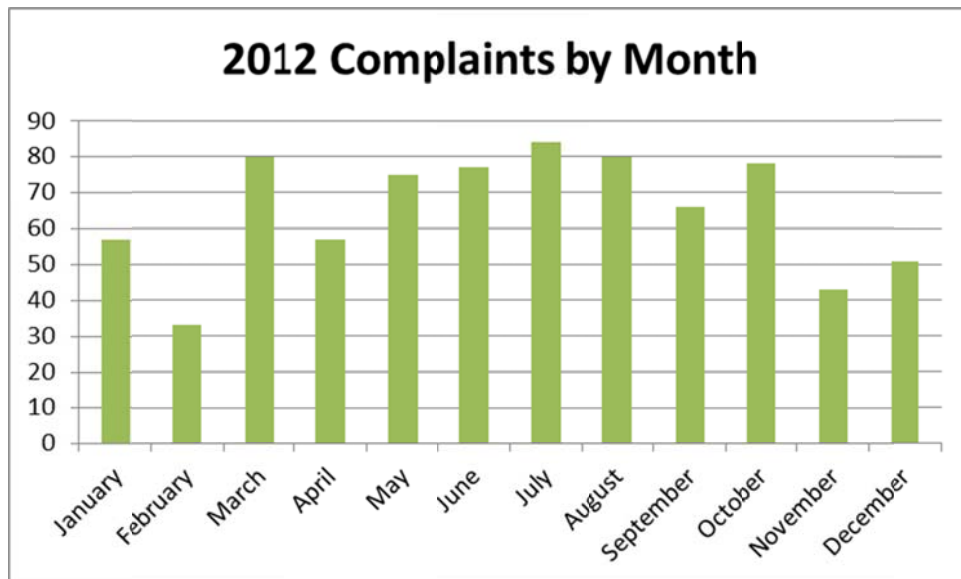
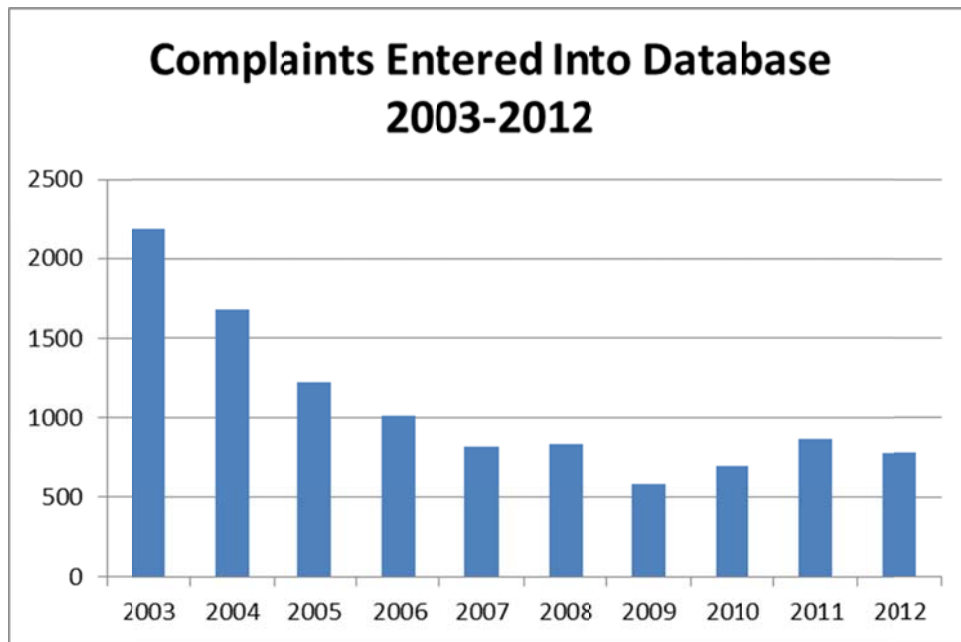
**Montana Dakota Utilities - .042% *CenturyLink-Legacy Qwest - .084%*

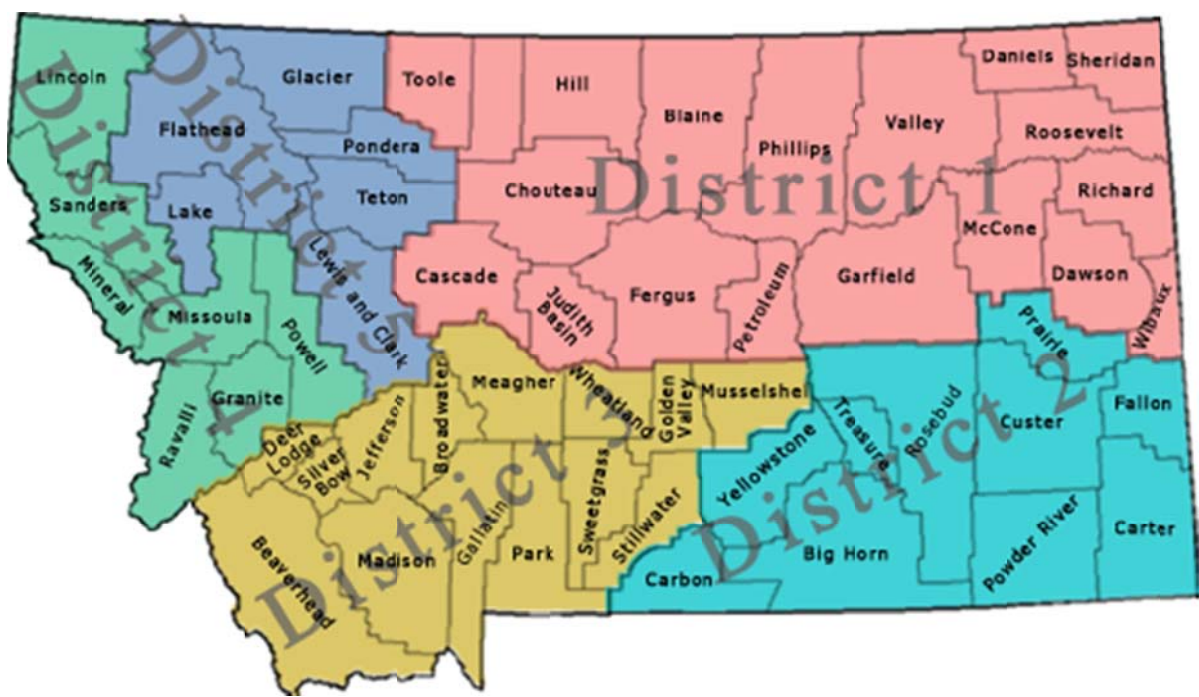
**NorthWestern Energy - .056% *CenturyLink-Legacy CenturyTel - .079%*

PSC Complaints By General Service Type 2003-2012









Montana Public Service Commission
1701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 202601
Helena MT 59620

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

(406) 444-6199 main phone number
(800) 646-6150 toll-free phone number
(406) 444-7618 fax number

PSC website: www.psc.mt.gov
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