

May 20, 2020



**FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE**



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey

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Practice Electrical Safety While Practicing Safe Distancing

May is **National Electrical Safety Month** across the U.S. and there is no better time than now to educate consumers about the actions and devices that make a home safe, secure, and energy efficient. As we continue to work from home, school from home and physically distance from others, please take steps to avoid electrically-related fatalities, injuries, and property loss.

Despite the loosening of business restrictions across the state, the Governor's safer-at-home order remains in place until May 25. In addition, Mississippi's State of Emergency Proclamation and the United States' nationwide State of Emergency Declaration due to the COVID-19 pandemic remain in place. Because of these declarations, many people will continue to work from home or shelter-in-place for the foreseeable future.

Working From Home

For these folks, that may mean bringing things like monitors, printers, shredders, Wi-Fi hotspots, and more from the office to your home. *To maintain a safe work area while at home, follow these electrical safety tips:*

- Avoid overloading wall outlets;
- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis;
- If using an extension cord, inspect it for damage, make sure it is not a tripping hazard, but don't run it under carpets or rugs either;
- Never use an extension cord to power a space heater;
- Keep papers away from heat sources;
- Unplug office equipment when not in use (this saves energy and money as well!).



Wherever you work, it's always important to be safe. Increase your awareness of electrical hazards and improve safety - whether you are at your home office or at a place of business. Assess your equipment, those who use it and procedures for maintaining a safe work area.



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Smoke Alarms:

- Have them in your home;
- Test them monthly;
- Change batteries yearly;
- Replace unit every 10 years.

Protecting Children

With schools, colleges, day cares and activity centers closed, more kids are at home all day. While curiosity helps drive learning, it can also be dangerous when it comes to electricity. So take steps to avoid any electricity-related injuries or death through education and electrocution awareness with kids. Also, parents of young children should invest in tamper resistant receptacles or, at the least, place caps on electrical outlets. And never place plugged-in devices near water, such as tubs and sinks.



Did you know: An average of 2,850 children are injured each year by electrical outlets. (Consumer Product Safety Commission)



Home Renovations

While you are working from home and/or schooling from home, you will likely use more energy than normal. And with more time around the home, you may see some DIY projects or renovations that you wish to undertake. Note that many older homes may not have an adequate electrical wiring system to meet additional electrical loads. So before you add a major appliance or if your home is more than 40 years old, have a qualified electrician inspect the wiring and circuit breakers.

Install safety devices such as an arc-fault circuit interrupter or a ground-fault circuit interrupter to protect against fires and shocks. Furthermore, be sure to follow any applicable codes in your area when doing a home renovation.



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Did you know: Home electrical fires account for an estimated 34,000 fires each year in the U.S., nearly than 500 deaths, more than 1,100 injuries, and \$1.4 billion in property damage. (National Fire Protection Association)

Storm Safety

Severe storms are a fact of life in Mississippi and the first four months of 2020 have not proven otherwise. Floods, straight-line winds, large hail and tornadoes have made their presence known, and we have not even made it to the official start of hurricane season. There are several steps you can take to protect yourself and your belongings from dangerous situations before, during and after storms. Before the



storm, charge communication devices and then unplug all electronics and move them high as possible if flooding is a risk. If leaving the home, turn off the main breaker. During the storm, avoid using corded phones and don't use a generator indoors if the power goes out. After the storm, stay away from downed power lines and have a qualified electrician inspect any damaged electrical equipment.



Did you know: Mississippi ranks #3 in the nation for lightning strikes per year at 18 strikes per square mile. (Lightning Protection Institute)

For More Information

Each year, too many lives are disrupted by electrical fires, electrocutions, and dangerous conditions. Take the time to make yourself aware of your surroundings at your home and your workplace to avoid injuries, or worse. The [Electrical Safety Foundation International](https://www.esfi.org/) (ESFI) is dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety at home and in the workplace and serves as a [leading resource](https://www.esfi.org/) for electrical safety issues.



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Last Week at the MPSC

- On the morning of May 13, the Legislative House Public Utilities and Education Committees held a joint meeting to explore rapid, near-term mechanisms to deploy high-speed internet access to unserved areas. They also looked at opportunities to utilize CARES funding for rural internet deployment. Funds must be spent before the end of 2020. In the afternoon of May 13, the Legislative Senate Education and Universities and Colleges Committees and the Senate Energy and Technology Committees held hearings to explore the issues around distance learning challenges and long-term plans to increase broadband access across the state. Commissioner Brandon Presley of the Northern District spoke on behalf of the MPSC and provided numerous facts and figures regarding homes lacking internet access, the inaccuracy of the FCC broadband coverage maps, and potential funding sources to assist providers in the deployment of infrastructure. The committees also heard from representatives of all levels of education, the electric cooperatives and telecommunication carriers.
- Oakview Utility Company, Inc. filed for its [notice of intent](#) to set initial [rates and fees](#) for providing sewage disposal service for approximately 30 customers in the Rowan Oak Subdivision in Byram, Mississippi.
- Entergy Mississippi, LLC filed an update of its [Energy Cost Recovery Rider Schedule \(ECR-4\)](#) and [Power Management Rider Schedule \(PMR-12\)](#).



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **23** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	11
Telecommunications	10
Water/Sewage	2

Last week, the Central District received a total of **91** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins. The top three general issues reported by consumers are related to insurance, credit cards and auto warranties.

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) recently reported on COVID-19 contact tracing text message scams. Contact tracers are usually hired by a state's department of public health. They work with an infected person to get the names and phone numbers for everyone that infected person came in close contact with while possibly infectious. Scammers are pretending to be contact tracers in attempt to take advantage of how the process works and are also sending text messages. But theirs are spam text messages that ask you to click a link. Clicking on the link will download software onto your device, giving scammers access to your personal and financial information. Ignore and delete these scam messages. For more tips on how to protect yourself against this type of scam as well as the latest Corona virus related scams seen by the FTC, visit: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/05/covid-19-contact-tracing-text-message-scams>

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.