

June 17, 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



Defend Yourself Against Utility Scams

This office often writes to warn consumers against the many scams that are thrust at you through robocalls and texts. These scams may involve insurance, credit cards, auto warranties, Google accounts, or more. Our No Call Specialists **collect information from you** and work hard to identify and stop further harassment from those telemarketers. We receive well over 100 complaints each week.

Nationwide, even in Mississippi, there has been an increase in the number and type of utility-specific scams - an incident where a scammer impersonates a utility, either by phone, in-person or through the internet - to deceive a consumer into giving away money or personal information. Common utility scams include: threats to disconnect service unless a payment is made; claims that you overpaid a bill and your account information is needed to issue a refund; requests for payment per the replacement of a meter or other device; and attempts to offer bill payment assistance with the promise of a reduced rate via a state or federal program.

During this time of the COVID-19 crisis, ***be sure to take precautions and protect yourself from utility scams.*** Always ask yourself, "Is this how I usually interact with my utility?" If the answer is no, hang up the phone, delete the email, lock the door, etc. Then call the utility at their published number to verify any offerings. Finally, **contact** one of our Consumer Complaint Specialists and/or No Call Specialists who can advise you on how to proceed if you have been the target of a scammer.

Utilities across the state also have resources and tools to help you be better informed against scams as well as actions you can take to keep your information - and your money - safe.



Check out the following:

Energy Mississippi wants to help you **[#StopScams - Know the Signs](#)**

Mississippi Power wants to **[Protect You Against Fraud](#)**

Atmos Energy offers **[Tips to Avoid Being Scammed](#)**

CenterPoint Energy wants to **[Help You Fight Utility Scammers](#)**

Spire Energy will help you **[Stay Safe from Scams](#)**



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The Mississippi Public Service Commission and its utility partners will continue to spread the word about utility scams and how to protect yourself, your family and your community. These threats will likely never go away, and the COVID pandemic has only increased the amount and frequency of scams. Therefore, you must be informed and vigilant and know the warning signs of a utility scam.

DO

DON'T

- ✓ **Immediately hang up on suspicious callers**
- ✓ **Ask lots of questions and ask for identification**
- ✓ **Stay informed about scams in your area**
- ✓ **Pay bills as you normally pay them**
- ✗ **Provide personal or financial information**
- ✗ **Wire money or make payments over the phone**
- ✗ **Be pressured**
- ✗ **Click on email links**



Anyone who pays a utility bill can be a mark for scammers. But you can avoid being a scam victim by taking a few precautions and knowing the warning signs.

Other tools: [Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker](#); [Utilities United Against Scams](#); [Federal Trade Commission](#); [AARP](#)

Last Week at the MPSC

- At the request of the Central District, the annual reports estimating the customer benefits (savings) from Entergy Mississippi's participation in MISO were filed under Docket No. 2011-UA-376: [2015](#); [2016](#); [2017](#); [2018](#); [2019](#).
- Entergy Mississippi filed a [Motion to Present a Virtual Public Workshop](#) in an attempt to timely comply with the requirements of the IRP Rule as well as reduce risks associated with the COVID-19. The Southern Renewable Energy Association filed a [Response](#) to Entergy's Motion. The MPSC issued an [Order](#) requiring Entergy Mississippi to present their public workshop remotely, on June 22, 2020, at 2:00 pm and in a manner that allows participants to log in, see the presentation, and then ask questions at appropriate times during the presentation.



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- Per Rule 53 Settlement Agreement dated April 10, 1998: "On a quarterly basis, Entergy Corp. shall provide the Commission with a report detailing the Regulated Utilities' proportionate share of the consolidated total of Entergy's assets, operating revenues and number of employees, and total operating and maintenance expenses." [The quarterly report for 1st Quarter 2020](#).
- CenturyLink Public Communications, Inc. submitted a [Petition to Discontinue Service](#) in Mississippi and surrender its CPCN. CenturyLink is exiting the business of providing phone service in correctional institutions via payphones available to inmates.
- Atmos Energy filed [Application for a CPCN to Construct](#) a new supply interconnect and distribution facilities to make natural gas available to over 1,200 planned residences and businesses in DeSoto County.
- [AT&T Mississippi](#) and [CTIA-the Wireless Association](#) each filed an Appeal against the MPSC in Hinds County Chancery Court in opposition to certain changes made to Rule 28 (Rules Implementing the Mississippi Telephone Solicitation Act).
- Annual Energy Efficiency Program Portfolio Performance report was submitted by [East Mississippi EPA](#).



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **28** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	17
Telecommunications	11

Last week, the Central District received a total of **177** 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 auto warranties, financial/loans/consolidated debts and health products/prescription drugs.

The FTC recently made more state-level data available about COVID-19 related complaints from consumers. Learn more about scams happening in Mississippi: <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2020/06/ftc-makes-more-state-level-data-available-about-covid-19-related>

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.