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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

Energy-Related Employment and the Hire Mississippi Rule

2020 U.S. Energy & Employment Report

The [2020 U.S. Energy & Employment Report](#) (USEER) tracks employment trends in Fuels; Electric Power Generation; Transmission, Distribution, and Storage; Energy Efficiency; and Motor Vehicles. The report offers unique insights into the people who help deliver the country's energy needs, and identifies important trends and skill sets for the 21st Century energy workforce. It serves as an important and consistent tool for policymakers and other key stakeholders to understand the impact of evolving energy markets and help prepare their communities, infrastructure, and workforce for these changes.

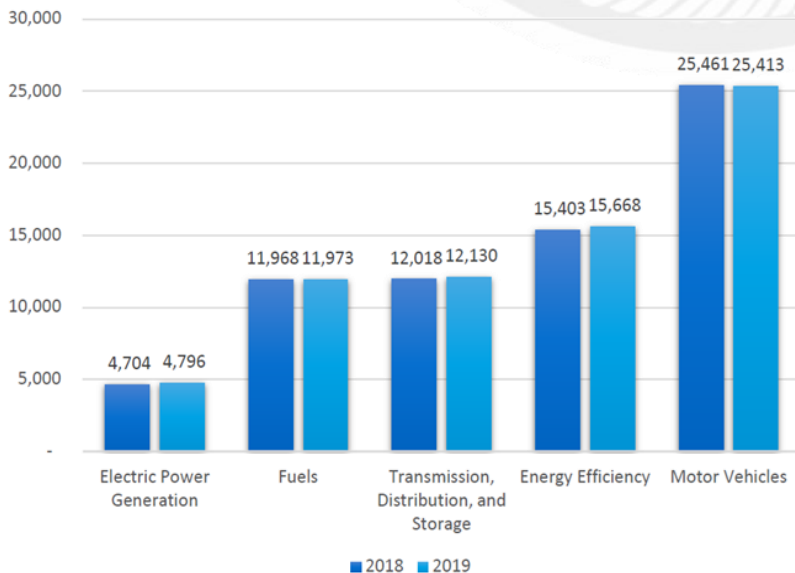
The traditional Energy and Energy Efficiency sectors employed 6.8 million people in the U.S. at the end of 2019, adding over 120,300 new jobs in total, outperforming the rest of the economy in job creation. These sectors include: Electric Power Generation; Electric Transmission, Distribution and Storage; Energy Efficiency; and Fuels. Motor Vehicles related jobs employ another 2.55 million.

Firms across all sectors anticipated an average of 3.1 percent employment growth for 2020. However, Electric Power Generation employers anticipated 4.8 percent job growth in 2020, with most of the increase expected in renewable generation construction. This growth in renewable

generation construction jobs mirrors the shift in electric generation sources over the last several years as the shares of solar, wind, and other renewable resources have increased.

The report also contains individual state snapshots of employment data. [Mississippi](#) had 28,900 traditional energy workers statewide at the end of 2019. Of these traditional energy workers, 4,796 are in Electric Power Generation, 11,973 are in Fuels, and 12,130 are in Transmission, Distribution, and Storage. Mississippi has an additional 15,668 jobs in Energy Efficiency and 25,413 jobs in Motor Vehicles.

Employment by Major Energy Technology Application





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While employers in Mississippi had been as similarly optimistic as their peers across the country in regards to job growth opportunities over the next year, Mississippi employers reported the greatest overall difficulty in hiring workers for jobs is in the Electric Power Generation sector.

These employers gave the following as the top three reasons for their reported difficulty:

1. Lack of experience, training, or technical skills
2. Competition/small applicant pool
3. Insufficient non-technical skills (work ethic, dependability, critical thinking)

Employers reported the following as the three most difficult occupations to hire for:

1. Technician or mechanical support — \$21.99 median hourly wage
2. Management (directors, supervisors, vice presidents) — \$39.94 median hourly wage
3. Sales, marketing, or customer service — \$32.38 median hourly wage

The full USEER, Executive Summary, State Fact Sheets, and a recorded webinar with key takeaways from the report are available for download at www.USenergyjobs.org.

While unemployment claims have spiked across the state and the country, electric power generation and energy distribution/delivery jobs for the most part have remained intact as the COVID-19 crisis has gripped the U.S. On the other hand, demand for petroleum fuels have dropped by 10+% while global storage of crude oil has nearly reached full capacity. Natural gas production will also slow as rigs are taken offline.

The employments hits will not just be felt in the traditional energy sectors. The Solar Energy Industries Association is warning that half of the 250,000 people employed in solar in the U.S. could lose their jobs, and that the rooftop solar market has already slowed by more than 40% as shelter-in-place orders effect household budgets. The American Wind Energy Association has estimated that 35,000 jobs and \$35 billion in investments are at risk due to the impacts of the pandemic.

Hire Mississippi Rule

The Hire Mississippi Rule was added as Rule 30 to the Commission's [Public Utilities Rules of Practice and Procedure](#) in August 2017. The purpose of the Hire Mississippi Rule is to facilitate economic development, create jobs, and empower communities through the promotion of utility contracting opportunities to Mississippi's resident contractors.

On March 1 of each year, regulated utilities file a report with the Commission to demonstrate compliance with the Rule. Among items to report, each utility shall provide the number of contracts awarded, the number of contracts awarded to Mississippi contractors, the number awarded to non-resident contractors, and the various outreach efforts to inform prospective contractors about bid opportunities and to promote careers and develop a qualified workforce in the utility sector.

Atmos Energy (Atmos): Atmos awarded 21 qualifying contracts to Mississippi-certified contractors, or 100% of its contracts to Mississippi-certified contractors for a total of \$12,415,800. See Atmos' [Hire Mississippi Annual Report](#) and [Exhibits](#).



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CenterPoint Energy Mississippi Gas (CenterPoint): CenterPoint awarded seven qualifying contracts. Six of the contracts were awarded to out-of-state contractors. One contract was awarded to a Mississippi contractor for \$284,000. See CenterPoint's [2019 Hire Mississippi Report](#).

Spire Mississippi (Spire): Spire awarded six qualifying contracts during 2019. Of those, four were awarded to Mississippi-certified contractors. See Spire's [Hire Mississippi Annual Report for 2019](#).

Entergy Mississippi LLC (EML): EML reported that 29% of qualifying contracts (53 of 286) were awarded to 19 different Mississippi contractors. EML awarded 233 contracts to 103 out-of-state contractors or contractors with insufficient information. See EML's [Hire Mississippi Report for Year Ending 2019](#).

Mississippi Power Company (MPCo): MPCo awarded a total of 111 qualifying contracts, of which, 71 were awarded to non-resident contractors and 40 were awarded to Mississippi contractors. \$6 million was awarded to Mississippi contractors while \$10.6 million was awarded to out-of-state contractors. See MPCo's [Hire Mississippi Annual Report](#).

The Hire Mississippi Rule was created to foster more business opportunity for Mississippi suppliers and contractors for the purpose of promoting economic development, creating jobs and improving communities. I believe the rule is serving its purpose and helping to keep dollars at home through the utilization of Mississippi contractors and businesses.

However, I also believe that the annual reporting required by the Hire Mississippi Rule needs standardization so as to better inform the Commission and the general public. Some utilities file data under confidential information protections while others do not. Some utilities report values of contracts awarded while others do not. And the definition of Mississippi-certified companies does not appear to be applied consistently across utilities. I hope to work with my colleagues to create and implement a standard reporting format that the regulated utilities can use to evenly report data.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **27** complaints in the Central District.

Telecommunications	14
Electric Companies	10
Water/Sewage	2
Natural Gas	1

Last week, the Central District received a total of **175** 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 health care products, credit cards and auto warranties.

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) recently announced from January 1 until today, they have received 18,235 reports related to COVID-19, and people reported losing \$13.44 million dollars to fraud. The top complaint categories relate to travel and vacations, online shopping, bogus text messages, and all kinds of imposters. More tips to protect yourself against the latest Corona virus related scams seen by the FTC can be found here: https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/04/covid-19-scam-reports-numbers?utm_source=govdelivery.

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.