

February 24, 2021



**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



Cybersecurity and State Regulatory Commissions

In this space, I have previously explored actions and the various stakeholders that assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid. In the past, these actions have focused on the physical health and resiliency of utility systems. However, rapid advancements in technologies and control systems have transformed the utility sector, particularly energy and electricity.

While these advancements have improved system performance and have created new consumer benefits, innovation has also generated more points of access to operating systems and thus the potential for cyberattacks. These pathway vectors include mobile devices, web sites, corporate email, data centers, private email, branch offices, cloud servers and many more. And the age of COVID-19 has greatly increased the number of remote access points as more people work from home.

In 2007, there were less than 50 common, recognizable cyber-based threat types. Today, that number is more than one million and cyber threat actors continue to develop new tools to gain unauthorized access to information systems in order to access or otherwise affect victims' data, devices, systems, and networks. Thankfully, there is also a large number of protective solution technologies and security frameworks available to protect critical infrastructure.

What should be the role and responsibility of utility regulators in the cybersecurity space? While the general mission of the MPSC is to ensure safe, reliable, and adequate utility service at a fair and equitable cost to ratepayers, the evolving threat of cyber-based incidents exposes the potential need for information on cybersecurity risk management, preparedness and mitigation programs within the MPSC. However, acquiring such issue expertise can be resource-intensive.

Winter Storm Update

The past 10 days brought forth a series of winter storms and extremely frigid temperatures to the state that have not been seen in nearly 30 years. As a result, over 200,000 Mississippians experienced power outages and tens of thousands of citizens remain subject to low to no water pressure and boil water notices as this is newsletter is written. Because the recovery and restoration of critical utility services is ongoing across the state, I hope to recap the impacts of the extreme winter weather and the response of utilities, state agencies and communities in a future newsletter.



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Short of establishing a cybersecurity division at the MPSC, we could review industry-accepted standards and promote a cybersecurity framework that provides a regulatory guide for a utility's cybersecurity measures and operations. As regulators, we can evaluate a utility's exposure to cyber risks, encourage certain actions or behaviors, or determine what level of regulation, if any, is needed. Too much regulation could displace resources via a focus on compliance. Too little could create a false sense of security.

Regardless of the path that the MPSC takes on cybersecurity regulation, you can be confident that utility companies and their value chain partners are currently putting more resources into understanding cyber risks and how to defend against them. Utilities mitigate their risk by getting more visibility into their networks, creating proactive security incident plans and staying up to date on security technology that can protect their assets.

While my focus will be on the utilities you rely on every day, you should also evaluate your own business's risk. Whether you are a one-person operation or you have 100 employees, ask yourself these questions:

- *How well do I know my systems? (this includes hardware, software, access to key operating systems, etc.)*
- *Can I run my business in "manual" mode?*
- *Do I put too much trust in a single IT product or system?*
- *Who all "touches" my system and have they been properly vetted?*

As business proprietors, you know that information transparency is greatly desired by potential customers. However, we must balance cyber risks with the need for customer (and adversaries) access. Consider conducting a cyber-risk analysis, evaluate your cyber readiness and create and implement a response plan. Don't deny you have a risk, hope to avoid an incident, or expect an easy resolution to a cyberattack. Take informed and consistent action to protect yourself and your company assets.



Other News

NARUC Releases New Cybersecurity Workforce Guide

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Center for Partnerships and Innovation has released a new cybersecurity publication. [*A Guide for Public Utility Commissions: Recruiting and Retaining a Cybersecurity Workforce*](#) is a response to the evolving threat environment and provides state regulators with another tool in their cybersecurity arsenal. This resource is a follow-up to the NARUC [*Cybersecurity Strategy Development Guide*](#).

New Reports Explore the Economic Impacts of Widespread, Long Duration Power Interruptions

A number of widespread, long duration power interruptions have recently occurred in the United States—most notably in Texas, Oregon and California. The first paper titled [*Case Studies of the Economic Impacts of Power Interruptions and Damage to Electricity System Infrastructure from Extreme Events*](#) discusses six case studies that detail the economics, at the level of the utility service territory, of power interruptions caused by extreme weather and lasting from a few days to several weeks. The second paper titled [*A Hybrid Approach to Estimating the Economic Value of Enhanced Power System Resilience*](#) describes a new approach for estimating the economic costs of widespread, long duration power interruptions. These reports will help utilities and their regulators consider the costs of past power interruptions and the benefits of preventing them in the future. Seems like timely resources.



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Legislation Tracker

- [HB 91](#): Removes the Public Service Commission from the provisions of the Mississippi Budget Transparency and Simplification Act
 - *Referred to Senate Appropriations; Accountability, Efficiency, Transparency*
- [HB 100](#): Extends repeal date that requires all fees collected under the MS Telephone Solicitation Act be deposited into the general fund
 - *Referred to Senate Accountability, Efficiency, Transparency*
- [HB 505](#): Creates the Mississippi Broadband Accessibility Act.
 - *Referred to Senate Energy; Appropriations*
- [HB 632](#): Establishes "All Fuels Act of 2021" and provides that no political subdivision may prohibit the expansion, connection, or reconnection of a service based upon the type of energy provided to a customer.
 - *Referred to Senate Energy*
- [HB 942](#): Authorizes investor-owned electric utilities to permit broadband provider use of the electric delivery system.
 - *Referred to Senate Energy*
- [HB 1063](#): Act to authorize Supervisors of any county to designate projects as Transformative Renewable Energy Projects.
 - *Referred to Senate Energy; Finance*
- [HB 1396](#): Act making an appropriation from general fund in the state treasury for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the MPSC for the 2022 fiscal year.
 - *Passed full House; Transmitted to Senate*
- [SB 2018](#): MS Telephone Solicitation Act; extend repealer on requirement that fees be deposited into State General Fund.
 - *Transmitted to House*
- [SB 2559](#): Authorizes PSC to enter into federal contracts for the mapping of broadband availability.
 - *Transmitted to House*
- [SB 2649](#): Extends repeal date on energy efficiency equipment or service contracts.
 - *Transmitted to House*
- [SB 2798](#): Provides for the participation of investor-owned electric utilities in the expansion of broadband services.
 - *Transmitted to House*

The deadline for Committees to consider and report general bills originating in the other chamber is March 2. The deadline for Floor Action on general bills originating in the other chamber is March 10. Please note that identification of a bill in this newsletter does not indicate support or opposition to a measure. We will continue to monitor progress of these and other legislation impacting the MPSC.



The March monthly docket meeting of the Mississippi Public Service Commission will take place on Tuesday, March 2 at 10 a.m. This meeting will take place telephonically with streaming broadcast over the MPSC YouTube channel at <https://www.psc.ms.gov/webcast>. The meeting notice is now available: https://www.psc.ms.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/NOTICE_OF_PUBLIC_MEETING_3-2-21.pdf



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Last week at the MPSC

Boomerang Wireless, LLC d/b/a **enTouch Wireless** filed its [Revised Tariff Pages](#).
Telrite Corporation d/b/a **Life Wireless** filed its [Revised Tariff Pages](#).

Mississippi Power Co. filed its Notice of 2021 [Ad Valorem Tax Adjustment](#) (ATA) Factor. The company recovers only actual costs related to property taxes. The tax costs could result in an increase in MPCo's customers' bills of \$3.88 per 1,000 kWh per month from and after the first April 2021 billing cycle. **Mississippi Power Co.** also filed its [Notice of 2021 Environmental Compliance Overview \(ECO\) Plan](#) filing. The ECO revenue adjustment for 2021 could result in a \$0.73 decrease per month for a residential customer with monthly usage of 1,000 kWh effective from and after the first billing cycle of May 2021.

Town of Edwards filed its [Response](#) to the Public Utilities Staff's First Set of Data Requests, and it refiled its [Notice of Intent](#) to Establish Water Rates and [Revised Tariff](#) documents.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **43** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	34
Water/Sewer	7
Telecommunications	1
Natural Gas	1

Last week, the Central District received a total of **334** 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, insurance and credit cards.

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.

Utility engineers help to improve the way utility services are delivered to your homes, businesses and governmental facilities. Their work helps to decrease service interruptions by designing modern systems, improving existing infrastructure and eliminating issues that may arise. During extreme events that cause outages or other impacts to services, utility engineers also help to direct and manage work crews that restore critical services in as fast and safe a manner as possible.

We thank all of our utility engineers in Mississippi!

