

March 31, 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

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April is National Safe Digging Month.

Watch Where You Sink Your Shovel!

The tell-tale signs of Spring have sprung across Mississippi: dogwood trees are blooming, grass is growing, pollen is falling and red wasps are looking for places to build their nests! Spring time also brings a groundswell of outdoor activity around the home, garden or shop which often includes digging in the soil. Therefore, I am using this week's newsletter to highlight the importance of Safe Digging Month and the easy to know number that can help prevent you from suffering an injury (or worse), getting [fined](#) or falling out of good grace with your neighbors.



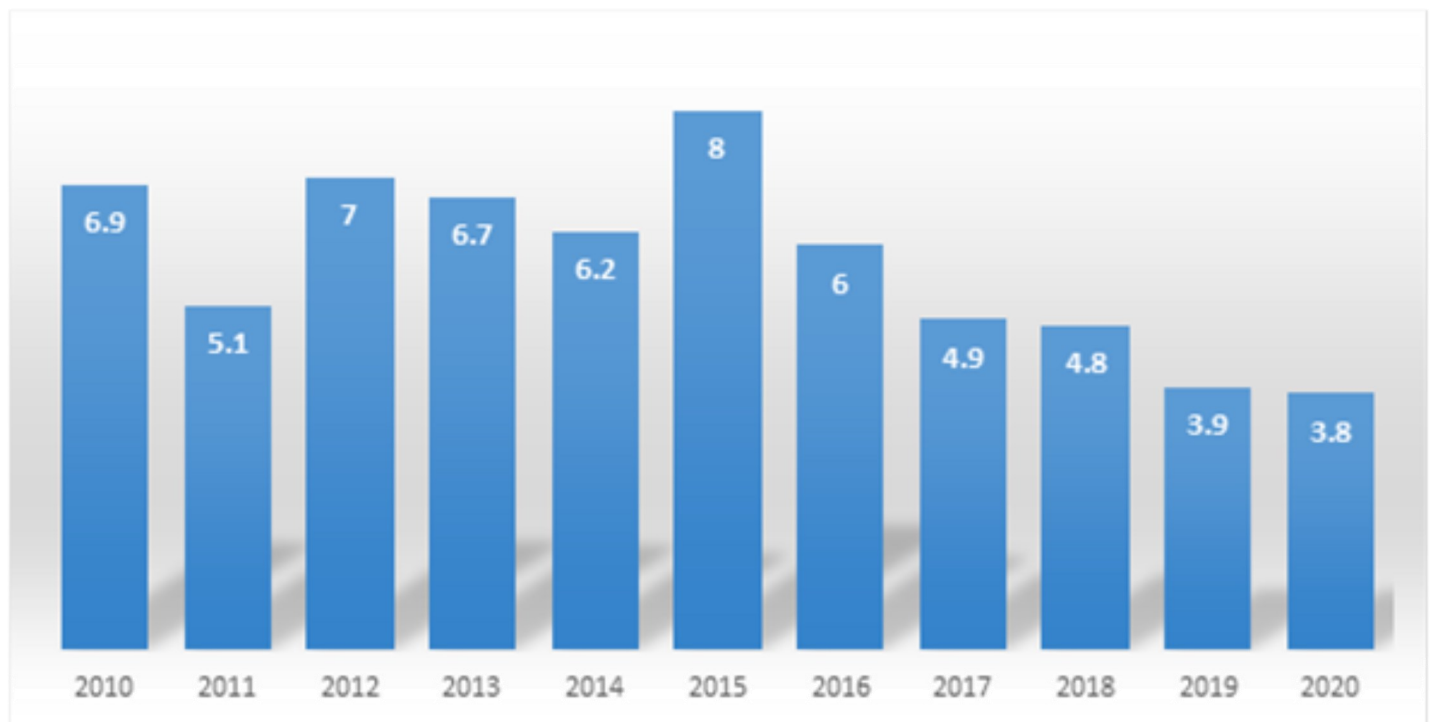
Whether it is a small project like putting in a mailbox or a large home improvement project like adding a room, call 8-1-1 before starting any digging project. Calling 811 promotes public safety, reduces underground utility damages, minimizes utility service interruptions, protects the environment and reduces on-the-job injuries. And it's the law! The importance of protecting underground utility infrastructure cannot be understated. Even **Governor Tate Reeves** recognizes the importance of acting responsibly and has issued a [Proclamation](#) proclaiming April 2021 as Safe Digging Month in Mississippi and encourages everyone to call 811 before digging.

Our in-state call-before-you-dig notification system program, [Mississippi 811](#), is free and helps protect hundreds of thousands of miles of underground utility lines that are necessary for everyday life. Every day Mississippi 811 operators receive excavation and demolition location information from excavators, contractors, builders, and private citizens who are going to dig, drill or bore. Operators then disseminate this information those utility members potentially located in the area of excavation. In 2020, Mississippi 811 agents received 444,416 calls (an 11% increase over 2019) which resulted in nearly 2.2 million utility locates. Mississippi 811 now has nearly 1,100 utility members.



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Excavation damage is the leading cause of natural gas distribution pipeline incidents, and a leading cause of other pipeline incidents, nationwide. The MPSC's Pipeline Safety Division works with Mississippi 811 and other stakeholders to increase awareness of proper reporting, improved safety measures and preventing damage to underground utilities, including natural gas pipelines. Under the leadership of the Pipeline Safety Division, the number of damages to natural gas pipelines fell to its lowest level in 10 years in 2019. Furthermore, the number of damages (3.8) per 1,000 locate tickets fell to its lowest level in 2020 as indicated in the chart below.



Pipeline Damages Per 1,000 Locates

While I am ecstatic for the great job that Mississippi 811 and our Pipeline Safety Division does in working to protect underground utilities, we still have work to do. The [2019 Damage Information Reporting Tool \(DIRT\) Report](#) analysis found that an estimated 532,000 excavation-related damages to underground facilities occurred in the U.S. in 2019, a 4.5% increase compared to the 2018 estimate of 509,000 damages. (Data for 2020 has not yet been published)

The report also found that the societal costs of damaging underground infrastructure totaled approximately \$30 billion in the U.S. in 2019 alone. That figure represents a massive amount of public and private resources spent not only repairing utilities and restoring utility service, but also covering property damage, medical bills, loss of commerce while businesses are interrupted or evacuated, and other indirect costs.

Failure to notify 811 is the single largest individual root cause contributing to damages of underground utilities. One-third of U.S. homeowners have been affected by a utility service interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many caused by outdoor do-it-yourself projects. Remember, always call 811 before digging and avoid service disruptions caused by damaging buried utilities.



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Other News

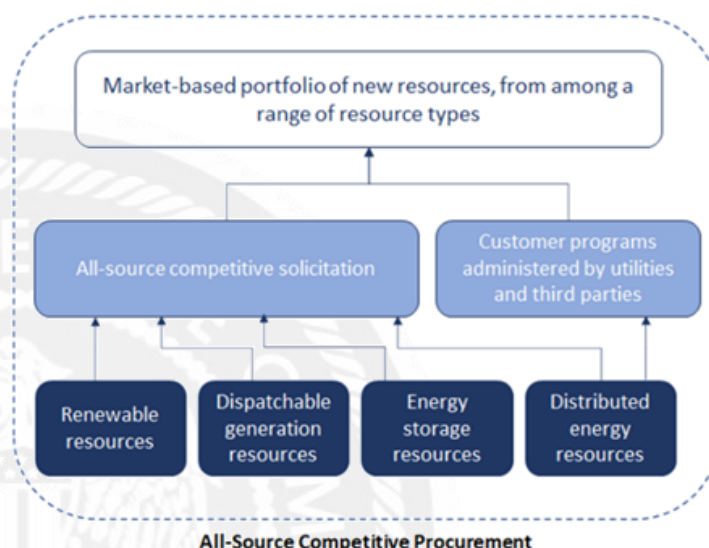
Report Examines Advantages of All-Source Competitive Solicitations

All-source competitive solicitations allow all potential resources — utility-scale and distributed energy resources (DERs), whether owned by utilities, customers or third parties — to compete to meet an electric utility's needs. A new report, [*All-Source Competitive Solicitations: State and Electric Utility Practices*](#), describes principles, practices and emerging issues for energy resource acquisition. Benefits of all-resource solicitations include: Discovery of competitive pricing across energy resource types; Reduced cost uncertainty; Integrated procurement of resources, and; Improved coordination between procurement of utility-scale and distributed generation resources.

As you may know, rate-regulated electric utilities must file proposed Integrated Resource Plans (IRP) with the MPSC in the coming months. Some would argue that the IRP development process is virtually meaningless unless it is linked in some way to an actual resource procurement decision process.

Unfortunately, the MPSC's Integrated Resource Planning and Reporting Rule 29 does not explicitly require utilities to hold an all-source competitive solicitation to identify and compare new energy resource options. State utility regulators will play a crucial role in building confidence in the fairness and integrity of any resource solicitation process for jurisdictional utilities.

A free public webinar on the report will be held on April 8, 2021, at 12:00 Noon CT. Register for the webinar at https://lbnl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_U5KvKDjcOUuFyO7fbH24Lg.



New DOE Goal: 30GW of Offshore Wind Deployment by 2030

The U.S. Department of Energy has [announced](#) a national goal to deploy 30,000 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind by 2030. According to the announcement, meeting this target will trigger more than \$12 billion per year in capital investment in projects on both U.S. coasts and the Great Lakes, create more than 44,000 jobs in the offshore wind industry by 2030 and generate nearly 33,000 additional jobs in adjacent communities. There are now 122,478 MW of operating wind power capacity in the United States, providing enough power for 38 million American homes. Of that, only 42 MW of capacity can be attributed to offshore wind turbines.



The April monthly docket meeting of the Mississippi Public Service Commission will take place on Tuesday, April 6 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/2021-03/NOTICE_OF_PUBLIC_MEETING_4-6-21.pdf.



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Legislation Tracker

The 2021 Legislative Session is expected to wrap up on Thursday morning. Legislators worked through the weekend in an attempt to find common ground on various pieces of legislation and to finalize the state budget, which entailed determining the level of appropriations to each state agency. I am pleased with the final result of our FY 2022 appropriation. I plan to go into more detail regarding the MPSC appropriations bill (and other key legislation) in the next newsletter.

- [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.
Conference Report adopted by House & Senate
- [SB 2649](#): Extends Repeal Date on EE Equipment or Service Contracts.
Conference Report adopted by House & Senate
- [SB 2798](#): Provides for the participation of investor-owned electric utilities in the expansion of broadband services
Conference Report adopted by House & Senate



Last week at the MPSC

- ✎ **Southern Alliance for Clean Energy** and **Sierra Club** filed confidential comments in response to **Mississippi Power Co.**'s Integrated Resource Plan [Technical Conference presentation](#). SREA's [comments](#) were initially filed Confidential, but after review by **Mississippi Power Co.**, the comments have been given the ok to file without redactions.
- ✎ The Commission issued Notice of Hearing for the following: [MS Solar 5, LLC](#), [Tunica Windpower, LLC](#), and [Walnut Grove Solar/Battery Demonstration Project](#).
- ✎ The Commission also issued an [Order Denying In Part](#) **Entergy Mississippi, LLC**'s Motion to Dismiss the **City of Clinton**'s Billing and Service Complaint.
- ✎ The following electric utilities have filed their annual report subject to the MPSC's Net Metering and Interconnection Rule: [Mississippi Power Company](#) and [Cooperative Energy](#).
- ✎ **CenterPoint Energy** made a [Compliance Filing](#) indicating customer notification of the company's various Customer Assistance Programs.
- ✎ **Great River Utility Operating Co., LLC** filed its [Response](#) to MPUS Data Requests concerning nine water systems to be acquired.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **14** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	11
Telecommunications	2
Natural Gas	1

Last week, the Central District received a total of **283** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins.

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.