

April 6, 2022



**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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# ***Don't Risk Disruption to Critical Services, Call Before You Dig!***

**S**pringtime in Mississippi usually means yard work, construction projects, planting gardens, trees and shrubs, and other outdoor activities that can include digging in the soil or excavation with mechanical equipment. Just because you may not be a commercial operator or are performing what you may think is a small digging task, don't neglect your obligation to call 811 before you dig. Everyone who contacts 811 at least two days before digging is connected to the local one-call notification center that will take the caller's information and communicate it to local utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint, flags or both. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

Know the Color Code	
WHITE:	Proposed Excavation
PINK:	Temporary Survey Markings
RED:	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
YELLOW:	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
ORANGE:	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
BLUE:	Potable Water
PURPLE:	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
GREEN:	Sewer and Drain Lines

Despite the continued reminders through the media and other information sharing platforms, millions of Americans will put themselves and their communities at risk and disrupt the provision of critical utility services because they failed to call 811 either intentionally or as an oversight.



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Last week, the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) announced results of a recent national public opinion survey revealing that nearly six-in-ten U.S. homeowners (58%) reported experiencing a utility service interruption during the last 12 months. In addition, 49% of U.S. homeowners (34.9 million Americans) who plan to dig this year will do so without contacting 811 beforehand to learn the approximate location of underground utilities.

The most popular planned projects cited among surveyed homeowners who plan to dig include: Planting a tree or shrub (80%); Building a fence (25%); Building a deck or patio (21%); Installing a mailbox (11%); Installing a pool (3%); Something else (19%). Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in serious injuries, inconvenient service disruptions and costly repairs when natural gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines are damaged. Making a free request to 811 online or over the phone before digging will help homeowners maintain essential utility services for themselves and their neighbors and keep communities safe, by reducing the likelihood of accidentally digging into buried utility lines. Don't be that neighbor that ruins the weekend for others because you failed to call 811 and then cut into an underground utility line.

April is recognized as [National Safe Digging Month](#) and serves to bring awareness to Americans about how much infrastructure they rely on every day is buried underground, and to remind them to stay safe and keep their communities connected to critical utility services as they conduct common digging projects. Contacting 811 is the first and most responsible step to protect buried utilities.

In Mississippi, 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. In 2021, Mississippi 811 agents received 480,871 calls (an 8.2% increase over 2020) which resulted in nearly 2.4 million utility locates. Mississippi 811 membership is still at nearly 1,100 utility members.

As part of National Safe Digging Month, the Mississippi Public Service Commission encourages homeowners to take the following basic steps before conducting any digging or excavation:

- **Contact 811 at least two days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.**
- **Make an 811 request on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend.**
- **Confirm that all lines have been marked.**
- **Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.**
- **If a contractor has been hired, confirm that the contractor has contacted 811. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.**
- **Visit [www.811beforeyoudig.com](http://www.811beforeyoudig.com) for more information.**

Failure to notify 811 is the single largest individual root cause contributing to damages of underground utilities. Damage prevention is a shared responsibility. Do your part to prevent damage to underground facilities.

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## Federal News

### White House Releases Proposed Budget for FY 2023

Last week, the Biden Administration released a [\\$5.8 trillion budget request](#) for fiscal year 2023, which included funding increases for clean energy, energy efficiency, and environmental justice.

Specifically, the Department of Energy would see a 7.3% increase to \$48.2 billion if Congress fulfills the request. The following table that demonstrates the funding level increases proposed as it relates to FY22 allocations.

FY23 President's Budget Request Relative to FY22 Spending Levels (Funding in Millions of Dollars)				
Program	FY22	FY23 WH Request	Change from FY22	
Department of Energy	\$ 44,900	\$ 48,200	↑ \$3,300	7.3%
Office of EE & Renewable Energy	\$ 3,200	\$ 4,019	↑ \$819	25.6%
Office of Cyber and Energy Security	\$ 185	\$ 202	↑ \$17	9.2%
Office of Electricity	\$ 277	\$ 297	↑ \$20	7.2%
Office of Fossil Energy & Carbon Mgmt	\$ 825	\$ 893	↑ \$140	18.7%
Office of Science	\$ 7,475	\$ 7,799	↑ \$414	5.9%
ARPA-E	\$ 450	\$ 700	↑ \$73	17.1%

### \$3.1 Billion Available for Home Efficiency Upgrades

The DOE has announced that it is accepting applications from states, Tribes, and territories for \$3.16 billion in new funding through the Weatherization Assistance Program to make homes more energy efficient. This funding will help low-income households install insulation, update heating and cooling systems, upgrade electrical appliances, and take other actions to make homes warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer with less energy usage. Mississippi's estimated allocation is \$28 million. See [Weatherization Program Notice BIL 22-1: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\) Grants for the Weatherization Assistance Program](#).



### Highlights from the April 5, 2022, Docket Meeting

The Mississippi Public Service Commission met on April 5, 2022, at 10:00 am CT to consider the following [agenda](#) items:

- ☑ **The Commission** considered and approved an [Order](#) on the application of **CenterPoint Energy Resources Corp. d/b/a CenterPoint Energy Mississippi Gas** proposing to obtain a new service area designated as Service Area No. 9 in **Harrison County**. The proposed service area is adjacent to existing **CenterPoint** service areas in **Harrison County** and will allow **CenterPoint** to serve the existing need for gas service in the area and to be better prepared to provide gas service should future needs arise. No change in rates will occur with the procurement of this area certificate.
- ☑ **The Commission** granted an [Order](#) approving **East Mississippi Connect, LLC's** application to expand the company's ETC designation for Lifeline support. **East Mississippi Connect, LLC** was designated as an ETC in 2021 following the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction. This petition expands their Lifeline-only designation to include the company's entire service area.
- ☑ **The Commission** considered and approved an [Order](#) approving **Telepak Networks, Inc.'s** petition to discontinue resold residential home phone access to certain residential customers. The current 165 remaining customers are outside the Company's current fiber-to-the-home network, and all are purchasing resold **AT&T** residential services. The proposed effective date to discontinue service is April 15, 2022.



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- ☑ **The Commission** considered and approved Orders referring the following matters:
- ☑ Order Referring the Application of **North Tishomingo County Utility Service, Inc.** for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Authorizing it to Construct, Operate and Maintain a Sewer System in a Specified Area in **Tishomingo County** to a hearing examiner for report and recommendation.
- ☑ Order Referring the Application of **Algoma Water Association Inc.** for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Authorizing it to Construct, Operate and Maintain a Water System in a Specified Area in **Pontotoc County** to a hearing examiner for report and recommendation.
- ☑ Order Referring the Joint Application of **Utility Services, LLC** and **Adams County Water Association, Inc.**, to transfer a portion of the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Authorizing it to Construct, Operate and Maintain a Water System in a Specified Area in **Adams County** to a hearing examiner for report and recommendation.
- ☑ Order Referring the Petition of **MS Solar 7, LLC**, for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Authorizing the Construction and Operation of a Solar Electric Generating and Storage Facility in **Clay County** to the Northern District Commissioner for report and recommendation of an appropriate Order.
- ☑ **The Commission** moved to prepare and issue a Request for Proposals for a consultant to assist the Commission Staff with reviewing Great River Utility Operating Company's Post-Acquisition Rate Case.
- ☑ **The Commission** held a hearing following the regular open meeting of the **Commission** approving **Mississippi Power Company's** 2022 Environmental Compliance Overview Plan (ECO). The annual ECO rider requires the Company to provide its actual cost of compliance for the prior year, to file its projected costs of compliance for the current year, to file factors that will allow the Company to recover its total cost of compliance, and to petition for any environmental Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity for equipment facilities not previously certificated. These projected expenditures result in a 2021 revenue adjustment equal to a \$1.5 million increase, which equates to an estimated rate increase of approximately \$0.63 per 1,000 kWh monthly residential bill.
- ☑ **The Commission** voted on and entered into a Closed Session where the Commission voted 3-0 to enter into an Executive Session to conduct a strategy session with respect to pending litigation at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in FERC Docket numbers: EL18-152; EL17-41; EL18-142, EL18-204, ER18-1182, EL20-72, EL21-56, ER21-117, ER21-129, ER21-748, EL21-24, EL21-46, and ER22-958. No vote was taken during the convening of the Executive Session.



## Legislation Tracker

As the Mississippi Legislature winds down the 2022 regular session, we are seeing a much clearer picture of where legislation has landed. This newsletter has followed numerous pieces of legislation since January, tracking progress and attempting to determine how bills could impact the **MPSC** and/or utility customers. We have seen several turns of events, from the House approving and adopting the Conference Report for HB 1029 to create the Office of Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi (BEAM) to Creating a New Wastewater District in Hinds County via HB 1762. Even in these final hours of the session, the **Commission** continues watching numerous bills that could impact customers, certain utilities, or the **MPSC**.

- **HB 1029SG:** Mississippi Broadband Accessibility Act; create. *Enrolled Bill Signed by House and Senate; Sent to the Governor*



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- [HB 1031SG](#): Capital City Water/Sewer Projects Fund; create and require DFA to develop plan for improvements projects. *Enrolled Bill Signed by House and Senate; Sent to the Governor*
- [HB 1421CR](#): Establish ARPA Rural Water Associations Infrastructure Grant Programs under Department of Health. *House and Senate Conference Reports Adopted*
- [HB 1425](#): Establish ARPA Wastewater and Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Programs under DEQ and Department of Health. *Suspended from Deadlines by HC 89*
- [HB 1538CR2](#): Appropriation to the MS State Department of Health for the purpose of funding the ARPA Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Program. *House and Senate Conference Reports Adopted*
- [HB 1607CR](#): Approving expenditure of special funds to defray expenses of the Mississippi Broadband Commission. *Suspended from Deadlines by HC 89*
- [HB 1609CR2](#): Mississippi Public Service Commission Annual Appropriation. *House and Senate Conference Reports Adopted*
- [HB 1748](#): Town of Shuqualak; authorize expansion of water services. *Approved by Governor*
- [HB 1762](#): Creates the Clinton/Raymond/Bolton Wastewater Authority. *Approved by Governor*
- [HB 1763](#): Kemper County; authorize to enter into certain contracts to fund capital costs to extend natural gas services. *Approved by Governor*
- [SB 2822CR](#): Establish the Mississippi Water and Wastewater Transformation Infrastructure Grant Program to be administered by the MSDF. *Senate and House Conference Reports Adopted*
- [SB 2898SG](#): Certain municipalities allowed to establish overdue water/sewer payment programs; extend repealer on code section. *Enrolled Bill Signed by House and Senate; Sent to the Governor*

*Please note that identification of a bill in this newsletter does not indicate support or opposition to a measure. Each bill is simply identified as an example of legislation that has been assigned to Energy, Public Utilities, or other committees with oversight of these matters.*

## Last Week at the MPSC

- ✎ [The Commission filed its Recommended Order](#) in regards to the Notice of **Town of Flora's** Intent to Increase Rates for Water Service in a Certificated Area in **Madison County**. The proposed rates will increase the average residential water bill by about \$9 per month and increase the average commercial water bill by about \$13 per month. In addition, Town is also proposing to increase the rates for those water customers located one mile beyond the town limits. Specifically, the increase in the average water bill for residential customers inside town will be \$8.39/month, for residential customers outside town will be \$8.79/month, and for residential customers beyond one mile of town will be \$9.19/month. In addition, the increase in the water bill for unmetered customers beyond one mile would be \$15 per month, which would make those customers water bills like that of the average resident.
- ✎ [The Commission filed its Recommended Order](#) in regards to the Notice of **Town of Flora's** Intent to Establish Rates for Sewer Service in a Certificated Area in **Madison County**. The proposed rates will increase the average residential sewer bill by about \$9 per month. Specifically, the increase in the average sewer bill for residential customers inside town will be \$8.05/month, for residential customers outside town will be \$9.63/month. Since no sewer bills are currently being collected from any sewer customers more than one mile outside the corporate limits, the proposed rates for residential customers beyond one mile of town will be \$29.15/month. The proposed sewer rate schedule would establish an initial sewer rate for any unmetered water customers beyond one mile at \$35 per month, which would make those customers sewer bills like that of the average resident.



# FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER BRENT BAILEY CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE



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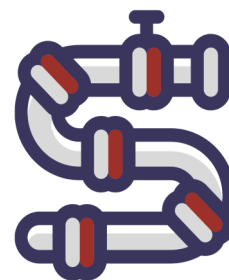
- ✉ **Arcadia Power, Inc.** filed its [Motion to Intervene](#) Out of Time in regards to the Order Establishing Docket to Review Community Solar Proposals.
- ✉ The following entities filed their annual Net Metering Report and Interconnection Report for the year ended 2021: [Mississippi Power Company](#); [Entergy Mississippi, LLC](#)
- ✉ The following entities have filed their Annual 2021 Workforce Diversity Report Containing Employment Data, Recruiting Awareness Reporting Data, and Outreach Efforts Through Community Organizations: [CenterPoint Energy](#)
- ✉ **The Public Utilities Staff** has prepared and filed Purchased Gas Adjustment Reports for the month ended December 31, 2021 for the following entities: [Atmos Energy](#); [CenterPoint Energy](#); [Spire Mississippi Inc.](#)
- ✉ **Great River Utility Operating Company, LLC** filed [Correspondence](#) for the purpose of keeping the **Commission** and **Public Utilities Staff** advised of **Great River's** plans and needs for future requests for major changes in rates. Following approval of the sale and transfers, **Great River** intends to operate each system through a stabilization period of not less than six months and then they will file a notice of intent with the **Commission** to establish state-wide rates, charges, and service rules and regulations for providing services for water and wastewater.
- ✉ **Entergy Mississippi, LLC** filed its [Response](#) to **ECA Solar LLC's** Motion to Intervene and [Opposition](#) to **ECA Solar LLC's** Motion for Extension of Time to File Comments in the Docket to Review Community Solar Proposals.
- ✉ **Entergy Mississippi, LLC** also filed its [First Quarter 2022 Report](#) on Sunflower Solar Facility. The Sunflower Solar Facility will be a 100-megawatt solar photovoltaic facility located in **Sunflower County** near the **City of Ruleville**. The facility is a greenfield project being developed by **Sunflower County Solar Project, LLC**. The Facility is expected to occupy approximately 1,000 acres.

Our Pipeline Safety Division completed **2** construction inspections in the Central District during the month of March.

The total amount of construction notices that were received by the Commission in the Central District during the month of March is approximately **\$1,870,000**.

**"Reporting of Construction Work"**- The rule is found in Chapter 57.1: All Construction work involving gas facilities in which the estimated cost of proposed facilities is in excess of eight thousand dollars are related facilities that would be governed by the Federal Minimum Safety Requirements, will be reported in writing, or via telephone to the MS Public Service Commission prior to starting date of such construction. (There are exceptions for emergencies.)

*The Commission encourages all intra-state natural gas operators to comply with the rule.*



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **30** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	21
Telecommunications	8
Water/Sewer	1

Last week, the Central District received a total of **217** 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.*