

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
1333 H STREET, N.W., SUITE 200, WEST TOWER  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005**

**AMENDED NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

**FORMAL CASE NO. 712, IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTIGATION OF  
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION'S RULES OF PRACTICE AND  
PROCEDURE**

The Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia ("Commission") hereby gives notice, pursuant to § 2-505 of the District of Columbia Code,<sup>1</sup> of its intent to adopt the following amendments to Chapter 3 of Title 15 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, commonly referred to as the "Consumer Bill of Rights." The amendments update the existing regulations, which were developed to address the provision of utility services in a traditionally regulated environment, to reflect the competitive nature of the energy and telecommunications industries and to provide appropriate safeguards for consumers who purchase services in this new, more competitive environment. These amendments are intended to promote administrative efficiency, uniformity of requirements and responsibilities of the utilities, energy and telecommunications service providers, and consumers and to better inform members of the public of their rights and responsibilities regarding electric, natural gas, and telecommunications services in the District of Columbia. The Commission gives notice of its intent to take final rulemaking action not less than thirty (30) days after publication of this notice in the *D.C. Register*.

**Proposed Amendment:**      **The present Chapter 3 is repealed in its entirety and substitute the following Chapter 3 to replace it:**

**CHAPTER 3                      CONSUMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Secs.
- 300                      Purpose and Applicability**
- 301                      Energy Meter Locations**
- 302                      Utility Meter Reading Requirements**
- 303                      Meter Read by Customers**
- 304                      Billing**
- 305                      Payments**
- 306                      Deferred Payment Agreements**
- 307                      Deposits**
- 308                      Use of Customer's Information**

<sup>1</sup> D.C. Code, 2001 Ed. § 2-505.

- 309 [Reserved]
- 310 Grounds for Disconnection
- 311 Procedures for Utility Disconnection
- 312 Personal Contact Before Utility Disconnection
- 313 Field Service Identification and Payment Procedures
- 314 Disconnection of Utility Service
- 315 Reconnection Service
- 316 Customer Discontinuance of Service
- 317-319 [Reserved]
- 320 Customer Inquiries and Complaints
- 321 Publication of Consumer Pamphlet
- 322 Public Access to Rules and Rates
- 323 Office of Consumer Services
- 324 Formal Complaints
- 325 Formal Hearing Procedures
- 326 Decision and Appeals
- 327 Customer Protection Standards Applicable to Energy Suppliers
- 328 Customer Protection Standards Applicable to Telecommunications Service Providers
- 329-397 [Reserved]
- 398 Waiver
- 399 Definitions

**300 PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY**

300.1 Technological changes, new federal and District of Columbia laws and the actions of the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia have created competitive natural gas, electricity and telecommunications service markets in the District of Columbia providing residential consumers with new choices. Consumers have access to an array of competitive Service Provider services as well as continued access to the regulated services of Utilities. The purpose of this chapter is to set forth residential consumer rights, responsibilities and rules for the initiation and acquisition of services, such as, but not limited to Meter reading, billing, Deposits, Disconnections and reconnections of service and the resolution of Complaints between residential consumers and a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider.

300.2 This chapter applies to those Residential Services regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia ("Commission") provided by Electric, Natural Gas and telephone Utilities, and Residential Services provided by Energy Suppliers and Telecommunications Service Providers licensed or certified by the Commission.

300.3 No residential Customer shall be discriminated against or penalized by a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider for exercising any right granted by this chapter.

300.4 Utilities, Energy Suppliers or Telecommunications Service Providers shall not discriminate against any Customer based wholly or partly on the race, color, creed, national origin, geographic location, sex, or sexual orientation of the Customer or for any arbitrary, capricious, or unfairly discriminatory reason.

**301 ENERGY METER LOCATIONS**

301.1 Meters shall be outdoors whenever possible unless extraordinary circumstances prevent it.

301.2 When an indoor electric meter installation is replaced due to modifications in electric service equipment by the utility it shall be relocated outdoors at no expense to the customer. The cost of connecting the Meter to the customer's electric service panel shall remain with the customer.

301.3 Whenever a new natural gas or electric service line is installed or an existing natural gas or electric service line is replaced, the Meter shall be placed outdoors at no expense to the Customer. However, Meter relocation and house piping costs incurred for the convenience of the Customer shall be at the Customer's expense. Meter relocation and house piping costs incurred for the convenience of the Customer shall be calculated in accordance with the Commission approved Tariff for this service.

301.4 If a Meter is located where it is inaccessible for purposes of maintenance, the Customer must grant access to the Meter for maintenance or service Disconnection within the provisions of 310.1. The Customer shall bear the cost of relocating the Meter if it must be moved due to Customer refusal or failure to grant access to the Meter.

**302 UTILITY METER READING REQUIREMENTS**

302.1 Natural Gas and Electric Utilities, if applicable, shall schedule residential Meters for reading at regular monthly intervals and read within three (3) Business Days of the scheduled date unless the Meter is inaccessible, extreme weather exists, or in the event of other extraordinary conditions.

**303 METERS READ BY CUSTOMERS**

303.1 Whenever a Meter reader is on the premises and cannot make an actual reading, the Utility shall provide Customers with an electronic or

telephonic means to report a Customer Meter reading. The Utility shall furnish a Customer a Meter reading card upon request.

303.2 Any Natural Gas or Electric Utility Customer may routinely read his/her own Meter and report the reading to the Utility by the means stated in subsection 303.6, so long as the usage is reported accurately and on the schedule specified by the Utility. A Customer's Bill based on a reading by the Customer is subject to increase or decrease based upon later actual reading by the Utility.

303.3 If a Utility determines that actual Meter readings have not been made of the Customer's Meter after two (2) consecutive Billing Cycles, the Utility shall provide the Customer with the means to read and report the meter reading to the Utility, as provided in subsection 303.6. The Customer's Meter reading shall be used for billing purposes, except in the following circumstances:

- (a) There has been an actual reading of the Meter by the Utility;
- (b) The Meter reading has not been timely forwarded to the Utility.
- (c) The Customer's reported reading varies significantly from the Utility's estimate of usage; if this occurs, the Utility is required to make an actual reading within seven (7) Business Days unless the Customer does not allow access.

303.4 At a Utility's request, the Customer shall provide access to the Meter in order for the Utility to verify the accuracy of readings reported under this subsection. This subsection shall not prevent a Utility from reading Meters on a regular basis.

303.5 If a Utility's estimate is used in lieu of the reading submitted by the Customer, the Utility shall make an actual Meter reading if the Meter is accessible.

303.6 The Utility shall provide the Customer with instructions on proper Meter reading, the date the Meter must be read and the date the Customer must report a Meter reading to the Utility. A Customer can report a Meter reading by any of the following methods:

- (a) telephone or telecommunications device;
- (b) Internet;
- (c) postage prepaid Meter reading card supplied by the Utility; or,

(d) by such other technological means generally available to the Customer and approved by the Commission.

303.7 Upon a Customer initiating service, and annually thereafter, the Utility shall provide information regarding Customer meter readings, including instructions on how to read the Meter and how to obtain the date on which the Meter should be read and the date by which the Customer Meter reading must be returned to the Utility.

**304 BILLING**

304.1 A Customer shall be provided a Bill at least once during each Billing Cycle, unless otherwise agreed to by the Customer.

304.2 An energy Bill shall be based upon an actual Meter reading, estimated Meter reading or Customer Meter reading, except as outlined in 303.3(c) and 304.3.

304.3 Each estimated energy Bill shall be clearly and conspicuously identified as such. An estimated energy Bill may be rendered only in the following circumstances:

- (a) When a Meter is not scheduled to be read, and the Customer Meter reading is not timely reported;
- (b) When a Meter has not been read due to the inaccessibility of the Meter, extreme weather, or other conditions; or
- (c) When a Customer's reading varies significantly from the estimated usage.

304.4 Whenever three (3) or more estimated energy Bills have been rendered in succession, an actual meter reading shall be rendered at the Customer's request at a mutually agreeable time.

304.5 The date of rendition of a Bill shall be the date stated on the Bill.

304.6 If a billing rendition date is changed by more than seven (7) Days, the Customer shall be provided written or electronic notice within ten (10) Days prior to the date of the change.

304.7 Each energy Bill rendered shall state clearly the following information:

- (a) The beginning and ending Meter reading of the Billing Cycle and the difference between the two Meter readings, if such data is available;

- (b) The beginning and ending dates of the Billing Cycle;
- (c) The due date by which payment must be made and the date after which the payment will be considered overdue or late;
- (d) The previous balance, if any;
- (e) Stated separately, the amount due for residential Utility services, Distribution Service Charge, transmission service, Purchased Gas Charge, natural gas supply service or Generation Service Charge, as applicable;
- (f) A listing of the amount due for other tariffed Charges, as applicable;
- (g) A listing of the amount due for non-tariffed Charges, as applicable;
- (h) The total amount due;
- (i) The rate elements of the generation, transmission and Distribution Service Charges identified for basic Utility service.
- (j) Amount of all payments or other credits made to the Customer's Account during current Billing Cycle;
- (k) Any amount overdue;
- (l) The statement, "Any inquiry or complaint about this bill should be made prior to the due date, in order to avoid late charges";
- (m) The address and telephone number to which an inquiry or Complaint should be directed;
- (n) As applicable, the statement: "[This Utility] is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia."
- (o) The name, address and telephone number of the Public Service Commission;
- (p) Whether the Bill is based upon an actual Meter reading, a Customer Meter reading, or an estimate of usage, if such data is known; and
- (q) The name, address and telephone number of The Office of the People's Counsel;

- (r) Any other information that the Public Service Commission may from time to time require;
- (s) If applicable, the energy Utility shall include an itemization of usage, payments made, and account balance;
- (t) If applicable, the energy Utility shall include either an energy usage history or a gas usage profile.

304.8

Each telecommunications Bill rendered to a residential Customer shall state clearly the following information:

- (a) The telephone number and Account number for which the Bill is rendered.
- (b) The due date;
- (c) The previous balance, if any;
- (d) The beginning and ending dates of the Billing Cycle;
- (e) The total amount due for local service Charges, identified as the total amount due for local Charges, taxes, and other applicable surcharges, as well as toll service, except where provided as part of a Bundled Service;
- (f) An itemization of all authorized Charges for message toll calls, including the date, time, duration, type, place and telephone number called when available, and the applicable Charge, except where provided as part of a Bundle of Services;
- (g) A monthly or semi-annual itemization and amount for optional recurring charges selected by the customer;
- (h) The address and telephone number to which an inquiry or Complaint should be directed;
- (i) A statement indicating that [This Utility] and some of the services contained in the Bill are regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia;
- (j) The name, address and telephone number of the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia;
- (k) The name and address of the Office of the People's Counsel; and

- (l) Any other information that the Public Service Commission may from time to time require.
- 304.9 An unpaid balance may be transferred from a Customer's former residential Account in the District of Columbia to the Customer's next residential Account in the District of Columbia.
- 304.10 A Natural Gas or Electric Utility may, at the election of a Customer, Bill a Customer in accordance with a level payment billing program or budget payment plan. The Utility shall inform the Customer of this option and explain how the monthly payments will be calculated. Prior to implementation of the plan, the Utility shall provide the Customer with the following information in written or electronic form:
- (a) An acknowledgement that the Customer shall be on the plan effective the next available Billing Cycle;
  - (b) An estimate of the Customer's use on an annual basis and an explanation of how the equal monthly payment has been calculated; and
  - (c) The final Bill for the plan effective period will reflect the last level payment installment or budgeted payment installment adjusted for any difference between actual and budgeted usage. Amounts overpaid will be credited to the Customer's Account or refunded, if requested by the Customer. Amounts underpaid that are equal to or greater than the monthly payment can be paid in up to three (3) monthly installments.
- 304.11 The Natural Gas or Electric Utility shall perform a periodic analysis of the Customer's plan and notify the Customer, within twenty-one (21) Days thereafter, if actual usage varies significantly from that upon which the plan was based and give the Customer an opportunity for revision of the plan.
- 304.12 A Utility may require an Applicant for service to pay a previously unpaid Account balance for the same class of service furnished to the Applicant in the District of Columbia.
- 304.13 In the case of a transfer of a previously unpaid District of Columbia residential Account balance for service rendered in the District of Columbia to a Customer's Account pursuant to this chapter, the Utility and Telecommunications Service Provider shall notify the Customer in writing of the reason for the charge, what the Customer must do to obtain or continue service, and how the Customer can dispute the charge.

- 304.14 An Energy Supplier may include other Bill components. If an Energy Supplier elects to Bill for multiple services, each service shall be clearly identified on the Bill.
- 304.15 Every Bill rendered by an Energy Supplier for residential natural gas or electric service, whether a separate Bill or a Consolidated Bill, shall include the following Bill components, if such data is available to the Energy Supplier:
- (a) Meter readings, such that, current, prior months and differences between the two may be presented in the same place;
  - (b) Meter reading date, which may be presented in a single place on a consolidated Bill;
  - (c) Number and kind of units measured;
  - (d) Applicable rate schedule;
  - (e) Taxes and surcharges, with each appropriate tax and surcharge separately displayed;
  - (f) Notice of potential late payment charges;
  - (g) Total amount due, provided that for consolidated bills, subtotals for the Company's and the energy supplier's portions of the Bill and a total amount due;
  - (h) Payment due date, provided that where Bills are separate, then payment dates may differ;
  - (i) For Estimated Bills, a distinctive indication where a Bill is based on estimated Meter reading;
  - (j) Business address and telephone numbers for billing inquiries;
  - (k) Conversion from Meter reading units to billing units, including computation;
  - (l) Service address, shown on first page of Bill;
  - (m) Mailing address, shown on first page of Bill;
  - (n) The Company account number, shown on each page if multiple pages;

- (o) Customer name and account number, shown on each page if multiple pages;
- (p) Bill payment plans, where applicable;
- (q) Emergency number for Washington Gas or PEPCO, whichever is applicable;
- (r) Required notices, e.g., Customer Bill of Rights, legal notices, which may be included as an insert;
- (s) Next Meter reading date;
- (t) Prior Bill amount and summary of energy supplier and/or Washington Gas or PEPCO charges;
- (u) Disclosure of previous payment activity;
- (v) Meter number/identification;
- (w) Number of days in Billing Cycle;
- (x) Billing Cycle;
- (y) Public Service Commission's address and telephone number;
- (z) Address to which payments are to be sent;
- (aa) How the check should be made payable;
- (bb) Collection messages;
- (cc) Bill step computations;
- (dd) Date of Bill issuance; and
- (ee) The Office of the People's Counsel's address and phone number.

**305****PAYMENTS**

## 305.1

Payments shall be due within twenty (20) Days after the date the Bill is rendered. If the due date falls on a non-business Day, the due date shall be the next Business Day.

- 305.2 The date of payment shall be considered as the Day the payment is received at the offices of the Utility, Energy Supplier, Telecommunications Service Provider or an authorized agent.
- 305.3 No late payment charge shall be levied on any amounts, including deferred payment installments, paid by the due date, or on amounts in dispute before the Commission. Amounts paid within the first month after the due date shall bear a late payment charge of one percent (1%), and an additional late payment charge at the rate of one and one half percent (1½ %) on the remaining unpaid balance per billing month thereafter, unless another rate has been specified by the Commission.
- 305.4 Unless the Customer designates otherwise, Customer payments shall be applied in the following order: first to the applicable Utility for arrears for Commission regulated Charges, oldest item first; next to arrears for non-regulated Charges (i.e., Energy Supplier Charges for gas supply or electricity); next to the Utility for current Commission-regulated Charges; finally, to current non-regulated Charges.
- 305.5 For energy or telecommunications services, sections 305.1 through 305.4 shall not apply when the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer agree to different payment terms.

### **306 DEFERRED PAYMENT AGREEMENTS**

- 306.1 The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer may enter into a Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA). The Utility shall include the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider past due balances as part of its DPA. No Charges, other than those accrued as of the date of settlement, and no interest shall be charged as part of the Deferred Payment Agreement.
- 306.2 Every DPA negotiated and agreed to between the Customer and the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be provided to the Customer in writing within ten (10) Business Days and shall include the following information:
- (a) The date of the DPA;
  - (b) The amount overdue and the payment terms of the DPA, including down payment amount and installment terms;
  - (c) The process that the Utility, Energy or Telecommunications Service Provider will follow, including a notice of Disconnection, to enforce the terms of the DPA;

- (d) A Customer's failure to make a scheduled payment under the DPA when due is a default and places the Account in delinquent status as of the date of default. Late payment Charges shall apply to any default of a DPA and may cause the DPA to become void; and
- (e) The DPA shall state that all subsequent Bills must be paid on or before the due date. Failure to pay all such subsequent Bills as stated will cause the DPA to become void. In such cases, normal collection activities, up to and including Disconnection may resume.

### 307 DEPOSITS

307.1 A Utility may require a Deposit from a new Customer. This provision shall not apply to Customers participating in Utility discount programs or other Commission authorized programs.

307.2 A Utility shall not require a cash Deposit as a condition of new or continued Utility service on the basis of income level, home ownership, residence location, race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin or any other criterion except those stated in this chapter.

307.3 A utility shall not require a cash Deposit as a condition of new service to a person who has been a Customer of a utility before, except under the following circumstances:

- (a) The service of the Customer has been disconnected for nonpayment of a past due balance not in dispute within the previous twelve (12) months; or
- (b) The Customer has in an unauthorized manner, used, diverted or interfered with the service of the utility situated or delivered on or about the Customer's premises within the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the Customer's request for new service; provided, that the following requirements are met:
  - (1) The Customer's service was last disconnected for this reason within the last five (5) years and that the Utility had so notified the Customer in writing, either by U.S. mail or electronically, to this effect; or
  - (2) The Customer either did not file a Complaint with the Commission regarding the Disconnection; or, if a Complaint was filed, final administrative action was taken thereon unfavorable to the Customer.

- (c) The Customer's Account has been delinquent in excess of sixty (60) Days within the previous twelve (12) months.
  - (d) The Customer has an outstanding balance due the utility for utility services incurred within the immediately preceding three (3) years. The provision of new service may be conditioned upon payment of the outstanding balance.
- 307.4 When a Deposit is required as a condition of new service to a former Customer, the Customer shall be notified in writing of the reason therefore and the amount of Deposit required.
- 307.5 A Utility shall not require a cash Deposit as a condition of continued service to a Customer, except under the following circumstances:
- (a) Utility service at the Customer's residence has been used, interfered with, or diverted in an unauthorized manner within the previous twelve (12) months; or
  - (b) The Customer's Account has been delinquent for an excess of sixty (60) days within the previous twelve months.
- 307.6 When a Deposit is required of a Customer with service connected, the Customer shall be notified in writing of the reason therefore, the amount of Deposit required, the date due (not less than fourteen (14) days from the date of the first written notice), and that it may be paid in installments.
- 307.7 No Deposit for Utility service shall exceed 2/12<sup>th</sup> the estimated annual Bill. The Utility shall notify the Customer in writing of the reason for the Deposit, the amount, date by which it must be paid, the fact that it may be paid in installments, and the payment options for the Deposit.
- 307.8 Each Utility shall be liable for interest on Deposits held from the date the Deposit is made until the date the Deposit has been refunded, or until an effort has been made to refund the Deposit. Each Utility shall pay simple interest on deposits with the rate being established not later than January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, equal to the average annual yields of one-year Treasury bills for September, October, and November of the preceding year.
- 307.9 The Deposit with accrued interest shall be credited to any final Bill and any remaining balance shall be returned to the Customer.
- 307.10 A Deposit and accrued interest shall be refunded promptly by the Utility upon payment by the Customer of all proper Charges for Utility service for twelve (12) successive months in case of a gas or electric Customer, or nine (9) successive months in the case of a telephone Customer.

- 307.11 A Utility shall maintain a record of all Deposits, showing the customer's name and address or other identifying data, the amount of the Deposit, the date it was paid, and the interest earned and paid thereon.
- 307.12 Each Customer posting a Deposit shall receive confirmation containing, at a minimum, the following information:
- (a) The Customer's name;
  - (b) The date of the payment;
  - (c) The amount of payment; and
  - (d) A statement of the terms and conditions applicable to Deposits.
- 307.13 When a customer is entitled to a return of a Deposit it shall be paid upon presentation of proper identification.
- 307.14 An Energy Supplier may require a Deposit from any Customer if authorized by its license.

**308 USE OF CUSTOMER'S INFORMATION**

- 308.1 Upon requesting a Customer's social security account number, the utility shall inform the Customer that the provision of the number is voluntary and will not affect the provision of service to that Customer.
- 308.2 A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall not disclose information which reveals the status of the Account of any individual Customer without the Customer's consent or upon dictate of lawful authority. A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider may rely upon written or oral representation of the Commission or the Office of the People's Counsel that consent has been granted.
- 308.3 Unless a Customer consents in writing, an Electric or Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier may not disclose or use information that is (1) about the Customer, and (2) was supplied to the Electric or Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier by the Customer for any purpose other than the purpose for which the information was originally acquired.
- 308.4 The restrictions in §§308.2 and 308.3 above do not apply to lawful disclosures for Bill collection or credit rating reports. It shall be the responsibility of the Electric or Natural Gas Utility or Energy Supplier to obtain and maintain the written consent referred to in §§308.2 and 308.3

above. This information shall be made available to the Commission upon request.

309 [RESERVED]

310 **GROUND FOR DISCONNECTION**

310.1 A Utility may disconnect service for any of the following reasons:

- (a) The Customer does not pay;
- (b) The Customer does not enter into a DPA;
- (c) Service is being used but no occupant or other person has applied for Customer status at the location;
- (d) There is unauthorized use, diversion or interference with utility service on or about the customer's premises;
- (e) The Customer fails to allow access to the premises to inspect, service, install, replace, read, or remove a Meter or remote recording device or allow access to other equipment, when the Utility has requested access in writing;
- (f) There is an unsafe condition or an adverse effect on the integrity of an energy or telecommunications delivery system or violation of a government statute, regulation or Commission-approved Tariff provision;
- (g) The Utility has reason to believe that there is fraud or that the Customer has misrepresented his or her identity in order to obtain Utility service;
- (h) Application for utility service was made in the name of an individual who is not an occupant of the dwelling unit without disclosure of the individual's actual address and without written authorization by such individual;
- (i) Application for utility service was made in the name of a third party without disclosing that fact or without bona fide authority from the third party;
- (j) Application was made by an individual for the purpose of assisting another occupant of a dwelling unit to avoid payment of that occupant's prior outstanding bill; or

(k) Failure to comply with an order of the Commission.

310.2 A Utility shall not initiate Disconnection of service or disconnect service without the consent of the Customer in the following circumstances:

(a) The amount overdue stated on the Disconnection notice includes an unpaid amount owed from a different Account, unless the amount was properly transferred to the Customer's Account balance; or an amount owed from Estimated Bills, unless the Utility has attempted reasonable alternatives to obtain a reading of the Meter; or

(b) Failure of a Customer to pay for merchandise or appliances.

310.3 Disconnection of natural gas or electric utility service for non-payment of Bills, failure to post a cash Security Deposit, or failure to comply with the terms of a DPA where natural gas or electricity is used as the primary source of heating the residence is prohibited:

(a) On any day when the National Weather Service forecast for the following 24 hours for the District of Columbia forecasts that the temperature will be thirty-two (32°) degrees Fahrenheit or below; or

(b) On any day preceding a holiday or a weekend when the National Weather Service forecast indicated that the temperature will be thirty-two (32°) degrees Fahrenheit or below during the holiday or weekend.

### 311 PROCEDURES FOR UTILITY DISCONNECTION

311.1 A Utility shall postpone the Disconnection of service for a reasonable time not to exceed twenty-one (21) Days if the Utility is provided with a physician's certificate or notice from a public health official which states that Disconnection would be detrimental to the health and safety of a bona fide occupant of the premises; provided that the Customer enters into a DPA. The postponement may be extended for one (1) additional period of not more than twenty-one (21) Days by renewal of the certificate or notice.

311.2 A Utility shall not disconnect service when a dispute involving the Account in question has been filed with the Office of Consumer Services and the dispute is still pending at the Public Service Commission; provided, that payments are made for amounts not in dispute.

- 311.3 A Utility shall not disconnect Residential Service unless a Disconnection notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least fifteen (15) Days prior to the date of proposed Disconnection. The Utility providing telecommunications services shall not suspend Residential Service unless a suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least ten (10) Days prior to the date of proposed suspension. Any notice required to be sent to a Customer prior to Disconnection or suspension of service may be sent along with the Bill for service; however, the notice of Disconnection or suspension of service must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in bold print. Upon request of the Customer, a duplicate copy of the notice shall be sent by either first class mail or Internet or other technological means to a designated third party. The third party assumes no obligation for the Customer's Account.
- 311.4 Nothing in this section shall preclude a Utility from taking immediate action necessary to correct any condition which threatens the health or safety of the Customer, the public or the integrity of the Utility's distribution system or action taken in cooperation with civil or law enforcement authorities. However, where that corrective action is taken, the Utility shall not thereupon discontinue service to any Customer whom it believes to be responsible for creation of that condition until it has complied with the notice provisions of this section. The notice and reconnection required by this rule shall not be required in the event that service has been disconnected for theft of services, unauthorized use, diversion or interference with utility service on or about the Customer's premises.
- 311.5 The disconnection notice shall state the following information:
- (a) The Customer's name, address and Account number;
  - (b) The address where service is to be discontinued, if different;
  - (c) The Charges for reconnection of service, if any;
  - (d) A statement of the total amount due, if applicable;
  - (e) The reason for the proposed Disconnection of service;
  - (f) The earliest date on which service will be disconnected in the absence of payment or adjustment;
  - (g) The telephone number and address of the Utility, and an invitation to contact the Utility to resolve the matter;

- (h) The Customer's right to delay Disconnection of service for medical reasons;
- (i) The possibility of deferred payments; and
- (j) The right to file a complaint with the Public Service Commission, and the availability of legal representation and assistance by the Office of the People's Counsel and the address and telephone number of the Office of the People's Counsel.

311.6 Utility service shall not be disconnected and shall be restored if Disconnected where a Customer has established or is reinstated to a DPA for utility charges that are the basis of the notice of Disconnection and the Customer has not defaulted on such DPA.

311.7 A Utility shall not disconnect service for the period after 5:00 p.m. Thursday and before 8:00 a.m. Monday, and it may not disconnect on a legal holiday, or on a Day that the Utility is closed to the public, except as provided in §§311.8 and 311.9.

311.8 A Utility may disconnect service on Friday or Saturday if the following applies:

- (a) The Meter is located on the inside of the premises or is otherwise not readily accessible; and
- (b) The Utility has previously and unsuccessfully attempted to gain access to the premise as stated in 310.1(e), on at least two (2) week days.

311.9 Subsections §§311.7 and 311.8 shall not apply to service disconnections to abandoned buildings, where the customer has requested disconnection in circumstances of unsafe conditions or of theft of natural gas or electricity, or to disconnect telephone service where there is evidence of toll abuse or fraud.

### **312 PERSONAL CONTACT BEFORE UTILITY DISCONNECTION**

312.1 A Utility shall make, at minimum, two (2) attempts to contact the Customer prior to Disconnection as specified in this section.

312.2 At least two (2) Days before the date set for Disconnection of service, a Utility shall make reasonable efforts to contact the Customer, by telephone, in person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection.

- 312.3 Immediately preceding the physical Disconnection of natural gas or electric service, the representative of the Utility designated to perform that function shall make a reasonable effort to identify himself or herself to the Customer or other responsible person then on the premises and announce the purpose of his or her presence; a telephone Utility shall make a second attempt to contact the customer.
- 312.4 If contact has not been made as provided in §312.2, and the Customer or other responsible Person is not on the premises, Disconnection of service shall not occur. The field service representative shall leave a notice reasonably calculated to be seen by the Person residing in the house in the same manner as the notice required by §314, indicating that service may be disconnected as soon as the next Business Day unless outstanding Bills are paid.
- 312.5 The Utility shall not deliver more than two (2) consecutive notices of Disconnection for past due Bills without attempting contact with the Customer as required by sections 312.1 and 312.2.
- 313 FIELD SERVICE IDENTIFICATION AND PAYMENT PROCEDURES**
- 313.1 The field representative shall produce an identification badge containing the Utility's name and logo, the field representative picture and full name, and, if applicable, the representative shall wear a company uniform bearing the company's name and logo.
- 313.2 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall have a statement of the amount due and inquire whether the Bill has been paid. If evidence is presented which reasonably indicates that the Bill has been paid, that a DPA has been entered into, that the Bill is currently the subject of a pending proceeding before the Commission, or that the Customer has demonstrated a medical emergency consistent with the provisions of this chapter, service shall not be disconnected.
- 313.3 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall be authorized to accept payment. If payment in full of all Charges due and owing is tendered, service shall not be disconnected. Tender of payment by personal check shall be accepted unless the Customer has within the past twelve (12) months paid the Utility with a check not honored by a bank.
- 313.4 The natural gas or electric field service representative shall seek authorization from his or her supervisor to accept partial payments or to override his or her orders to disconnect service upon a reasonable explanation by the Customer of the delinquency.

**314 DISCONNECTION OF UTILITY SERVICE**

314.1 If the requirement to make an attempt to contact a Customer is satisfied, the Utility may disconnect service to a residential Customer on the date specified in the notice or within a reasonable time thereafter.

314.2 When natural gas or electric service is disconnected, the Utility shall leave a notice reasonably calculated to be seen by Persons residing on the premises stating that service has been disconnected and the address and telephone number of the Utility where the Customer may arrange to have service restored. The notice shall also state procedures to be followed where a medical or safety emergency exists on the premises.

**315 RECONNECTION OF SERVICE**

315.1 A Utility shall reconnect service within twenty-four (24) hours of cure of the cause for Disconnection.

315.2 The Utility may Charge the Customer for reconnection of service in an amount authorized by the Commission.

**316 CUSTOMER DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE**

316.1 A Customer shall be permitted to discontinue service with a Utility either by telephone, in writing, or in person at the business office of the Utility, provided that the Customer contacts the Utility at least three (3) Business Days before the date discontinuance is desired and grants access to discontinue the service.

316.2 The Customer shall be responsible for all electricity and natural gas consumed for three (3) Business Days after contacting the Utility pursuant to section 316.1, unless the Utility obtains an actual meter reading sooner than the third Day.

316.3 The Customer shall be responsible for all telephone Charges due for the period service has been rendered.

**317-319 [RESERVED]**

**320 CUSTOMER INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS**

320.1 This section applies to Utility, Energy Suppliers and Telecommunications Service Providers. A Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall, in accordance with this section, establish written procedures which will ensure the prompt, efficient, and thorough receipt,

investigation and, where possible, resolution of all Customer inquiries, service requests and Complaints regarding residential Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider services and Charges.

- 320.2 Qualified Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider personnel shall be available and prepared at all times during normal business hours to receive and discuss all Customer inquiries, service requests and Complaints. All Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Providers shall make necessary arrangements to ensure that foreign language-speaking personnel are made available to assist the non-English speaking public or maintain a toll-free or local telephone number for Customer service inquiries.
- 320.3 Supervisory personnel shall be available during normal business hours to discuss Customer complaints that are not resolved through contact with customer service representatives.
- 320.4 Qualified personnel authorized to enter into a DPA on behalf of the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be available during normal business hours.
- 320.5 Qualified personnel shall be available at all times to respond to Customer calls regarding interruption or Disconnection of service or emergency conditions.
- 320.6 When a Complaint cannot be resolved between the Customer and its Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall inform the Customer of the right to contact the Commission for resolution. The Utility, Energy Supplier, and Telecommunications Service Provider shall also advise the Customer of the availability of OPC to assist in resolving a dispute before the Commission.
- 320.7 In every dispute between a Customer and the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the first attempt at resolution shall be made directly between the parties unless the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider has been notified that the Customer is represented by counsel.
- 320.8 When the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider concludes that there is a mistake in an amount billed, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall adjust the amount due, and shall reflect the adjustment during the next Billing Cycle or as soon as reasonably possible.
- 320.9 A Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider and a Customer may agree upon a DPA to pay any amount due the Utility or

service provider. No charges, other than those accrued as of the date of settlement, and no interest shall be charged to the Customer as part of the DPA.

320.10 When a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider cannot resolve a dispute with a Customer, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall refer the Customer to the Commission for resolution.

### 321 PUBLICATION OF CONSUMER PAMPHLET

321.1 Each Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall prepare a pamphlet in English and Spanish which clearly summarizes the rights and responsibilities of its Customers in accordance with these and other applicable rules. The text of the pamphlet is subject to prior Commission approval and the pre-publication comment by the Office of the People's Counsel. Every Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall also make available free copies of this pamphlet to those persons who speak limited or no English, consistent with the Language Access Act of the District of Columbia (D.C. Law 15-167, as amended).

321.2 The pamphlet shall be available at every Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider location open to the general public.

321.3 The pamphlet will be provided upon request at no charge to Customers. Each new Customer shall be offered a pamphlet free of charge.

321.4 The pamphlet shall cover, if applicable, the following items:

- (a) Billing procedures and estimation standards;
- (b) Methods for a Customer to verify billing accuracy;
- (c) Customer's right to have Meter tested free of charge by the utility once every twelve (12) months as well as a referee Meter test pursuant to 15 DCMR §2368 *et seq.*;
- (d) Customer payment standards and procedures;
- (e) Security Deposit;
- (f) Disconnection and reconnection of service;
- (g) Inquiry, service and complaint procedures;

- (h) Public Service Commission Consumer Complaint resolution procedures and the availability of assistance and legal representation by the Office of the People's Counsel;
- (i) The availability of DPA for payment of Bills or Deposits; and
- (j) Customer access to information required to be made available to them.

321.5 The cover of the pamphlet shall indicate conspicuously that the pamphlet is provided in accordance with the rules of the Commission and shall indicate in English and Spanish that a Spanish version is available upon request.

321.6 Based on the number of limited or non-English speaking persons that a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider serves or encounters, or is likely to serve or encounter in the District of Columbia, each Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall have accessible an interpreter for those persons who seek information about the rights and responsibilities of Customers, services, and programs as stated in this section consistent with the laws of the District of Columbia.

## **322 PUBLIC ACCESS TO RULES AND RATES**

322.1 Every Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider shall keep available for free public inspection during normal business hours in every office open to the general public, copies of this chapter, the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider's schedule of rates, and its terms and conditions of service.

322.2 Every Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall have available translation services during normal business hours for the translation of its Tariff to other languages at no cost to the Customer.

322.3 Suitable signs shall be posted at each office open to the public calling attention to the public that the items are available for inspection. Upon request, the Utility or Service Provider shall provide a copy of this chapter and advise Customers where copies of rate schedules and general service provisions may be obtained.

## **323 OFFICE OF CONSUMER SERVICES**

323.1 There is established within the Public Service Commission an Office of Consumer Services.

- 323.2 The Office of Consumer Services shall do the following:
- (a) Answer inquiries regarding residential utility service, the services provided by each Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider and the procedures for resolving disputes;
  - (b) Assist in the informal resolution of Customer complaints and disputes which have not been resolved under the Utility's or Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's own procedures; and
  - (c) Refer to the Commission for formal adjudication any Customer's complaint that cannot be resolved informally.
- 323.3 Any applicant for utility, energy or telecommunications services, a Utility or Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider Customer, or the Applicant's or Customer's designated representative may complain to an Commission concerning a Deposit requirement, the service provided, or a Utility or an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider's Bill. Should a party other than the Applicant, Customer of record, or the Office of the People's Counsel file a Complaint, the Applicant or Customer of record shall file a notarized letter authorizing the designee to act on his or her behalf, and the individual or entity shall file a notice which authorizes it to act on the Applicant's or Customer's behalf.
- 323.4 If a Complaint addresses a matter which has failed to be resolved under the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's procedures, the Office of Consumer Services shall handle the matter as an Informal Complaint for resolution. If the Complaint has not been referred to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider of the service in question, the matter shall be referred to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider for an attempt at direct resolution. In every case of a dispute between a Customer and a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider, the first attempt at resolution shall be made directly between the parties.
- 323.5 The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall respond to the Informal Complaint or similar Customer related referral to the Office of Consumer Services within fourteen (14) Business Days. If the Complaint or matter is not resolved within that time, the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall refer the matter back to the Office of Consumer Services.

323.6 If the Office of Consumer Services handles a matter informally, the office shall notify the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider by telephone, in writing or other technological means to investigate the matter and attempt through mediation to resolve the matter.

323.7 If the Office of Consumer Services determines that a matter cannot be resolved informally, then within five (5) Business Days, the Office of Consumer Services shall notify the Complainant in writing and invite the Complainant to file a Formal Complaint with the Commission. The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall be copied on this notification. The notification shall:

- (a) State that the Complainant has the right to file, at no cost, a Formal Complaint, if he or she so desires;
- (b) State that a Formal Complaint must be filed within fourteen (14) Days of the date of mailing of the notification or the matter shall be dismissed;
- (c) Indicate the availability of assistance and legal representation by the Office of the People's Counsel and the address and telephone number of the Office of the People's Counsel;
- (d) Indicate that the Complainant may be represented by him or herself, by counsel, by the Office of the People's Counsel, or by a third party of the Complainant's choosing; and
- (e) Set forth the Commission's Formal Complaint and hearing procedures.

**324 FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

324.1 A Formal Complaint shall be in writing, signed by the Complainant, and shall state facts necessary to state a claim upon which relief may be granted and the specific relief requested. The Complainant shall submit the Complaint in a format approved by the Office of Consumer Services or consistent with the requirements set forth in Chapter 1 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as applicable. 15 D.C.M.R. § 100 *et seq.* The Office of Consumer Services, or the Customer's designated representative, may assist in completing a Complaint. The Complaint shall be filed with the Office of the Commission Secretary.

- 324.2 If a review of the Complaint by the Office of Consumer Services of the Complaint determines that a complaint should be revised to more clearly or fairly set forth the matter at issue, the complainant shall be so notified and offered assistance by the OPC or the Office of Consumer Services to amend the Complaint.
- 324.3 Within two (2) Business Days of the filing of the Complaint, the Office of the Commission Secretary shall notify and provide the affected Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider a copy of the Complaint in writing by facsimile, U.S. mail or other technological means. Each Utility, Energy Supplier and Telecommunications Service Provider shall provide the name, address, and telephone number of its designated contact Person or office for delivery of such notification.
- 324.4 A written answer to the Complaint shall be filed with the Commission within fourteen (14) Days from the date of notice, setting forth the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunications Service Provider's position with respect to the allegations contained in the Complaint. The Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider shall also serve a copy of its answer on the Customer or Customer's Designated Representative or their legal counsel.

### **325 FORMAL HEARING PROCEDURES**

- 325.1 A formal hearing shall, if appropriate, be scheduled within forty-five (45) Days of the filing of the Complaint answer. Except in special cases, hearings shall be held during business hours of the Commission. The Commission shall designate a hearing officer who has not participated in the investigation of the Complaint to preside over the proceeding.
- 325.2 If the Formal Complaint fails to state all the facts necessary to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, the Hearing Officer may order the Complainant to amend the Complaint or may dismiss the complaint.
- 325.3 The Commission shall provide notice of the hearing by personal service, by first-class mail or other technological means, as authorized by the Commission, to the Customer and the Customer's Designated Representative and to the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider. Service shall be made by first-class mail postage prepaid at least fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing date unless the parties agree on a shorter time. The notice shall also state that in the event that the Complainant fails to attend a scheduled hearing without evidence of good cause, the hearing officer may dismiss the Complaint with prejudice. The hearing officer may reschedule any hearing to a date or time agreed upon by the parties or, upon notice and for good cause shown, at the request of any party.

- 325.4 A party requesting a second continuance will be required to provide good cause for the continuance. If the party is the Complainant and he or she does not provide good cause, as determined by the hearing officer, the Complaint may be dismissed, with prejudice. If the party is a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider and it fails to provide good cause, the matter may be heard, without continuance. The hearing officer may, at his or her discretion, postpone or adjourn a hearing for reasonable cause. If a hearing is continued, adequate notice shall be provided to the parties.
- 325.5 In the event the Complainant fails to attend any scheduled hearing without good cause, the hearing officer may dismiss the Complaint with prejudice.
- 325.6 In the event a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider fails to attend a scheduled hearing without good cause, the hearing officer may hear evidence and render a decision.
- 325.7 Upon a reasonable request from each other, the parties shall, within the timeframe prescribed in the Commission's rules in Chapter 1, provide all information they have relevant to the matters at issue in the Complaint including relevant documents, Account data, files and the names of witnesses. Nothing herein shall preclude a party from filing a request or motion to compel responses to information requests.
- 325.8 Parties may examine any relevant records of the Commission. However, information deemed to be confidential may be reviewed in a manner that is consistent with the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.
- 325.9 On any issue or procedure where Chapter 3 is silent, the hearing officer may at his or her discretion utilize Chapter 1 regulations as appropriate.
- 325.10 Parties may represent themselves or be represented by counsel, conservator, legal guardian or someone with power of attorney. If a complainant proceeds *pro se*, the hearing officer may construe the pleadings liberally. If it appears to the hearing officer that a party appearing without an attorney should be represented by an attorney, the hearing officer shall suggest that the party secure counsel or contact the Office of the People's Counsel concerning representation and allow a reasonable time to secure such representation.
- 325.11 Parties shall have the right to present evidence, call witnesses, and present written and oral argument.

- 325.12 Witnesses shall testify under oath, and the parties shall have the right to examine and cross-examine all witnesses.
- 325.13 The hearing officer may, in his or her discretion, limit any line of questioning, testimony and the time for argument.
- 325.14 Unless otherwise ordered by the hearing officer, the Complainant's witnesses shall testify first, followed by the Utility's, Energy Supplier's or Telecommunication Service Provider's witnesses. A reasonable opportunity will be afforded all parties to present rebuttal evidence.
- 325.15 The hearing officer may elicit testimony from any witness regarding the issue(s) in dispute.
- 325.16 The hearing officer has the obligation, especially when a Complainant is not represented by counsel, to ensure that all material facts are developed to the fullest extent consistent with his or her responsibility to preside impartially throughout the proceeding.
- 325.17 The formal rules of evidence shall not apply, but the hearing officer shall exclude irrelevant or unduly repetitious evidence.
- 325.18 Parties may stipulate to any facts, and such stipulation shall be put into evidence.
- 325.19 All proceedings shall be recorded or transcribed by a certified court reporter. The transcriptions shall be made available promptly to any party upon request, at the party's expense.

**326 DECISION AND APPEALS**

- 326.1 Within thirty (30) Days after the close of the record, the hearing officer shall issue a written decision which states the issues and makes findings of fact, conclusions of law, and his or her disposition of the matter.
- 326.2 When reviewing the matter for disposition, the hearing officer has available the following remedies:
- (a) Upon a factual finding of a complainant's meritorious claim, the hearing officer may award, as the facts in each individual case may warrant, a refund to Complainant for overpayment to a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider; a credit to Complainant's account with a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider; a reduction in the amounts owed to a Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service

Provider; or any other equitable or injunctive relief as permitted by these rules.

- (b) In no instance may a hearing officer award a Complainant compensatory or punitive damages.
- (c) Complaints requesting monetary damages as the sole basis for relief may be dismissed with prejudice by the hearing officer for failure to state a claim upon which relief may granted.

326.3 In cases involving billing disputes in which the hearing officer has concluded that all or part of the amount in dispute is owed, the hearing officer may, for good cause stated in the decision, direct that the amount found outstanding be paid in installments.

326.4 Copies of the hearing officer's decision shall be served upon the parties either personally, by regular mail or other technological means on the Day the decision is issued, together with instructions on how to appeal the decision to the Commission and indicating the last date the appeal may be filed.

326.5 The decision of the hearing officer shall be final if there is no appeal to the Commission within the time specified in this section.

326.6 Any party may appeal the hearing officer's decision to the Commission by filing a Petition for Review with the Commission Secretary's Office within ten (10) Days of personal service or service by other technological means or twelve (12) Days of service by mail of the decision.

326.7 The appeal shall be signed by the party or his or her designated representative, identifying the decision appealed and specifying the grounds on which the appeal is based.

326.8 The appealing party shall serve the opposing party with a copy of the petition for review within one (1) Day of the date of its filing with the Commission. Service may be made personally, by first class mail or other technological means.

326.9 The opposing party's response or cross-appeal shall be filed within seven (7) Days of personal service or other technological means and ten (10) Days of service by first class mail.

326.10 Within ten (10) Days of the filing of a Petition for Review, the record shall be prepared, certified as complete and forwarded by the Commission Secretary to the Commission.

- 326.11 The Commission shall review the decision and rule on the Petition for Review within thirty (30) Days after the record is prepared, certified as complete and forwarded by the Commission Secretary.
- 326.12 Upon review of the record, and after giving consideration to the matters raised on appeal in the Petition for Review, the Commission shall:
- (a) Adopt the decision of the hearing officer;
  - (b) Issue a Commission decision;
  - (c) Remand the matter to the hearing officer for further proceedings; or
  - (d) Take such other action as the Commission may deem appropriate.
- 326.13 If the Commission is unable to render a decision pursuant to 326.12 within thirty (30) Days, then the hearing officer's decision becomes the final decision of the Commission. The decision will become final unless a tolling order is issued by the Commission extending the time for the Commission's decision.
- 326.14 Any party may request reconsideration of a final Commission decision within thirty (30) Days of the issuance of the decision. The filing of such request shall act as a stay upon the execution of the order or decision of the Commission until the Commission takes final action; provided, that upon written consent of the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider such order or decision shall not be stayed unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. The Commission, within thirty (30) Days after the filing of the request for reconsideration, shall issue an order either granting or denying the request. In granting the request, the Commission shall, either with or without hearing, rescind, modify, or affirm its order or decision. If the Commission is unable to render a decision within thirty (30) Days, and does not issue a tolling order, then the decision of the hearing officer becomes final and is appealable pursuant to § 326.15.
- 326.15 Review of a final Commission decision shall be to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals pursuant to D.C. Code §§ 34-604 and 34-605 (2001). An appeal of any order of the Commission cannot be made unless a request for reconsideration shall have been first made pursuant to section 326.14. Any Person affected by a final order or decision of the Commission may, within sixty (60) Days after final action of the Commission upon request for reconsideration, file with the Clerk of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals a petition of appeal setting forth the

reasons for such appeal and the relief sought; at the same time such appellant shall file with the Commission notice in writing of the appeal together with a copy of the petition filed in the Court of Appeals.

**327 CONSUMER PROTECTION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ENERGY SUPPLIERS**

327.1 This section sets forth billing, Deposit, Enrollment, Termination of Contract, supplier switching, advertising and minimum Contract standards that apply to Energy Suppliers, Marketers, Aggregators, and Consolidators licensed to provide competitive electric and gas services by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia. If a Customer has a Complaint about an alleged violation of this section, the Complaint procedures in § 320 of these regulations shall apply.

327.2 An Energy Supplier may not engage in a marketing, advertising, Solicitation or trade practice that is unlawful, misleading, or deceptive as set forth in D.C. Code §28-3904.

327.3 An Energy Supplier shall not engage in Cramming.

327.4 An Energy Supplier shall not engage in Slamming.

327.5 Any prohibition regarding the disclosure of Account status and Customer information should not preclude Energy Suppliers from obtaining or providing Account status and Customer information for acquisition or sale of a book of business as long as the review of such information during a proposed acquisition or sale is subject to confidentiality agreements.

327.6 Any advertisement of energy supply that contains specific environmental claims must be supportable by documentation.

327.7 Any Solicitation of an energy supply that contains any specific offering to a residential Customer must at a minimum include the following:

- (a) The Energy Supplier's name, address, telephone number, and web site address, if applicable;
- (b) The Energy Supplier's District of Columbia license number in a clear and conspicuous manner;
- (c) The price offered for natural gas supply or electricity supply including all fixed and variable components and any restrictions on the time period the advertised price will be in effect;
- (d) A statement that the advertised price is only for the specified natural gas supply or electricity supply and does not include any

additional tax, Utility Distribution Service Charge, or other Utility fee or Charge;

- (e) Any minimum Contract duration necessary to obtain an advertised price;
- (f) A statement of minimum use requirements, if any; and
- (g) If the advertisement offers several services and does not break out individual prices for the services, the following disclaimer must accompany the advertisement: "Disclaimer: This offer includes several services at a single price. You should compare this price to the total of the prices you currently pay for each of the individual services."

327.8

An electricity supply or gas supply Contract with a Customer shall, at a minimum, contain the following material terms and conditions:

- (a) A list and description of the Contract services;
- (b) A statement of minimum use requirements, if any;
- (c) A description of any time of use restrictions, including the time of Day or season;
- (d) A price description of each service, including all fixed and variable costs;
- (e) A notice that the Contract does not include Utility Charges;
- (f) A billing procedure description;
- (g) In the case of consolidated billing, a notice that the Customer acknowledges that Customer billing and payment information may be provided to the Energy Supplier;
- (h) A statement of Contract duration, including initial time period and any rollover provision;
- (i) A Deposit requirement, if any, including: the amount of the Deposit; a description of when and under what circumstances the Deposit will be returned; a description of how the Deposit may be used; and a description of how the Deposit will be protected;
- (j) A description of any fee or Charge and the circumstances under which a Customer may incur a fee or Charge;

- (k) A statement that the Energy Supplier may terminate the Contract early including the circumstances under which early cancellation by the Energy Supplier may occur; the manner in which the Energy Supplier shall notify the Customer of the early cancellation of the Contract; the duration of the notice period before early cancellation; remedies available to the Customer if early cancellation occurs;
- (l) A statement that the Customer may terminate the Contract early including the circumstances under which early cancellation by the Customer may occur; the manner in which the Customer shall notify the Energy Supplier of the early cancellation of the Contract; the duration of the notice period before early cancellation; and remedies available to the Energy Supplier if early cancellation occurs; and the amount of any early cancellation fee;
- (m) A statement describing Contract renewal procedures, if any;
- (n) A dispute resolution procedure;
- (o) The Commission's telephone number and Internet address; and
- (p) The Office of the People's Counsel's telephone number and Internet address.

327.9 Telephone Solicitations shall be made only between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

327.10 The party making the telephone Solicitation must begin the conversation by stating the following:

- (a) His or her name;
- (b) The name of the business or organization calling;
- (c) The nature of the call, i.e., a Solicitation;
- (d) A brief description of the subject-matter being solicited; and
- (e) An offer to the Customer to hear the full Solicitation.

327.11 Home Solicitations shall be limited to the hours between 9 a.m. and sunset. The soliciting party must produce a picture identification badge and begin the conversation by stating the following:

The name of the business or organization;

- (b) The nature of the visit, i.e., a Solicitation;
- (c) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited;
- (d) Ask the Customer if he/she would like to hear the full Solicitation; and
- (e) The soliciting Energy Supplier must include a statement under the conspicuous Caption: "BUYER'S RIGHT TO CANCEL" which states: If this agreement was solicited at or near your residence, and you do not want the goods and services, you may cancel this agreement by mailing a notice to the seller. The notice must say that you do not want the goods or services and must be mailed before midnight on the third business Day after you signed this agreement. This notice must be mailed to: (name and address of seller). If you cancel, the seller may not keep any of your cash down payment.

327.12 If an Energy Supplier receives a request from a Customer not to receive Solicitations from that solicitor, the Customer shall no longer be contacted in the manner in which the Customer indicates including but not limited to, in-person Solicitation, telephone Solicitation, electronic Solicitation or any form of mail or post card by the solicitor.

327.13 Nothing in these regulations will affect the applicability of any Federal or District telephone Solicitation and consumer protection laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the fines and penalties thereunder for violation of such laws and regulations.

327.14 There are three (3) principal forms by which a Customer may enter into a Contract with an Energy Supplier:

- (a) over the telephone;
- (b) Internet and other technological means; and
- (c) a written Contract.

327.15 An Energy Supplier may not use "negative option contracts," in which Contracts are created if the customer takes no action. Stated differently, a Customer may not enter into a Contract with an energy supplier by simply refraining from action.

## F.C. 712 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA REGISTER

- 327.16 If a Customer wishes to enter into a Contract with an Energy Supplier, the Energy Supplier may request from the Customer the following information, by telephone, in writing, or Internet or other technological means:
- (a) The customer's name;
  - (b) billing address;
  - (c) service address;
  - (d) electronic mail address;
  - (e) telephone number;
  - (f) Utility Account number;
  - (g) employment information; and
  - (h) usage information.
- 327.17 An Energy Supplier may ask for additional information beyond that specified in section 327.16 only after first informing the Customer of his or her right not to provide such information.
- 327.18 An Energy Supplier must advise a Customer that he/she has the right to rescind the Contract agreement within a 3-day period.
- 327.19 For the purpose of verifying a residential Customer's intent to Contract with an Energy Supplier by telephone, an Energy Supplier must implement either:
- (a) an Independent Third-Party telephone verification system; or
  - (b) an electronic recording system that maintains the entire recording with the Customer for the duration of the Contract.
- 327.20 If an Energy Supplier elects to implement an independent third-party verification system, then the Independent Third-Party Verifier shall be required to ask the Customer the following questions:
- (a) "Are you the Customer of record?";
  - (b) "Did you agree to switch your natural gas supply service or electric supply service to [New Supplier]?"; and

- (c) "Is [Customer's address] your correct address?" or "Is [Customer's Utility Account number] your correct Utility Account number?"
- 327.21 An Energy Supplier may not transmit an Enrollment transaction to a Natural Gas or Electric Utility unless and until the Energy Supplier obtains either a positive third-party verification of the Customer's intent to Contract or electronically records the entire conversation with the Customer on which the Contract is based.
- 327.22 Once a positive verification has been obtained or an electronic recording has been made, the Energy Supplier will transmit the Enrollment transaction to the Natural Gas or the Electric Utility, whichever is appropriate.
- 327.23 Once the Customer's Contract choice is verified by an Independent Third-Party Verifier or an electronic recording is made, the Energy Supplier must within five (5) Business Days from the Day the Customer agreed telephonically to Contract with the Energy Supplier, provide to the Customer a complete written Contract, via U.S. mail or electronic mail.
- 327.24 In the event of a dispute over the existence of a Contract, the Energy Supplier shall bear the burden of proving the Contract's existence.
- 327.25 A written Contract requires a written signature of the Customer.
- 327.26 The Energy Supplier may post on its web site an electronic version of the solicitation for the supply of natural gas or electricity. The electronic solicitation must include:
- (a) an electronic application form to enter into a contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity;
  - (b) an electronic version of the actual contract; and
  - (c) a link to the Commission's web site to obtain the applicable rules and regulations governing the relationship between the Customer and the Energy Supplier.
- 327.27 The Energy Supplier must advise the Customer of the right to rescind the contract agreement within a 3-Day period. This information shall be prominently displayed on the website.
- 327.28 The electronic submission of the application to Contract with the Energy Supplier constitutes a valid and binding "electronic signature."

- 327.29 If the Customer executes an electronic Contract, the Energy Supplier must acknowledge the Customer's submission with a Confirmation of receipt of application within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
- 327.30 All Enrollments via the Internet shall be initiated by the Customer. It is the responsibility of the Energy Supplier to provide its website address to the Utility and the Utility shall include such link on its website. The Energy Supplier shall include a website link of the Natural Gas Utility or Electric Utility on its website.
- 327.31 For electronic contracting, the Energy Supplier's website must be configured to prompt the Customer to print or save the Contract.
- 327.32 During the Enrollment procedure, each webscreen must clearly display a "Cancel" icon enabling the Customer to terminate the Enrollment transaction at any time. In addition, this feature must be explained to the Customer at the beginning of the Enrollment process.
- 327.33 At the completion of the enrollment process, the Energy Supplier's website must conspicuously display that the Customer has been enrolled in its program.
- 327.34 All electronic transactions and communications via the Internet between the Customer and the Energy Supplier shall be protected in such a manner as to ensure privacy of the Customer's information.
- 327.35 The Electric Utility shall accept the last Enrollment submitted by an Energy Supplier.
- 327.36 By the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) calendar Day of the month (or next Business Day, if holiday or weekend), each Energy Supplier shall provide to the Natural Gas Utility a list of Customers to be supplied by that Energy Supplier beginning with the Customer's Meter read date the following month.
- 327.37 Once the Natural Gas Utility processes a Customer Enrollment from an Energy Supplier, the Natural Gas Utility shall not accept Enrollments from any other Energy Supplier for that Customer until Termination of Contract.
- 327.38 If a Customer chooses to cancel his/her Contract, prior to the expiration of the Contract, that Customer must contact the Energy Supplier to make such a request, and the Energy Supplier shall process the Customer's cancellation request to meet the Natural Gas Utility's next available cancellation cycle and for electric service within two (2) Business Days after receipt of the cancellation request.

- 327.39 Confirmation of a Customer's intent to enroll with an electric supplier and the expiration of the 3-day Rescission Period must occur prior to the transmittal of an EDI enrollment transaction by the electric supplier to the electric Utility.
- 327.40 Confirmation of a Customer's intent to enroll with a natural gas supplier and the expiration of the 3-day Rescission Period must occur prior to the transmittal of an enrollment transaction by the gas supplier to the gas Utility.
- 327.41 Upon an Energy Supplier's Enrollment of a Customer with the Utility, the Energy Supplier must provide to the Customer, within a reasonable period of time the following:
- (a) A statement of enrollment;
  - (b) A description of the agreed-upon billing option and the billing date if different from the Company's usual billing date;
  - (c) Customer service information (including toll-free telephone number, mailing address, and dispute resolution process information); and
- 327.42 If the Customer does not respond to the Rescission Notice within the 3-Day Rescission Period, the enrollment will be considered effective. The customer must notify the Energy Supplier, not the utility, of his or her intent to rescind the Contract.
- 327.43 After the 3-Day Rescission Period expires and the enrollment is processed by the electric Utility, the relationship between the Customer and the electric supplier will be governed by the terms and conditions contained in the contract.
- 327.44 The 3-Day Rescission Period begins on one of the following dates;
- (a) when the Customer signs the contract;
  - (b) when the Customer transmits the electronic acceptance via the Internet; or
  - (c) when the Contract is mailed by the supplier the Rescission Period begins when the mail is postmarked.
- 327.45 An Energy Supplier shall provide the Customer with a notice at least thirty-five (35) Days before expiration or termination of a Contract. The

Energy Supplier's expiration or termination notice shall include the following:

- (a) Final Bill payment instructions;
- (b) A statement informing the Customer that unless the Customer selects a new Energy Supplier, Termination of Contract shall return the Customer to the Utility; and
- (c) The Commission's telephone number and Internet address.

327.46 If an Energy Supplier's contract provides for automatic renewal of the contract:

- (a) The Energy Supplier shall provide notice of the pending renewal of the Contract at least forty-five (45) Days before the renewal is scheduled to occur;
- (b) Notice of any changes to the material terms and conditions (including billing option, Billing Cycle), must be provided within the forty-five (45) Day notice. The notification of renewal or of any change must be highlighted and clearly stated; and
- (c) The forty-five (45) Day notice must inform the Customer how to terminate the Contract without penalty and advise the Customer that terminating the Evergreen Contract without selecting another Energy Supplier will return the Customer to Natural Gas Sales Service or electric Standard Offer Service. The notice must also inform the Customer that the Commission can provide the Customer with additional information on the energy supply choices available to the Customer. The telephone number and website for the Commission shall be included in the notice.

327.47 At least 24 hours prior to any change, an Energy Supplier shall provide to the Commission current information regarding changes in its rates charges and services provided.

327.48 An Energy Supplier shall post on its website information about its services and rates for Customers that is current and understandable.

327.49 An Energy Supplier shall not conduct Meter readings.

327.50 To the extent that an Energy Supplier's charges are based on usage, an Energy Supplier shall rely on the Meter reading (actual, estimated, or customer meter readings) provided to it by the respective Utility.

- 327.51 An Energy Supplier may, at the election of a Customer, Bill a Customer in accordance with a level payment billing program. If an Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of a Utility, an Energy Supplier may use the level payment plan as part of the Utility's billing service. The Energy Supplier shall inform the Customer of this option and explain how the monthly payments are calculated. Prior to implementation of the plan, the Energy Supplier shall provide the Customer with the following information in writing:
- (a) An acknowledgement that the Customer will be on the plan effective the next billing period;
  - (b) An estimate of the Customer's use on an annual basis and an explanation of how the monthly payment has been calculated; and
  - (c) An indication that the final bill for the plan effective period will reflect the last level payment installment adjusted for any difference between actual and budgeted usage. Amounts overpaid shall be credited to the customer's account or refunded, if requested by the Customer. Amounts underpaid that are equal to or greater than the month payment may be paid in up to three (3) monthly installments.
- 327.52 The Energy Supplier may perform a periodic analysis of a Customer's level payment billing plan and notify the Customer, within twenty-one (21) Days thereafter, if actual usage varies significantly from that upon which the plan was based and give the Customer an opportunity for revision of the plan. If an Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of a Utility, the Customer may have an opportunity for revision of the level payment plan at the same time as the Utility allows under the Utility's level payment plan procedures or at a time designated by the Energy Supplier.
- 327.53 If the Customer enters into a DPA with the Utility pursuant to §306, and the Energy Supplier utilizes the billing services of the Utility, the Utility may include the Energy Supplier's balance as part of its DPA.
- 327.54 Any Energy Supplier that violates this section is subject to Sanctions including license revocation.
- 328 CUSTOMER PROTECTION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- 328.1 The purpose of the Telecommunications Service Provider Consumer Protection Standards is to establish uniform standards for billing, security deposits, Disconnections and reconnections of service, resolution of complaints, enrollment procedures, advertising, termination of contracts, and switching of service of Telecommunications Service Providers.
- 328.2 This section applies to service provided to residential Customers by Telecommunications Service Providers who have received certification to provide telecommunications services in the District of Columbia.
- 328.3 A Telecommunications Service Provider may not engage in a marketing, advertising, Solicitation or trade practice that is unlawful, misleading, or deceptive as set forth in D. C. Code §28-3904.
- 328.4 Telecommunications Service Providers shall not engage in Cramming.
- 328.5 A Telecommunications Service Providers shall not engage in Slamming.
- 328.6 Any prohibition regarding the disclosure of Account status and Customer information should not preclude Telecommunications Service Providers from obtaining or providing Account status and Customer information for acquisition or sale of a book of business as long as the review of such information during a proposed acquisition or sale is subject to confidentiality agreements.
- 328.7 Telecommunications Service Providers must follow the Federal Communications Commission rules regarding Customer Proprietary Network Information.
- 328.8 Advertising of Telecommunications Service Providers shall be neither false nor misleading.
- 328.9 Information contained in a Telecommunications Service Provider's advertising must be clear, accurate and supportable. Any advertisement that contains any specific statement, claim, comparison or assertion regarding rates, specific contract provisions, or similar service details that could reasonably be construed as an attempt to persuade consumers that any component of a Telecommunications Service Provider's offering is better than the comparable component of the incumbent local exchange carrier's or another Telecommunications Service Provider's offering must include:
- (a) The rate for service offered, including a disclosure that the rate does not include charges imposed by the FCC or federal or local taxes and that the total Bill will include such charges in addition to telecommunications service charges. If the rate for service offered

is not available because it is part of a bundled package, then the disclosure shall be in accordance with § 328.12(b) *infra*.

- (b) Any fees and charges, other than for telecommunications service to be provided, which will automatically be charged to consumers who contract for the advertised service; and
- (c) Any minimum contract duration necessary to obtain an advertised rate.

328.10 Any print Solicitations must contain all material terms and conditions, including, but not limited to, the following, if applicable:

- (a) Telecommunications Service Provider's name, address, Customer contact, telephone number, and website address (if applicable);
- (b) Itemization of services provided;
- (c) Price of service;
- (d) Description of proposed Contract items;
- (e) Duration of the agreement (including initial time period, rollover provisions with mandatory notice, and early cancellation penalties);
- (f) Notice that there may be a Deposit required, including the amount of the Deposit, return procedures, use of and protection for such Deposits;
- (g) All applicable fees and charges and the circumstances under which the Customers will incur them;
- (h) Notice concerning early termination by the provider and the options open to the Customer if termination occurs;
- (i) Notice concerning early termination by the Customer and the options open to the Customer if termination occurs;
- (j) Notice of right to rescind; and

328.11 If the Telecommunications Service Provider is providing Bundled Service and does not break out the individual rates for services in its Solicitation, a disclaimer must accompany the Solicitation.

- 328.12 Telephone Solicitations shall be limited between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. and comply with applicable Federal "Do Not Call" rules. Should a conflict between this section and the Federal rules exist, the Federal rules shall apply.
- 328.13 The party making the telephone Solicitation must begin the conversation by stating the following:
- (a) The name of the business or organization calling;
  - (b) The nature of the call, i.e., a solicitation; and
  - (c) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited.
- 328.14 Home Solicitations shall be limited between the hours of 9 a.m. and sunset. The soliciting party must produce a picture identification badge and begin the conversation by stating the following:
- (a) The name of the business or organization;
  - (b) The nature of the visit, i.e., a solicitation;
  - (c) A brief description of the subject matter being solicited; and
  - (d) Ask the Customer if he/she would like to hear the full Solicitation.
- 328.15 In any Contract solicited at a Customer's home, the soliciting Telecommunications Service Provider must include a statement under the Conspicuous Caption: "BUYER'S RIGHT TO CANCEL" which states: If this agreement was solicited at or near your residence, and you do not want the goods and services, you may cancel this agreement by mailing a notice to the seller. The notice must say that you do not want the goods or services and must be mailed before midnight on the third Business Day after you signed this agreement. This notice must be mailed to: (name and address of seller). If you cancel, the seller may not keep any of your cash down payment.
- 328.16 Each Telecommunications Service Provider must comply with all federal "Do Not Call" rules and maintain its own "Do Not Call" List. If a Telecommunications Service Provider receives a request from a Customer not to receive Solicitations from that solicitor, the Customer's name must appear on the list and the Customer shall no longer be contacted by the solicitor.

## F.C. 712 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA REGISTER

- 328.17 Any Telecommunications Service Provider that violates this section is subject to having its certification revoked by the Commission, after due process.
- 328.18 Nothing in these regulations will affect the applicability of any Federal or District telephone Solicitation and consumer protection laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the fines and penalties thereunder for violation of such laws and regulations.
- 328.19 A Customer may not enter into a new Contract with a Telecommunications Service Provider by refraining from action except when complying with Federal rules governing Customer Proprietary Network Information.
- 328.20 If a Customer wishes to enter into a Contract with a Telecommunications Service Provider, the Telecommunications Service Provider may request, by telephone, in writing, or by Internet or other technological means, information including, but not limited to the following:
- (a) the customer's name;
  - (b) the customer's billing address;
  - (c) the customer's service address;
  - (d) the customer's electronic mail address;
  - (e) the customer's telephone number;
  - (f) the customer's employment information; and
  - (g) the name of a third party responsible for the Bill.
- 328.21 The Telecommunications Service Provider may ask for additional information only after first informing the customer of his or her right not to provide such information.
- 328.22 If a contract is entered into electronically, the following conditions must be met:
- (a) The Telecommunications Service Provider shall post on its web site an electronic version of the solicitation for the telecommunications service. The electronic solicitation must include:

- (1) an electronic application form to enter into a Contract for telecommunications service,
  - (2) an electronic version of the actual Contract, and
  - (3) an electronic version of any applicable rules and regulations governing the relationship between the customer and the telecommunications service provider.
- (b) The electronic submission of the application to Contract with the Telecommunications Service Provider shall constitute a valid and binding "electronic signature."
- (c) The Telecommunications Service Provider must acknowledge the Customer's submission of the application to Contract with a confirmation of receipt of application within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
- (d) The Telecommunications Service Provider is not required to furnish a hard copy of the Contract or of any and all applicable rules and regulations if the same are posted in full and are available for download from the website of the Telecommunications Service Provider.
- (e) The Telecommunications Service Provider's website must be configured to prompt the Customer to print or save the terms and conditions to which the Customer agrees.
- (f) At the completion of the Enrollment process, the Telecommunications Service Provider's website must display that the Customer has agreed to receive service from the Telecommunications Service Provider.
- (g) All electronic transactions and communications via the Internet between the Customer and the Telecommunications Service Provider shall be protected in such a manner as to ensure privacy of the Customer's information.

328.23 If applicable, a written Contract requires a written signature of the Customer.

328.24 In the event of a dispute over the existence of a Contract, the Telecommunications Service Provider shall bear the burden of proving the Contract's existence.

- 328.25 Upon initiation of service, the Telecommunications Service Provider shall send, within a reasonable period of time, to the Customer:
- (a) A statement of enrollment;
  - (b) A description of the agreed-upon type of service; and
  - (c) Customer service information (including a local or toll-free telephone number).
- 328.26 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall post on the Internet information about its services and rates for Customers that is current and understandable.
- 328.27 Upon request by the Commission, a Telecommunications Service Provider may be required to provide information regarding a Customer's request for its service. If such information is not provided, that Telecommunications Service Provider may be subject to Sanctions as determined by the Commission.
- 328.28 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not be obligated to provide service to an applicant who owes the Telecommunications Service Provider money for telecommunications service provided to a prior account in his or her name, unless:
- (a) the applicant makes full payment for such service provided to any such prior account in his or her name;
  - (b) the Telecommunications Service Provider agrees to accept payments under a Deferred Payment Agreement of any amount due for telecommunications service to a prior Account in the Applicant's name;
  - (c) the applicant has pending a billing dispute pursuant to § 320 of these rules with respect to any amounts due for service to a prior account in his or her name and has paid any amounts required to be paid pursuant to those provisions; or
  - (d) the Commission directs the Telecommunications Service Provider to provide services to a Customer.
- 328.29 The Telecommunications Service Provider may request either a Deposit or other payment option, but not both, as a condition of service.
- 328.30 An oral application for service shall be deemed completed when an applicant who meets the requirements of sections §328.29 provides his or

her name, address, and address of prior account or prior telephone number, if any. A telecommunications service provider may establish non-discriminatory procedures to require an applicant to provide reasonable proof of the applicant's identity.

328.31 An application for service not approved within three (3) Business Days may be deemed denied.

328.32 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall deny an application for service or condition service upon Deposit or other payment option without advising the Applicant verbally within three (3) Business Days of receipt of the application for service of:

- (a) the reason or reasons for the denial, or the requirement for a Deposit or other payment option;
- (b) precisely what the Applicant must do to qualify for service or satisfy the requirement; and
- (c) his or her right to an investigation and review by the Commission of the denial or request for a Deposit or other payment option. The Telecommunications Service Provider shall advise the Applicant of the appropriate methods available to challenge the action of the Telecommunications Service Provider and the address and telephone number of the Commission and the Office of the People's Counsel.

328.33 The following may not constitute cause for refusal of service to a present or prospective customer:

- (a) failure of a prior customer to pay for service at the premises to be serviced;
- (b) failure to pay for a different class of service or to a different entity;
- (c) failure to pay directory advertising charges;
- (d) failure to pay an undercharge; or
- (e) failure to pay an outstanding Bill that is over three (3) years old, unless:
  - 1. the customer signed an agreement to pay the outstanding bill before the expiration of this period;

2. the outstanding bill for service obtained by the customer by means of tampering with equipment furnished and owned by the telecommunications service provider or incumbent local exchange carrier or by unauthorized use of service by another method; or
3. the outstanding bill is for service obtained by the customer by means of an application made:
  - (i) in a fictitious name;
  - (ii) in the name of an individual who is not an occupant of the dwelling unit, without disclosure of the individual's actual address;
  - (iii) in the name of a third party without disclosing that fact or without bonafide authority from the third party; or
  - (iv) without disclosure of a material fact or by misrepresentation of a material fact.

328.34

No Telecommunications Service Provider shall require any Applicant or existing residential Customer to post a Deposit, credit limit or a direct debit payment option as a condition of receiving telecommunications services unless the existing Customer or Applicant:

- (a) has an Account that has been delinquent in excess of forty-five (45) Days at least three (3) times within the previous twelve (12) months;
- (b) has had telecommunications services terminated for non-payment during the preceding six (6) months or has an outstanding balance on a previous District of Columbia residential Account;
- (c) does not give a Telecommunications Service Provider with which he or she is applying for service permission to determine the existence of delinquent Charges; or
- (d) fails to provide reasonable proof of identity.

328.35

If a Telecommunications Service Provider requires a deposit from an existing residential customer or an Applicant for telephone service, it shall permit such customer to pay the Deposit in installments over a period not to exceed six (6) months.

- 328.36 In any case where Customer Deposits are authorized by this section, the Deposit amount shall not exceed two times the average monthly bill for telecommunications services for a calendar year in order to secure payment for telecommunications services actually rendered or for the rental of equipment, instruments and facilities actually supplied.
- 328.37 Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall be liable for interest on Deposits held from the date the Deposit is made until the date the Deposit has been refunded or until an effort has been made to refund the Deposit. Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall pay simple interest on Deposits with the rate being established not later than January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, equal to the average annual yields of one year Treasury bills for September, October, and November of the preceding year.
- 328.38 Each Telecommunications Service Provider holding Customer Deposits shall send a statement to each Customer when the Deposit is applied to an unpaid Bill or Bills which shows the following:
- (a) the amount of the Deposit, together with the interest accrued thereon and the period covered thereby, and
  - (b) the balance of the Bill or Bills remaining to the credit of the Customer.
- 328.39 Upon Disconnection of service, the deposit and any accrued interest shall be credited to any outstanding final Bill and any remaining balance shall be returned to the customer.
- 328.40 A Deposit and accrued interest shall be refunded promptly by the Telecommunications Service Provider upon satisfactory payment by the Customer of all proper Charges for telecommunications service for nine (9) successive months. The Telecommunications Service Provider may withhold return of Deposit funds pending resolution of any dispute.
- 328.41 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall maintain a record of all Deposits, showing the Customer's name and address or other identifying data, the amount of the Deposit, the date it was paid, and the interest earned and paid thereon.
- 328.42 Each customer posting a Deposit shall promptly receive a confirmation containing, at a minimum the following information:
- (a) the Customer's name;
  - (b) the amount of payment; and

(c) statement of the terms and conditions applicable to Deposits.

328.43

A Telecommunications Service Provider may suspend or disconnect telecommunications service, if the Customer:

- (a) fails to pay the telecommunications service provider charges due at any time during the preceding six (6) months, provided, however, that suspension or Disconnection of service for Bills due for service rendered during periods in excess of the six (6) month period is permitted in cases involving billing disputes during the six (6) month period;
- (b) fails to pay amounts due under a DPA;
- (c) fails to pay or agree in writing to pay equipment installation charges relating to the initiation service;
- (d) fails to pay a lawfully required Deposit;
- (e) is in bankruptcy, receivership, has abandon service, or abnormal high usage not covered adequately by a security deposit less than five (5) days notice may be given if necessary to protect the Telecommunications Service Provider's revenues;
- (f) fails to keep a prior promise to pay bankruptcy, receivership, abandoned service, or abnormal high usage is involved, a telecommunications service provider may not deny services on the day preceding any day on which it is not prepared to accept payment of the amount due; or
- (g) fails to comply with municipal regulations or other laws pertaining to telecommunications service.

328.44

A notice of suspension or Disconnection may either be sent along with the Bill or such notice must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in such bold print as to be conspicuous to a reasonable Person. A notice of suspension or Disconnection shall clearly state or include:

- (a) the earliest date on which suspension or disconnection may occur;
- (b) the reasons for suspension or disconnection and the manner in which suspension or disconnection may be avoided including the total amount required to be paid to avoid suspension or disconnection;

- (c) the address and telephone number of the office of the Telecommunications Service Provider that the Customer may contact in reference to his or her account;
- (d) the availability of the procedures for handling Complaints;
- (e) the availability and a general description of a DPA, which shall be capitalized and in bold print; and
- (f) additional information consistent with this Chapter.

328.45 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not Disconnect Residential Service unless a Disconnection or suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least fifteen (15) Days prior to the date of proposed Disconnection. The Telecommunications Service Provider shall not suspend Residential Service unless a suspension notice has been sent to the Customer at the billing address by either first class mail or other technological means at least ten (10) Days prior to the date of proposed suspension. Any notice required to be sent to a Customer prior to Disconnection or suspension of service may be sent along with the Bill for service; however, the notice of Disconnection or suspension of service must be on the first page of the Bill and shall be in bold print. When the Customer has requested, a duplicate copy of the notice shall be sent by either first class mail or Internet or other technological means to a designated third party. The third party assumes no obligation for the Customer's Account.

328.46 A Telecommunications Service Provider may not issue or send a notice of suspension or Disconnection unless at least twenty-five (25) Days have elapsed from the Bill date. When exceptional circumstances exist, a notice may be issued in less than twenty-five (25) Days, but only in accordance with procedures approved by the Commission.

328.47 The Telecommunications Service Provider shall make, at minimum, two (2) attempts to contact the Customer by telephone, in writing, in Person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection. At least two (2) Days before the date set for Disconnection of service, a Utility shall make reasonable efforts to contact the Customer, by telephone, in person or other technological means, to advise of the pending action and what steps must be taken to avoid Disconnection.

328.48 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall not disconnect service for the period after 5:00 p.m. Thursday and before 8:00 a.m. Monday, provided such Day or the following Day is not a public holiday or a Day

on which the main business office of the Telecommunications Service Provider is closed for business.

- 328.49 Section 328.48 shall not apply to service Disconnection to abandoned buildings, where the Customer has requested Disconnection in circumstances of unsafe conditions, or to Disconnection of telecommunications services where there is evidence of toll abuse or fraud.
- 328.50 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall suspend or disconnect service on the grounds that a customer's facilities have been abandoned or are being used by unauthorized persons unless such Telecommunications Service Provider shall first determine by such means as are reasonably calculated to determine occupancy, that such facilities have in fact been abandoned or are being used without the authority of the customer of record. The Telecommunications Service Provider shall send notice to the customer stating the reasons for the suspension or Disconnection, except that the five (5) days notification period shall be waived when mailings are returned by the post office or a new Customer advises that he or she moved into the location.
- 328.51 No Telecommunications Service Provider shall suspend or disconnect service for non-payment of bills rendered unless:
- (a) it shall have verified that payment has not been received at any office of the Telecommunications Service Provider or at any office of an authorized collection agent through the end of the notice period required by this chapter; and
  - (b) it shall have verified on the day suspension or Disconnection occurs that payment has not been posted to the customer's account as of the opening of business on that day.
- 328.52 Each Telecommunications Service Provider shall ensure that any payments made in response to a notice of suspension or Disconnection, when the customer brings to the attention of the Telecommunications Service Provider or its collection agents that such a notice has been issued, are:
- (a) posted to the Customer's account on the day payment is received; or
  - (b) processed in a manner such that suspension or Disconnection will not occur.

328.53 Service shall not be used for any purposes in violation of law or for any use as to which the Customer has not obtained all required governmental approvals, authorizations, licenses, consents, and permits.

328.54 Service shall not be used in any manner that interferes with other Persons in the use of their service, prevents other Persons from using their service, or otherwise impairs the quality of service to other Customers. The Telecommunications Service Provider may require a Customer to immediately shut down its transmission of signals if said transmission is causing interference to others or impairing the service of others.

328.55 A Telecommunications Service Provider shall reconnect service within twenty-four (24) hours of cure of the cause for suspension or Disconnection upon:

- (a) receipt by the Telecommunications Service Provider of full amount of arrears for which service was suspended or Disconnected or upon the elimination of conditions that warranted suspension or termination of service; or
- (b) agreement by the Telecommunications Service Provider and the Customer on a Deferred Payment Agreement and the remittance of a down payment, if required under the plan.

328.56 Whenever circumstances beyond the Telecommunications Service Provider's control prevent reconnection of service within twenty-four (24) hours of any of the events specified in § 328.56, service shall be reconnected by the Telecommunications Service Provider or Utility with ownership or control of the facilities causing the service interruption within four (4) hours after those circumstances cease to exist.

328.57 In the event of a dispute between a Customer and a Telecommunications Service Provider regarding any matter contained in § 328 of these regulations, such dispute shall be resolved pursuant to the provisions of §§ 323, 324, 325 or 326 of these regulations.

**398 WAIVER**

398.1 The Commission may, upon request with good cause shown, or on its own, waive any provisions of Chapter 3 of this title.

**399 DEFINITIONS**

399.1 When used in this chapter, the following terms and phrases shall have the meaning ascribed:

**Account:** a record capturing information related to the service(s) provided to a Customer or at a premise by a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider or third party biller on behalf of a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider.

**Aggregator:** a person who acts on behalf of customers to purchase gas or electricity. To "act on behalf of customers" means that a person acts with the express authorization of customers to purchase gas or electricity on those customers' behalf and receives direct or indirect compensation or benefit in any form from any entity.

**Applicant:** Person who requests natural gas, electric or telecommunications services at premises to be used as his or her residence or the residence of a third party on whose behalf the Person is requesting service.

**Bill:** a statement from the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider, stating the Charges for the services rendered to the Customer or premises.

**Billing Cycle:** the service period of twenty-six (26) to thirty-five (35) Days.

**Broker:** a person who acts as an agent or intermediary in the sale and purchase of natural gas or electricity but who does not take title to natural gas or electricity.

**Bundled Service:** package of multiple services offered at a single price.

**Business Day:** a Day in which normal business is transacted, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal and District of Columbia holidays.

**Charge:** the price of a service or commodity to a Customer or premise.

**Commission:** the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Complaint:** any contact by a Customer or his or her Designated Representative with the Commission in which the Customer or Designated Representative registers dissatisfaction with the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider's service.

**Complainant:** a Customer or Customer's Designated Representative who files a Complaint.

**Consolidator:** any owner of or property manager for multi-family residential, commercial office, industrial, and retail facilities who combines more than one property for the primary purpose of contracting with an Aggregator or energy supplier for gas or electric energy services for those properties and who: (A) does not take title to natural gas or electric energy; (B) does not sell natural gas or electric energy to buildings not owned or managed by such owner or property manager; (C) does not offer aggregation of natural gas or electric energy services to other, unrelated end-users; and (D) arranges for the purchase of natural gas or electric energy services only from duly licensed energy suppliers or Aggregators.

**Consolidated Bill:** an arrangement whereby a Customer receives a single Bill from a Utility.

**Confirmation:** (A) Confirmation of a telephone application for Enrollment of a residential Customer refers to action taken by a competitive Energy Supplier wherein an Independent Third Party Verifier must confirm the residential Customer's decision to switch from an Energy Supplier. (B) Confirmation of an electronic application for Enrollment occurs when the Energy Supplier sends an electronic response to the Customer confirming that the application for Enrollment was intended and received. (C) There is no confirmation process applicable to written applications for Enrollment.

**Contract:** an agreement between a Customer and an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider that specifies the terms, conditions, and Charges for the provision of electric, natural gas or telecommunications services to the Customer.

**Cramming (for Telecommunications Service Providers):** the practice of causing unauthorized, misleading or deceptive Charges to be placed to a Customer's existing telecommunications service Account option(s).

**Cramming (for Energy Suppliers):** the practice of adding services or Charges to a Customer's existing retail energy service options absent the express consent of the Customer.

**Customer:** a purchaser of electric, natural gas or telecommunications services for residential use in the District of Columbia, excluding master-metered apartments with four or more units.

**Day:** a calendar day unless otherwise specified.

**Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA):** an agreement whereby a Customer pays a past due balance on an installment basis.

**Deposit:** any payment made by a Customer to a Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider in order to secure the Utility, Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider against potential Customer nonpayment or default.

**Designated Representative:** a Person for whom the Customer of record has submitted a notarized letter with the Office of Consumer Services authorizing the representative to act on his or her behalf.

**Disconnection:** an action by a Utility or Telecommunications Service Provider to prevent the delivery of energy or telecommunications services. For telecommunications services, this shall also include the suspension of services.

**Distribution Service Charge:** a Charge levied by the Electric or Natural Gas Utility to deliver energy supply to the Customer.

**EDI Transaction:** Electronic Data Interchange.

**Electric Utility:** the company that provides electric distribution service and is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Energy Supplier:** a person, including an Aggregator, Broker, or Marketer, who generates or produces natural gas or electricity, sells natural gas or electricity, or purchases, brokers, arranges, or markets natural gas or electricity for sale to customers. The term excludes the following: (A) building owners, lessees, or managers who manage the internal distribution system serving such building and who supply natural gas or electricity solely to occupants of the building for use by the occupants; (B)(i) any person who purchases natural gas or electricity for its own use or for the use of its subsidiaries or affiliates; or (ii) any apartment building or office building manager who aggregates natural gas or electric service requirements for his or her building(s), and who does not: (I) take title to natural gas or electricity; (II) market natural gas or electric services to the individually-metered tenants of his or her building; or (III) engage in the resale of natural gas or electric services to others; (C) property owners who supply small amounts of power, at cost as an accommodation to lessors or licensees or the property; and (D) a Consolidator.

**Enrollment:** the process in which the Natural Gas or Electric Company receives and processes the notification from the energy supplier that a customer has entered into a contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity.

**Estimated Bill:** a Bill for natural gas or electric service which is not based on an actual meter reading by the Utility or Customer.

**Evergreen Contract:** a Contract that is capable of automatic renewal without any action by the Customer.

**Formal Complaint:** a written Complaint filed with the Commission.

**Generation Service Charge:** a Charge levied by the Energy Supplier or Utility for the provision of electricity supply to the Customer.

**Independent Third-Party Verifier:** a Person retained by individual Energy Suppliers to confirm the Customer's decision to enter into a Contract for the supply of natural gas or electricity.

**Informal Complaint:** a Complaint filed by a Customer with the Commission's Office of Consumer Services requesting mediation of a dispute after the Customer has failed to resolve the dispute directly with the Utility, Energy Supplier, or Telecommunications Service Provider.

**Marketer:** a person who purchases and takes title to natural gas or electricity as an intermediary for sale to Customers.

**Meter:** instrument that measures or records the amount of energy service delivered to the customer.

**Natural Gas Sales Service:** services governed under WG's Rate Schedule No. 1., with Sales Service, whereby the Customer receives natural gas supply from the Washington Gas Light Company. Sales Service is also available as a default to Customers who Contract for natural gas with an Energy Supplier but who fail to receive delivery of natural gas under such Contracts and to Customers who do not choose an Energy Supplier.

**Natural Gas Utility:** the company that provides Sales Service and delivery of distribution service and is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia.

**Office of Consumer Services:** an office of the Commission designated to perform responsibilities in accordance with this chapter.

**OPC:** the Office of the People's Counsel of the District of Columbia.

**Person:** every individual, corporation, company, association, joint-stock company, firm, partnership, or other entity.

**Purchased Gas Charge (PGC):** the provision in a Natural Gas Utility's rate schedule which permits the adjustment of the amount of the Bill as the cost of gas varies from a specified base amount per unit.

**Rescission Notice:** written correspondence issued to the Customer via U.S. Mail notifying the Customer of the right to cancel.

**Rescission Period:** the time period within which a Customer may choose to cancel a Contract for natural gas or electric service with an energy supplier.

**Residential Service:** natural gas or electric service to a separately metered household, and including natural gas service to not more than three dwelling units served by a single Meter in a multiple-family dwelling, or portion thereof; telephone service to an individual, family or group for non-business purposes.

**Sanctions:** The following Sanctions may be imposed by the Commission:

- (a) **Civil Penalties:** The Commission may impose a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 for each violation. Each Day a violation continues shall be considered a separate violation for purposes of this penalty. The commission shall determine the amount of a civil penalty after considering the following: the number of previous violations of any provisions of Commission law or regulations; the gravity and duration of the current violations; and the good faith efforts of the Licensee or Person charged in attempting to achieve compliance after the Commission provides notice of the violation.
- (b) **Customer Refund or Credit:** The Commission may order a Licensee to issue a refund or credit to a Customer.
- (c) **Cease and Desist Order:** The Commission may order the Licensee to cease adding or soliciting additional Customers; cease serving Customers in the District of Columbia; and cease any action found to be in violation of Commission orders, rules or regulations.
- (d) **Cancellation of a Contract or part of a Contract** between a Customer and a Licensee.
- (e) **Suspension of License.**

(f) Revocation of License.

**Service Provider:** an energy supplier or telecommunications service provider as defined in this section.

**Slamming (for Telecommunications Service Providers):** occurs when a company changes a Customer's telecommunication's carrier selection without that Customer's knowledge or explicit authorization.

**Slamming (for Energy Suppliers):** the practice of switching a Customer's natural gas or electric supplier Account without the express consent of the Customer.

**Solicitation:** A communication in any medium that urges a customer to Contract for receipt of specific natural gas, electricity, or telecommunications services from an Energy Supplier or Telecommunications Service Provider. Types of Solicitation may include, but are not limited to, telephone Solicitation, radio advertisements, print advertisements, home Solicitations, electronic advertisements (i.e. Internet), newspaper advertisements, and written Solicitations.

**Standard Offer Service:** Service provided by the incumbent electric Utility to 1) Customers who do not choose an electricity supplier; 2) Customers who cannot arrange to purchase electricity from an electricity supplier; and 3) Customers who contract for electricity with an electricity supplier, but who fail to receive delivery of electricity under such Contracts.

**Tariff:** a schedule of rates, terms and conditions governing the provision of telecommunications or energy service on file with the Public Service Commission.

**Telecommunications Service Provider:** for purposes of this chapter only, any provider of telecommunications service that was not an incumbent local exchange carrier in the District of Columbia on January 31, 1996.

**Termination of Contract:** cessation of a Contract for supply with an Energy Supplier or services of a Telecommunications Service Provider between the Service Provider and Customer."

**Utility:** every street railroad, street railroad corporation, common carrier, gas plant, gas corporation, electric company, telephone corporation, telephone line, telegraph corporation, telegraph line, and pipeline company.

**Utility Consumer Bill of Rights:** refers to the Commission's Consumer Bill of Rights, adopted as regulations by the PSC in the D.C. Mun. Regs., Tit. 15, Chapter 3.

All persons interested in commenting on the subject matter of this proposed rulemaking action may submit comments, in writing, not later than thirty (30) days after publication of this notice in the *D.C. Register* with Dorothy Wideman, Commission Secretary, Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia, 1333 H Street, N.W., West Tower, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005. Copies of these proposed rules may be obtained, at cost, by writing the Commission Secretary at the above address.