



The Public Utilities
Commission of Ohio

4
08-0090-GA-CSS
Case Number

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Attn: Docketing
180 E. Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Formal Complaint Form

Gregory and Stacey Houser

Customer Name

6774 Alloway Street East

Customer Address

Worthington, OH 43085

City

State Zip

163621900010008

Account Number

Against

Columbia Gas of Ohio

Utility Company Name

Customer Service Address (if different from above)

City

State Zip

Please describe your complaint. (Attach additional sheets if necessary)

On January 5, 2008 a representative from Columbia Gas came to our house at about 6:00 on Saturday to inform us that the service line to our house was leaking. He told us it was our responsibility to get it repaired.
(Continued on next page.)

x Stacey D. Houser

x [Signature]

Signature

(614) 841-1380

Customer Telephone Number

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The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Ted Strickland, Governor • Alan R. Schriber, Chairman
Commissioners: Ronda Harman Fergus, Judy A. Jones, Valerie A. Lemmie, Donald L. Mason
180 E. Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793 • An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider

He also told us that the leak was not that bad and we had a week to get the repair made. We contacted an authorized plumber from the list on the Columbia Gas web site. They came out the following week to make the repair. On Friday, January 11, 2008 we called Columbia Gas to come out and inspect the work per their requirements. Columbia Gas's customer service department's first response was that they would be out on Monday. I had to call back and request multiple times that Monday was not acceptable because by law/regulation the plumber cannot turn the gas back on and that would leave us without for the entire weekend. They relented and said they would try to get someone out this evening, but it would probably be Saturday before the inspector arrived.

On Saturday morning the inspector arrived at 10:00 and then turned around and left because he said he was paged for an emergency. I told him that I had to run some errands and that the house was open and our dog was friendly. He came back without calling me to ensure that I would be there. He inspected the service line and the inside lines and said that there were leaks in the service line and at the furnace. He left a card with a description of the issues and left the gas off. After pleading with customer service representative for 20 minutes to have the inspector call me back to explain why the line failed inspection, they finally relented and had him call. He informed me that he could not test the repaired/replaced service line because the valve at the street (Columbia Gas's property) was leaking. His only suggestion was to have the plumber disconnect the service line, cap it, have him come back and test it. Then after he approved the line, the plumber would have to reconnect the service line. This occurred because his tests could not determine if my new service line was leaking because Columbia Gas's valve was leaking. He said that his valve leak was not significant enough and he could turn the gas on if the work was completed as he described by 4:30 that day, even though his valve was visually leaking under normal pressure and my new service line was not. My plumber said he could not get the work done by then. I was told that I would not have gas until the valve was fixed.

On Monday morning we contacted customer service at Columbia Gas and they informed us that the work was scheduled for today. They could not tell us when they would be there. At the end of the day they had not come out to make the repair. Customer Service at that point told us that the work was now scheduled to be completed Wednesday morning at 8:00. They had not made any attempt to contact us and inform us of what their intentions were. By this point in time we obviously had to leave the house as it was not fit stay in with such frigid temperatures.

Numerous attempts to contact customer service would not provide any improved service response. All requests to speak to a supervisor or manager were denied to us. Nothing happened on Tuesday.

Wednesday morning Columbia Gas did not show up and did not call. Calls to the customer service department again provided no answers and no results. All they would say is that the work was schedule and we had to be there. By Wednesday afternoon my wife was looking for anything that might help us. Out of total frustration she sent an e-mail to Kevin Bacon. Ironically, we started to get some responses from Columbia Gas.

After 5 days of complaining and trying to speak to someone in customer service that could help us, asking for assistance and asking for a senior person who could help us, anyone; we finally received a call from Customer Relations department. No one would tell us that such a department existed. She seemed to be very concerned, yet nothing really changed.

Finally, Thursday around 11:00 Columbia Gas showed up and replaced the valve. After replacing the valve, they tested our service line and house and there were no leaks or problems. Around 3:00 we got our gas turned back on, almost six complete days from when we contacted Columbia Gas to tell them that our required repair had been completed.

Per the instructions for this form it is my responsibility to demonstrate that the public utility has made mistakes:

1. Columbia Gas did not comply with 4901:1-13-05 (C)
Scheduled appointments with customers. The gas or natural gas company shall provide customers with an expected company arrival time window of 4 hours or less for all appointments requiring the customer to be present... When the gas or natural gas company will not be able to meet a scheduled appointment with a customer, the company shall reasonably attempt to notify the customer in advance of the failure to meet the appointment and arrange a new appointment date and time.

This occurred more than once through out our ordeal.

2. Columbia Gas did not comply with 4901:1-13-05 (A) (1) (a)
Requests will be completed within five business days after the gas or natural gas company has been notified...

It took Columbia Gas 6 days to get our gas back on.

Additionally, we feel that it is unreasonable to leave a customer without gas for six days over a simple repair that took them little over an hour once they got to the problem.

Clearly our experience exemplifies inadequate service.

Requested remedy to our complaint:

1. We would like Columbia Gas to explain (with documentation) how they can determine with accuracy and certainty that our service line was leaking when their valve was also leaking. Furthermore, how come Columbia Gas could not determine that our newly replaced line was not leaking under the same conditions? It seems illogical that testing can be completed one way and not the other. It also appears that Columbia Gas assumed the problem was ours without considering that the problem could be theirs. The report of gas odor that Columbia Gas responded to was coming from the area of their valve.

2. We would like Columbia Gas to explain why it is okay to leave their leak on until they can get around to it, and it is not okay to temporarily leave my gas on until Columbia Gas could verify my new line was okay. (Please keep in mind that an authorized certified plumber made the repair to the service line and that the connections to the valve and the house were not visually leaking. The only leak that could be verified with certainty was the valve which was Columbia Gas's responsibility.) Note: After Columbia Gas made the repair to the valve, they backfilled the ditch before testing the service line. I can only assume that they assumed that the new service line was fine. Which after testing, it was validated.
3. We would like Columbia Gas to explain why it took 5 days to fix their valve once they new about it's required repair? Especially knowing that our gas service was off because of it. (It took them less than 2 hours to make the repairs once they finally came.)
4. We would like Columbia Gas to implement a written plan disclosed to the public for bettering customer service. This plan would allow a customer to speak to some one other than a person that can only give you your account balance and tell you that your "ticket has been assigned", when it has been assigned for three days. It would allow them to pass a frustrated customer to a superior or to a department that is actually working, or has been assigned to work on the problem. It would also require that personnel in customer service have a company directory of all departments/individuals phone numbers. The plan would not require a phone call to your state Senator before the department called "customer relations" is engaged, that department might be required to be engaged the customer after said customer's gas has been off for only two days.
5. Financial Settlement
\$115.58 x 3 nights = \$346.78 (Cost of room at Holiday Inn, closest hotel)
\$50 X 3 = \$150 (Cost of eating out for 3 days, conservative estimate)
\$1000.00 (Cost of service line repair/replacement)
\$1503.22 (Estimated cost of our wasted time on the phone waiting to talk and talking to "customer service", frustration of said phone time, physical and emotional distress on our entire family, time pulled away from other activities.)

\$3000.00 Total Payment

We believe these to be reasonable requests to remedy our complaint.