



Public Utilities Commission

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February 25, 2022

Kelsey Johnson
514 North Street
Toledo, OH 43620

PUCO

2022 APR 25 PM 3:40

RECEIVED-DOCKETING DIV

RE: Case No. 22-0145-GA-CSS

Dear Kelsey Johnson:

This letter will confirm that the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has received your formal complaint against Columbia Gas of Ohio. Your formal complaint has been assigned the above case number. We have sent a copy of your complaint to the utility company. The utility company has been given 20 days to file its answer in response to your complaint and will send a copy of that answer to you as well.

The Commission will issue an entry that explains the next step in your case. A copy of the entry will be sent to you.

Enclosed is a brochure to assist you in understanding the process associated with formal Complaints filed with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

Sincerely,

Tanbwa Troupe, Secretary
Debbie Ryan, Acting Secretary
Donielle M. Hunter, Acting Secretary
Susan Patterson, Acting Secretary

DH/dlh

This is to certify that the images appearing are an accurate and complete reproduction of a case file document delivered in the regular course of business.
Technician MC Date Processed

APR 25 2022

180 East Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793

(614) 466-3016
www.PUCO.ohio.gov

FYI -
I guess I am not the
only one...

Maumee corrects water billing issues with new batteries for meter reading

4/13/2022

BY KATE SNYDER / THE BLADE

While some Maumee residents have seen a vast increase in their most recent water bill, city officials said any major deviations are a one-time occurrence after battery outages disrupted meter-reading for more than a year.

"I get it. I understand," said Jim MacDonald, Maumee City Council president. "I don't want a \$1,000 bill, either."

The city uses a battery system to remotely read water meters in every resident's home, said Mayor Rich Carr. The batteries were supposed to have a 20-year lifespan, but several thousand died after just seven years.

It took about 18 months to get new batteries installed, and during that time, the city billed residents estimates based on past usage. Mr. Carr said it wouldn't have been feasible to read the meters manually—the city doesn't have enough staff to do so, and the outage occurred in the middle of the pandemic.

"In the meantime, all we could do was estimate the bills," Mr. Carr said.

But the meters kept track of usage, and when the new batteries were installed, all that past data was available to the city, Mr. Carr said, so the city could then charge any differences if residents had been underpaying during that time.

"Some people went the other way," he said. "They got a credit on their bill because they overpaid."

Mr. Carr published a Facebook post on the recent billing in a Maumee residents group in response to several residents posting photos of their bills and asking questions about the reason for the sudden changes. In some cases, residents' bills jumped from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

"They're not going to have bills like that going forward," Mr. Carr said.

He encouraged anyone with questions about their water bills to call the city, and city officials can review the bill and offer an explanation. For those who can't pay the bill, the city is offering a payment plan.

"I understand the frustration," Mr. Carr said.

The company that installed the batteries, Mueller Systems, needed time to not only replace the dead equipment but also calibrate each system to the city's computers, Mr. Carr said. Other than this issue, he said there haven't been any problems.

"It's a great system," he said.

Mr. MacDonald said the outage happened at a very bad time, with the pandemic going on and also supply chain shortages and backups. Because the city bills quarterly, some residents are seeing six billing cycles' worth of differences in their normal payments.

"The numbers are real," he said. "They're not exaggerated."

Many other issues could also cause water bills to increase, Mr. MacDonald said, including the use of backup sump pumps or any kind of leaks, even small leaks.

"Any kind of leaks in the house can add up over time," he said.