

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

MARY PATEK,)	
)	
Complainant,)	
)	Case No. 21-0549-EL-CSS
vs.)	
)	
THE CLEVELAND ELECTRIC)	
ILLUMINATING COMPANY,)	
)	
Respondent.)	

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ROBERT PERKINS ON BEHALF OF
THE CLEVELAND ELECTRIC ILLUMINATING COMPANY**

INTRODUCTION

Q. PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

A. My name is Robert Perkins. I am employed by The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company (“CEI” or the “Company”) as Manager of Meter Reading. Meter Reading is the department responsible for obtaining monthly meter reads to ensure accurate electricity consumption for customer billing.

Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE.

A. I have worked at FirstEnergy companies for almost 32 years. I have been the Manager of Meter Reading at CEI since February 2022, and I was previously the Manager of Meter Services at CEI from 2006 to February 2022. Prior to that, for approximately seven years I supervised some of Ohio Edison’s field meter services personnel, including those who installed meters, performed off-cycle meter reads, and investigated customer complaints regarding, among other things, unexplained high bills and allegedly inaccurate meters. Before that, I worked as a metering instructor for FirstEnergy Service Company for one year, instructing technical courses on metering to our metering personnel and other employees. I also taught courses on the basics of electricity to other office personnel. For the first six years of my employment with FirstEnergy, I worked as a technician in Ohio Edison’s meter testing laboratory, where I calibrated the testing equipment to ensure its proper function when meters were tested. Previous to my work experience at FirstEnergy, I was self-employed as an electrical contractor and currently hold and maintain an Ohio Electrical Contractor License. I also have a four-year degree from The University of Akron in Electronic Technology.

1 **Q. WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT JOB RESPONSIBILITIES?**

2 A. My job responsibilities include management and oversight of all activities that fall within
3 the responsibility of meter reading at CEI.

4 **Q. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE THE COMMISSION?**

5 A. Yes, I testified in *Disiena v. CEI*, Case No. 09-947-EL-CSS; *Moore v. CEI*, Case No. 17-
6 1563-EL-CSS; and *Kenderes v. CEI*, Case No. 18-922-EL-CSS. I also filed pre-filed
7 Direct Testimony in *DiFiori v. CEI*, Case No. 18-1608-EL-CSS.

8 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THE PRESENT CASE?**

9 A. My testimony addresses the Complaint pertaining to the electric service provided by CEI
10 to Mary Patek at 30455 Woodall Dr., Solon, OH 44139 (the “Property”). Specifically, my
11 testimony addresses the circumstances surrounding the testing of the meter accuracy of the
12 meter servicing a barn located at the Property as well as other issues related to
13 Complainant’s high-bill complaint.

14 **Q. WHAT DID YOU DO TO PREPARE FOR YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS**
15 **PROCEEDING?**

16 A. I have reviewed the Complaint submitted by Mrs. Patek, as well as business records related
17 to this case maintained and preserved within FirstEnergy’s SAP System. These records,
18 all of which were kept in the course of regularly conducted business activity, include
19 customer contact notes and account summary, and CEI’s Commission-approved tariff. It
20 is the regular practice of FirstEnergy and CEI to make and preserve these business records,
21 and I rely upon such documents in accordance with my duties at CEI.

HISTORY OF MRS. PATEK'S ACCOUNT

Q. WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF MRS. PATEK'S COMPLAINT IN THIS CASE?

A. From my review of CEI's records and the filings in this matter, I understand Mrs. Patek's Complaint is chiefly that she believes that from December 11, 2020 to April 7, 2021, her meter was incorrectly calculating her electrical usage. She believes this alleged error led to errors in how much she was charged.

Q. HOW DOES CEI DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF ELECTRICITY USED?

A. Each service account has a meter, which could be analog (with dials instead of digital numbers), digital, or a smart meter. These meters record the net usage over the life of the meter. To determine each month's bill, CEI reads the meter and subtracts the current reading from the previous month's reading. This results in the usage amount for that month.

Q. DOES CEI ESTIMATE BILL READINGS?

A. If a customer does not have a smart meter, CEI will, on occasion, estimate the read to determine that month's usage.

Q. DID MRS. PATEK HAVE A SMART METER?

A. Yes. CEI's records indicate that a smart meter was installed in December 2020 on the barn located at the Property. During the period of December 2020 through April 2021, Mrs. Patek's electricity consumption was measured with actual meter readings.

Q. DID MRS. PATEK RAISE CONCERNS REGARDING THE ACCURACY OF HER METER?

1 A. During her March 15, 2021 call with CEI, Mrs. Patek requested a meter test because she
2 believed that there was an issue with the meter.

3 **Q. DID CEI TEST COMPLAINANT’S METER?**

4 A. Yes.

5 **Q. CAN YOU PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE**
6 **METER TEST?**

7 A. Yes. As I previously stated, Mrs. Patek contacted CEI by phone on March 15, 2021 about
8 a perceived issue with her smart meter. CEI’s customer contact notes from that call indicate
9 that CEI agreed to start an investigation and, as a result of the call, CEI ordered a test of
10 Mrs. Patek’s meter. To complete this request, CEI personnel removed the meter from
11 service on April 8, 2021 and installed a new meter that same day. The old meter was sent
12 to the Meter Lab in Akron, Ohio for testing. The Meter Lab conducted the standard tests
13 on the meter, which measured well within the accuracy thresholds established by the
14 Commission. In fact, the meter registered an average accuracy of 100.01 percent. CEI
15 mailed a letter to Mrs. Patek on May 24, 2021 informing her of the test results on her meter.
16 A copy of the letter to Mrs. Patek informing her of the meter test is attached hereto as
17 **Exhibit A.**

18 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF METER TESTING.**

19 A. When a meter arrives for testing at the Company’s Meter Lab, it is marked and logged for
20 identification purposes. The basic meter function measures a well-known relationship of
21 current and voltage commonly referred to as “load” which is reflected as kilowatts over
22 time (“kilowatt hours” or “kWh”). As installed in the field, the meter measures the kWh
23 being drawn from the Company’s service line through the meter and into the premise by

1 the electricity-using devices such as electronics, lights, fans, and motors. The testing
2 consists of putting a known voltage and amperage through the customer's meter and
3 comparing the measured result with a meter standard with known test results. The result
4 can be expressed as a percentage of measured load to known load. In this case, the meter
5 in question tested at 100.01% accurate. The tolerance allowed by Commission Rules is
6 plus or minus 2.0% of 100%. So Mrs. Patek's meter was operating within the
7 Commission's parameters.

8 **Q. IS THE METER LAB EVER INSPECTED BY THIRD PARTIES?**

9 A. Yes. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio inspects the Meter Lab on an annual basis
10 to ensure that CEI's Meter Lab is compliant with the Commission's Rules.

11 **Q. IN YOUR OPINION, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE COMPLAINANT'S METER**
12 **REGISTERED MORE ELECTRICITY THAN THE CUSTOMER ACTUALLY**
13 **USED DURING THE MONTHS IN QUESTION?**

14 A. No, it is not. First, testing at the Meter Lab showed the meter to be operating within the
15 Commission's tolerance levels. The Meter Lab's tests use the same delivery-side electrical
16 connections and measurement relationships as in the field, and, of course, the internal
17 workings of the meter itself are the same. In other words, there is no difference in result
18 between testing in the field and testing in the lab. That is why our Meter Lab can verify
19 meter accuracy as required by law. I would again note that the Commission Staff inspects
20 our Meter Lab annually for compliance.

21 Second, given the satisfactory test results, it is clear the meter registered accurately
22 until its removal in April 2021, including during the months of December 2020 through

1 April 2021.¹ Meters do not temporarily “go haywire” for a few months and then revert to
2 normal. When meters break—which is relatively rare—they stay broken. If Mrs. Patek’s
3 meter was malfunctioning as she claims it was, it would not have tested 100.01% accurate
4 at the Meter Lab.

5 Third, the Company cannot “push” electricity through a meter—it can only be
6 drawn through or “pulled” by electric-consuming devices on the customer’s side of the
7 meter. For example, a new meter installed at a planned construction site will continue to
8 register zero kWh until the first wire is connected on the customer’s side. After that, the
9 amount of kWh flowing through the meter is exclusively determined by the customer’s
10 load. Electricity, somewhat like pushing on a rope, doesn’t go anywhere until it is pulled.

11 **Q. BASED ON THE INFORMATION REVIEWED, WAS MRS. PATEK’S METER**
12 **PROPERLY CALCULATING HER USAGE?**

13 A. Yes. I have seen no evidence that would suggest that Mrs. Patek’s meter was not
14 functioning within the parameters required by the Commission.

15 **Q. IS MRS. PATEK ENTITLED TO ANY REFUND?**

16 A. No. Mrs. Patek’s meter was performing properly and recorded the actual amount of
17 electricity that the barn on the Property used. CEI calculated her bills based on the amount
18 of electricity she used, in accordance with CEI’s Commission-approved tariff.

19 **Q. MRS. PATEK ALLEGES THAT FROM DECEMBER 11, 2020 THROUGH APRIL**
20 **7, 2021, THERE WAS AN “UNREAL INCREASE IN BILLED LOAD.” HOW DO**
21 **YOU RESPOND?**

¹ Mrs. Patek’s electricity consumption was measured with actual meter readings for December 2020 – April 2021.

1 A. I believe that it is not only possible that she used the registered kWh and kW demand, but
2 that it is certain. I recognize that Mrs. Patek may not fully understand the kW demand of
3 normal household appliances, but the consistency between her previous meter's kWh
4 registration and her new meter makes it a practical certainty that both meters are registering
5 normally. The installation of the new meter in December 2020 allowed for a measured kW
6 demand for the highest thirty (30) minute integrated kW to be determined. The previous
7 meter did not measure the kW demand and billed the greatest of either 5.0 kW or kWh /
8 200 for months when over 1,000 kWh were consumed in accordance with CEI's
9 Commission-approved tariff. Generally, an electric furnace demand is between 10 kW and
10 50 kW, with the typical residential electric furnace at 20 kW. Running a 20 kW residential
11 electric furnace for 30 minutes will consume 10 kWh of electricity and a demand of 20
12 kW.

13 **Q. IF THERE IS A GROUND CONDITION AND THE CUSTOMER IS NOT EVEN**
14 **USING THE ELECTRICITY TO POWER DEVICES, WHY IS IT PROPER TO**
15 **BILL THE KWH USAGE AS CONSUMPTION?**

16 A. Pursuant to CEI's Commission-approved tariff, customers are responsible for all
17 equipment "behind the meter," including the wiring leading from the meter to any terminus
18 on the premises. Thus, if a wire becomes grounded and draws current, it is the customer's
19 responsibility and is treated no differently than, say, running an air conditioner or space
20 heater. This is necessary because even a grounding condition requires generation to
21 produce—and transmission and distribution circuits to deliver—the electricity. If the
22 customer whose meter the electricity flows through doesn't pay for it, then other customers
23 would be required to make up the difference.

1 **Q. DID CEI VIOLATE COMMISSION RULES?**

2 A. No.

3 **Q. DID CEI COMPLY WITH ITS TARIFF?**

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. WAS MRS. PATEK'S METER WORKING PROPERLY?

6 A. To a reasonable degree of professional certainty, yes.

7 CONCLUSION

8 Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?

9 A. Yes, however, I reserve my right to supplement my testimony.



May 24, 2021

MARY PATEK
30455 WOODALL RD
SOLON OH 44139

Dear MARY PATEK

Account Number: [REDACTED]

Our representatives removed your electric meter for testing on April 07, 2021 and a new meter was installed in its place at 30455 WOODALL RD
SOLON OH 44139

The test was performed on April 13th, 2021, on the meter we removed and showed that the meter is registering at the average accuracy of 100.01 percent, which is within the limits established by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

As a result, all of your usage charges on your previous bills are correct.

If you have any questions, please contact our Customer Contact Center where a representative will be happy to help you.

Sincerely,

The Illuminating Company
A FirstEnergy Company

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

On June 20, 2023, the foregoing document was filed on the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's Docketing Information System. The PUCO's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on all parties of record in this proceeding. A service copy has been sent by U.S. Mail on this 20th day of June 2023 to Complainant at the following address:

Mary Patek
30455 Woodall Dr.
Solon, OH 44139

/s/ Kari D. Hehmeyer

Attorney for Respondent

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities
Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

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in

Case No(s). 21-0549-EL-CSS

Summary: Testimony Direct Testimony of Robert Perkins electronically filed by Ms.
Kari D. Hehmeyer on behalf of The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company.