



Letter from Chairman Andre T. Porter: Looking ahead as we welcome 2016.



With the beginning of a new year comes a lot of reflection of the previous year and many hopes for the days ahead.

The PUCO worked on many things throughout last year that began to set the groundwork for advancing and updating Ohio's utility regulation landscape. That groundwork will prepare Ohio for the months and years to come.

It is important for regulation to stay on pace with innovation and technology, ensuring that we do not fall behind and develop reactionary regulation. It is important that regulation help facilitate discussions and efforts for more advanced and efficient policies, technologies and services that every Ohioan depends on, in some way, everyday.

From the technology advancements we are currently looking at within the telecommunications industry to developments in natural gas and the development of a modernized electric grid, the PUCO is committed to assuring all residential and business consumers continue to receive adequate, cost-effective, safe and reliable utility services.

Regulators are the neutral arbiter between the regulated utility and the customers it serves. This is the culture at the PUCO — where opposing sides can come together and work towards common ground to achieve the best outcomes for the state of Ohio and its citizens.

In the coming months, you will see a lot of activity from the PUCO and the industries we regulate. The PUCO will host several meetings to solicit input from subject matter experts, stakeholders and the public regarding much of the issues facing regulated utility industries.

We continue to develop a regulatory framework that enhances value for all stakeholders and encourages consumer engagement.

I look forward to what is to come and hope for your participation in carving out the structure that will equip the PUCO to advance along with technologies and the industries we regulate.

Happy New Year.

PUCO sets “fixed means fixed” guidelines



In November 2015, the PUCO ordered that competitive retail electric service (CRES) customer contracts be more transparent and straightforward by better defining the terms and conditions of fixed-rate offers.

Following the winter of 2014, the PUCO received complaints that CRES providers included additional charges on customer's bills, despite being enrolled in a fixed-rate contract. Because of these complaints, the PUCO began to investigate the terms and conditions of CRES provider offers to ensure protections for consumers against unreasonable sales practices.

The PUCO ordered that beginning Jan. 1, 2016, an offer marketed as a fixed-rate should not include in its terms and conditions any mechanism that allows unforeseen charges incurred by the CRES provider to pass-through to customers. Offers that include these terms should be marketed as variable- or introductory-rate.

Before enrolling in a competitive supplier agreement, customers should be sure to read and understand the terms and conditions of the offer. For more information and to compare offers on the PUCO's *Apples to Apples* comparison charts, visit www.energychoice.ohio.gov.

PUCO accepts results of natural gas supply auctions



In January 2016, the PUCO accepted the results of Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio's and Columbia Gas of Ohio's auctions for their standard choice offers (SCO).

Vectren's auction, held Jan. 12, 2016, secured natural gas supplies for its customers for the delivery period of April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017, and established a retail price adjustment of \$0.12 per hundred cubic feet (ccf)



Columbia Gas's auction, held Jan. 19, 2016, secured natural gas for its customers for the delivery period of April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017, and established a retail price adjustment of \$0.143 per ccf.



The SCO applies to choice-eligible customers that have not selected an alternative supplier. Choice-eligible customers will continue to have the option to enroll with an energy choice supplier of their choosing, join a government aggregation buying group or remain on the SCO. Customers who are interested in choosing an energy choice supplier can compare available offers by visiting the PUCO's [Energy Choice Ohio](#) website and using the online *Apples to Apples* comparison charts.

Each SCO customer's bill will indicate the certified retail natural gas supplier that is responsible for providing the customer's natural gas. Vectren and Columbia Gas will continue to deliver natural gas to all customers, offer payment plans and handle all emergency and customer service calls. Government aggregation customers and those already enrolled with an energy choice supplier are not affected.

EnerNOC, the auction manager, conducted descending clock auctions for the SCO rates for both auctions. Bids were submitted by natural gas suppliers based on fixed adjustments to the NYMEX settlement price. The names of the winning bidders remain confidential for 15 days following the auction, to protect the suppliers' positions in contract negotiations with pipeline companies.

PUCO Call Center saves Ohioans money



The PUCO employs professional customer service representatives who work to address concerns customers have with their utility companies. The PUCO learns a great deal from customers who call in with questions and complaints. This information is used to ensure that companies engage in fair and reasonable practices. It also helps the PUCO to formulate rules and regulations.

Each year, the PUCO Call Center receives tens-of-thousands of calls from consumers that need assistance with utility concerns ranging from service disconnection to understanding their bill to mitigating disputes between the consumer and the utility.

In 2015, the PUCO Call Center saved Ohio consumers more than \$780,000. PUCO Call Center representatives are trained on the most up-to-date utility information and often times can address customer needs in only one phone call.

The PUCO Call Center can be reached by calling (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

PUCO hosts first meetings of telephone network transition collaborative



In June 2015, Governor John R. Kasich signed into law House Bill 64, which required the PUCO to establish a collaborative process to address the Internet-protocol transition. The collaborative process includes input from a variety of interested parties. The collaborative will evaluate the availability of comparable telecommunications services, identify possible vulnerable Ohioans and develop expectations for consumer education.

The PUCO brought together the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, incumbent telephone providers, alternative providers, members of the General Assembly and other interested parties, forming a collaborative to address the Internet-protocol network transition. The first two meetings of the collaborative were held on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015 and Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016. The next collaborative meeting is scheduled for Feb. 23, 2016, at 1 p.m. at the PUCO offices.

For more information on the telephone network transition or to submit comments, visit www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

PUCO IN FOCUS



A spotlight on the latest news affecting Ohio utility consumers.

PUCO issues Winter Reconnect Order for 2015–2016



The Winter Reconnect Order allows customers who have had their home heating service disconnected for nonpayment, or who may face disconnection, the opportunity to pay a maximum of \$175, plus a reconnection fee not to exceed \$36, to restore or maintain their utility service. Ohioans can use the Winter Reconnect Order once per winter heating season. Customers who use the Winter Reconnect Order are required to make payment arrangements with their natural gas or electric company on the outstanding balance. During the 2014–2015 heating season more than 280,000 consumers utilized the Winter Reconnect Order.

PUCO works to keep Ohio's highways safe



With more than 4 million commercial motor vehicles registered to operate in Ohio, the work of PUCO motor carrier safety inspectors is important in order to keep Ohio's highways safe. Throughout 2015, PUCO motor carrier safety inspectors completed 1,987 driver-vehicle inspections, 507 carrier and shipper compliance reviews and 1,083 new entrant safety audits. These actions resulted in 494 out-of-service citations and 597 hazardous materials violation citations.



PUCO inspectors conducted safety inspections of commercial motor vehicles during Roadcheck 2015 held June 2–4, 2015.

Rail safety upgrades



In 2015, the PUCO rail division was responsible for 172 rail crossing safety improvements with over \$14.3 million allocated for these projects. The upgrades to rail crossings included the installation of lights and gates, supplemental assistance upgrades, circuitry upgrades and closings. The work done by the PUCO Rail Division

has helped improve safety at rail crossings throughout the state. The annual number of train-motor vehicle crashes in Ohio has decreased significantly, from 123 in 2001 to 76 in 2014.

PUCO awards 15 hazardous materials training grants



In 2015, the PUCO approved 15 hazardous materials training grants totaling \$393,286. The grants will be used to train more than 2,400 public safety and emergency services professionals in Ohio.

The PUCO awards hazardous materials planning and training grants to local government subdivisions, educational institutions and state agencies in Ohio. Money for these grants comes from fines paid by hazardous material carriers and shippers. Individual grants are based upon applications to the PUCO and are awarded on a reimbursement basis.

The PUCO has regulatory authority to conduct safety audits and compliance reviews to evaluate the safety records, policies and procedures of motor carriers, including hazardous materials carriers operating in Ohio. The PUCO hazardous materials transportation program has been recognized by Battelle Memorial Institute as one of the best and most comprehensive of such programs in the nation.