



The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio *Your one-stop utility resource*

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PUCO to host Internet protocol network transition collaborative



On Nov. 4, 2015, the PUCO announced the beginning of the Ohio Network Transition Collaborative. The PUCO will host the first meeting on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. at the PUCO offices.

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 will include 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.



“Access to reliable telecommunications services is important to ensure Ohio’s continued success,” said Chairman Andre T. Porter. “With the advancement of these technologies, Ohio is moving in the right direction.”

The PUCO is also seeking public comments regarding the Internet-protocol network transition. Please visit the PUCO website to provide comments, or click [here](#). Ohioans who would prefer to send a letter may refer to the topic questions online and send a letter to PUCO, Telecom and Technology Section, 180 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

For more information, or to sign up for regular updates regarding the collaborative process please visit www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

Commissioner Trombold named OPSI president



The Organization of PJM States, Inc. (OPSI), comprised of 13 states and the District of Columbia, was established in 2005 as an organization of utility regulatory agencies in the service area of PJM, our regional transmission operator (RTO). PJM operates the high-voltage electric transmission grid—including 62,556 miles of transmission

lines—as well as the wholesale electricity market affecting 61 million people.

How long have you been a part of OPSI and what are some of your accomplishments there?

In May 2013, I was appointed as the Ohio representative to OPSI by former PUCO Chairman Todd Snitchler. Previously, then Commissioner Andre Porter was serving on OPSI and working his way “up the ranks” before leaving the PUCO to be director of the Ohio Department of Commerce. As soon as I was appointed, it was easy to see that time and attention to this organization was important for Ohio. I volunteered for committees, took on an active role, and was soon elected secretary and then vice president.

How does OPSI affect Ohio and the PUCO?

OPSI gives us the opportunity to work with commissioners and staff from other states as well as with PJM and FERC on the many complex technical and policy issues affecting our electric grid and energy marketplace. OPSI commissioners and staff are actively engaged in PJM and FERC issues, and we also work closely with the region’s Independent Market Monitor, Joe Bowring. This is important because so many regional and federal issues have the potential to impact rates and reliability in Ohio.

While OPSI is a regional body and seeks to speak with one voice as much as possible, OPSI does not infringe on each state’s individual role as regulator. For example, Ohio’s needs may differ from other states because of our size and because the entire state is within the RTO (some states are split between two RTOs). Participation in OPSI provides a forum to discuss state-specific concerns, but it does not prohibit the state from acting individually.

What is your current involvement with OPSI like? What are you currently working on?

In October I was named president of OPSI for the upcoming year. I also serve as a member of the Market Monitor Committee and the Personnel Committee. In addition, I chair the Independent State Agencies Committee (ISAC), a committee focused on PJM’s transmission planning process.

There are a lot of things OPSI has been working on this year, including PJM’s new capacity performance product, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan, issues regarding demand response, PJM’s load forecast and the like. The issue of cost allocation is a particularly tough issue for the region. Although we need policies that ensure reliability to the regional electric grid, I am also sensitive to ratepayers in our state being unfairly burdened with costs due to our size and electric load. We have been active in voicing concerns whenever costs are “socialized” across the PJM footprint, especially when the benefits are not equally distributed.

What do you hope to accomplish as president of OPSI?

Ohio has the largest load in the PJM footprint (22%), but an Ohio commissioner has never served as president of the organization. I am honored to be the first Ohio commissioner to serve in this capacity. As president, I would like to continue positioning OPSI as a pivotal organization—one that PJM and FERC listen to when we weigh in on energy issues. I also want to ensure that Ohio’s voice is heard in the regional energy debate.

How long will your tenure as president be?

My tenure as OPSI president is one year. My term began last week and will end at the annual OPSI meeting held in Columbus in October 2016.

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Ohio’s presence regionally and at the federal level is increasingly important as decisions are made that may significantly impact ratepayers and reliability. The PUCO is very lucky to have our Federal Energy Advocate, Jon Tauber, and capable staff like Hisham Choeuiki, Lori Sternisha, Deb Gebolys and my aide, Kristin Clingan. They closely monitor technical and policy issues occurring around us and at PJM and FERC. They advise me and the Commission on ways to position Ohio to minimize rate impacts and to effectuate policies that are beneficial to our state. Many states do not have a federal energy advocate office or so many capable staff. This is why Ohio has a solid reputation for understanding the issues and positively advocating for ratepayers.

PUCO issues Winter Reconnect Order



In September the PUCO approved the Winter Reconnect Order to help Ohioans reconnect or maintain electric and natural gas service during the winter heating season between Oct. 19, 2015 and April 15, 2016. Any customer of a PUCO regulated electric or natural gas utility may take advantage of the order.

The Winter Reconnect Order is an opportunity for Ohioans to avoid disconnection or to reconnect their gas and/or electric service once during the winter heating season. Customers who utilize the Winter Reconnect Order are required to pay the utility \$175 plus any applicable reconnection charge not to exceed \$36. If the company's reconnection charge is greater than \$36, the balance may be billed to the customer the following month.

The Winter Reconnect Order also applies to customers seeking to establish new electric and natural gas service. Rather than paying the full security deposit that may be required for new service, customers can pay up to \$175 and be billed any remaining balance of the security deposit the following month.

There is no income eligibility requirement to utilize the Winter Reconnect Order, however customers who are at or below 175 percent of the federal poverty level may apply through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to pay the \$175 amount. Several other state and federal programs are also available to Ohioans who qualify, including the Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP) and the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP). More information about these programs and additional ways to save on home heating bills this winter is available on Ohio's Winter Heating Resource website at www.winterheat.ohio.gov.

If you would like to utilize the program, call your electric or natural gas utility between Oct. 19, 2015 and April 15, 2016, to find out more information about your account and how to apply the Winter Reconnect Order to your utility bill. Utility representatives will explain the order, and if applicable, set you up on a payment plan for any default amount. PIPP customers who would like to use the Winter Reconnect Order must pay the balance of any default they may have within one billing cycle in order to re-enroll in PIPP.

For more information contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or visit the PUCO's website at www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

Underground damage prevention enforcement to begin January 2016



In December 2014, Governor John R. Kasich signed Senate Bill 378, placing enforcement of Ohio's underground damage prevention regulations under the PUCO and creating the Underground Technical Committee (UTC).

The UTC was created to provide expertise during excavation violation reviews and to recommend a course of action for any inquiry. The goal of the UTC is to increase public safety by providing accountability of members of the Ohio Utility Protection Service (OUPS) and anyone who excavates or operates underground facilities in Ohio.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2016, parties may file inquiries regarding excavation violations with the PUCO. The PUCO will provide all information received to the UTC. The UTC will determine if a compliance failure occurred and recommend a course of action to the PUCO. The UTC will be responsible for reviewing all reports while the PUCO will enforce UTC recommendations.

Commercial excavators, utility operators, designers and developers are required to pay a registration fee of up to \$50 annually. Failure to register may result in a fine of up to \$2,500. The PUCO will be invoicing those required to pay.

The OUPS and Ohio Oil & Gas Producers Underground Protection Service remain the primary contacts for Ohioans who are planning excavations.

Before any digging project, Ohioans must call 8-1-1 to have underground facilities marked. For more information about underground damage prevention, visit the PUCO website at www.PUCO.ohio.gov.



The PUCO is charged with enforcing underground damage prevention laws to enhance public safety in Ohio.

PUCO IN FOCUS



A spotlight on the latest news affecting Ohio utility consumers.

Area code overlay approved for the 614 area code



Residential and business customers within the existing 614 area code should be prepared for the introduction of the new 380 area code. Beginning Jan. 30, 2016, customers in the 614 area code region requesting new service, an additional line or, in some cases, moving their service may be assigned the new 380 area code.

To ensure a continuing supply of telephone numbers, the new 380 area code will be added to the 614 area code region, which generally covers the central region of Ohio. The PUCO ordered an area code overlay for the area served by 614, rather than an area code split. The new 380 area code will be “overlaid” or superimposed over the same geographical area as the 614 area code.

Effective Jan. 30, 2016, 10- or 11-digit dialing (the appropriate area code plus the seven-digit telephone number or 1+ area code + telephone number) will be necessary for local and expanded local calls to be completed. Local calling areas and rates will not be affected by this change. Special services that use three-digit numbers, such as 911 and 411, as well as 1+ 10-digit long distance calling remain unchanged. Additionally, if other three-digit numbers are currently available in your community or from your provider, such as 211, 311, 511, 611, 711 or 811, these will remain unchanged.

As of August 2015, consumers may dial using seven, 10 or 11 digits to complete calls. The PUCO recommends starting early using 10- or 11-digit dialing so it will be second nature by the time it is required on Jan. 30, 2016.

The most important facts that consumers and businesses need to know about the upcoming 380 area code overlay are:

- Your telephone number, including current area code, will not change.
- You will need to dial area code + telephone number for all local calls.
- You will continue to dial 1+ area code + telephone number for all long distance calls.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call.
- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the overlay.
- You can still dial just three digits to reach 911.
- If 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711 or 811 are currently available in your community,

Customers should identify their telephone number as a 10-digit number (area code + seven-digit telephone number), and include the area code when giving the number to their friends, family, business associates, customers, etc.

Customers should ensure that all services, automatic dialing equipment, applications, software or other types of equipment recognize the new 380 area code as a valid area code. Some examples are life safety systems, fax machines, Internet dial-up numbers, alarm and security systems, gates, speed dialers, mobile phone contact lists, call forwarding settings, voicemail services and similar functions. Be sure to check your business stationery, advertising materials, personal checks and your personal or pet ID tags to ensure the area code is included in your telephone number. Remember that all local calls must be programmed using 10-digits and you need to add “1” for all long distance calls.

For more information, please visit www.PUCO.ohio.gov or call the PUCO Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).