



Public Service Commission

SERVING MARYLAND SINCE 1910

Frequently Asked Questions

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Billing Disputes

1. My gas and/or electricity bill is too high - what should I do?

First, you must contact the [utility company](#) or [supplier](#) to try to resolve the problem. It is required by law to assist you. If you are not satisfied with the company's action, you may file a complaint with the Consumer Affairs Division (CAD). (See [Complaint Procedures](#).) Your complaint will be forwarded to the utility company for investigation and response.

2. How will the Public Service Commission's Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) investigate my high bill dispute?

The utility company provides the Commission's CAD with information about your account to determine whether or not there is an obvious reason for the high bills. Often the utility will include a meter reading history or furnish copies of bills if not supplied by the customer so they can be examined. The CAD representative will review the information that includes the utility's written response to determine if there was an obvious reason for the high bill, like colder temperatures. CAD may require that the utility test your meter to ensure that it is operating accurately. The utility is only responsible for ensuring that your usage has been recorded properly and is registering accurately on a meter that has been approved by the PSC. CAD's determination will be based on the accuracy of your meter and the meter readings.

3. Does the utility have to prove that I am using the service that is billed?

The utility can only measure the consumption of gas or electricity through an accurate meter. There are numerous variables which determine the amount of gas or electricity consumed at a residence, such as the efficiency of the heating/cooling systems and the appliances, the size of a residence, the home's insulation, the outside temperature, and the consumption patterns of the customer setting the thermostat. Therefore, utilities are not required to determine how the service was used, just if it was used and recorded by an accurate meter.

You are able to obtain from the utility's [website](#) tips for conserving energy and information on the energy efficiency and conservation programs that are available to you, including energy audits.

4. What should I do if I suspect that my meter is faulty?

If you suspect that your high bill may be due to your meter not registering your consumption accurately, then you may ask the utility to test your meter. The Code of Maryland Regulations ("COMAR") states that "upon request by a customer and at no charge, the utility shall make a test of the accuracy of registration of the meter serving him, provided that these tests need not be made more frequently than once in 18 months." COMAR also states that you (or your representative) may be present when the meter is tested. The results of the test shall be provided to you within a reasonable time after completion of the test and the utility must retain a record of the test for at least three years.

5. Are there any options to me if I do not want my utility to test my meter?

If you do not want the utility to perform the meter test, you may submit an on line request for the Public Service Commission to conduct a [referee test](#) through the Commission's website (www.psc.state.md.us). There is a \$10.00 charge for the referee test. You will be required to register before you have access to the [Referee Test System](#). As part of the registration process, you will need to provide an email address, your name, address and telephone number. If you already have a complaint filed with the Public Service Commission's Office of External Relations, you can enter the complaint number to speed up the registration process. After you are registered you will receive an email confirmation that includes instructions for submitting your payment to the PSC. The referee test is not scheduled until payment is made.

Customers who do not have access to a computer may send a written request to the Public Service Commission's Engineer for a referee test. Your written request must include your name, address, daytime telephone number, name of your utility company and type of meter to be tested (gas or electric). You will be contacted by a Commission representative to schedule the test.

Your written request must be accompanied by a \$10.00 check or money order made payable to the Public Service Commission. You should address your request as follows:

Public Service Commission
Engineering Division
William Donald Schaefer Tower
6 Saint Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202-6806

If the results of the referee test reveal that the meter is not measuring electricity consumption within the PSC's prescribed 98% - 102% accuracy requirements, then a billing adjustment will be warranted for your account. Your \$10.00 payment will also be refunded to you. However, if the referee test confirms your electric meter is operating within the PSC's accuracy requirements, then no adjustment will be made to your account, and the PSC will retain the \$10.00 fee for the referee test.

6. Do I have to pay a bill that is estimated?

You are responsible for paying your bill every month, whether the reading was estimated or based on an actual meter reading. If the reading is estimated, the utility must denote on the bill form that the reading is estimated, and the utility should have a record internally to indicate the reason for the estimate. If the estimates are due to no access to the meter, you should check to see if your utility can install a remote meter reading device that will allow them to read the meter remotely without having to gain access to the meter. If this is not an option, then you can obtain meter reading cards and/or phone in your reading to your utility. If the estimate is way out of line with your normal usage, you can request that the utility cancel the bill. However, if you do this just remember that the next bill will cover a two month period.

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