

## CHAPTER 24. SUBSTANTIVE RULES APPLICABLE TO WATER AND SEWER SERVICE PROVIDERS.

### Subchapter F. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROTECTION.

#### §24.153. Customer Relations.

(a) **Information to customers.**

- (1) Upon receipt of a request for service or service transfer, the utility shall fully inform the service applicant or customer of the cost of initiating or transferring service. The utility shall clearly inform the service applicant which service initiation costs will be borne by the utility and which costs are to be paid by the service applicant. The utility shall inform the service applicant if any cost information is estimated. Also see §24.161 of this title (relating to Response to Requests for Service by a Retail Public Utility Within Its Certificated Area).
- (2) The utility shall notify each service applicant or customer who is required to have a customer service inspection performed. This notification must be in writing and include the applicant's or customer's right to get a second customer service inspection performed by a qualified inspector at their expense and their right to use the least expensive backflow prevention assembly acceptable under 30 TAC §290.44(h) (relating to Water Distribution) if such is required. The utility shall ensure that the customer or service applicant receives a copy of the completed and signed customer service inspection form and information related to thermal expansion problems that may be created if a backflow prevention assembly or device is installed.
- (3) Upon request, the utility shall provide the customer or service applicant with a free copy of the applicable rate schedule from its approved tariff. A complete copy of the utility's approved tariff must be available at its local office for review by a customer or service applicant upon request.
- (4) Each utility shall maintain a current set of maps showing the physical locations of its facilities. All facilities (production, transmission, distribution or collection lines, treatment plants, etc.) must be labeled to indicate the size, design capacity, and any pertinent information that will accurately describe the utility's facilities. These maps, and such other maps as may be required by the commission, shall be kept by the utility in a central location and must be available for commission inspection during normal working hours.
- (5) Each utility shall maintain a current copy of the commission's substantive rules of this chapter at each office location and make them available for customer inspection during normal working hours.
- (6) Each water utility shall maintain a current copy of 30 TAC Chapter 290, Subchapter D (relating to Rules and Regulations for Public Water Systems), at each office location and make them available for customer inspection during normal working hours.

(b) **Customer complaints.** Customer complaints are also addressed in §24.155 of this title (relating to Resolution of Disputes).

- (1) Upon receipt of a complaint from a customer or service applicant, either in person, by letter or by telephone, the utility shall promptly conduct an investigation and report its finding(s) to the complainant.
- (2) In the event the complainant is dissatisfied with the utility's report, the utility shall advise the complainant of recourse through the Public Utility Commission of Texas complaint process. The commission encourages all complaints to be made in writing to assist the commission in maintaining records on the quality of service of each utility.
- (3) Each utility shall make an initial response to the commission within 15 days of receipt of a complaint from the commission on behalf of a customer or service applicant. The commission may require a utility to provide a written response to the complainant, to the

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commission, or both. Pending resolution of a complaint, the commission may require continuation or restoration of service.

- (4) The utility shall keep a record of all complaints for a period of two years following the final settlement of each complaint. The record of complaint must include the name and address of the complainant, the date the complaint was received by the utility, a description of the nature of the complaint, and the adjustment or disposition of the complaint.
  
- (c) **Telephone number.** For each of the systems it operates, the utility shall maintain and note on the customer's monthly bill either a local or toll free telephone number (or numbers) to which a customer can direct questions about their utility service.
  
- (d) **Local office.**
  - (1) Unless otherwise authorized by the commission in response to a written request, each utility shall have an office in the county or immediate area (within 20 miles) of a portion of its utility service area in which it keeps all books, records, tariffs, and memoranda required by the commission.
  - (2) Unless otherwise authorized by the commission in response to a written request, each utility shall make available and notify customers of a business location where applications for service can be submitted and payments can be made to prevent disconnection of service or to restore service after disconnection for nonpayment, nonuse, or other reasons specified in §24.167 of this title (relating to Discontinuance of Service). The business location must be located:
    - (A) in each county where utility service is provided; or
    - (B) not more than 20 miles from any residential customer if there is no location to receive payments in that county.
  - (3) Upon request by the utility, the requirement for a local office may be waived by the commission if the utility can demonstrate that these requirements would cause a rate increase or otherwise harm or inconvenience customers. Unless otherwise authorized by the commission in response to a written request, such utility shall make available and notify customers of a location within 20 miles of each of its utility service facilities where applications for service can be submitted and payments can be made to prevent disconnection of service or restore service after disconnection for nonpayment, nonuse, or other reasons specified in §24.167 of this title.