

**2005  
ANNUAL REPORT  
CONSUMER SERVICES  
DIVISION**



**Illinois Commerce  
Commission**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION**  
**2005**

**ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION**

**527 East Capitol Avenue**  
**Springfield, Illinois 62701**

**800-524-0795(V)**  
**217-782-2024(V)**  
**800-858-9277(TTY)**  
**217-524-6859(FAX)**  
**[www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>1</b>
ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS	1
DISTRIBUTING CALLS, RECORDING, AND TRACKING DATA	2
<b>INFORMAL INQUIRY/COMPLAINT DATA</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>REVIEW OF INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS DATA</b>	<b>11</b>
ENERGY INDUSTRY	12
RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC SUPPLIER CHOICE	19
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY	21
WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY	30
PROBLEM CODE COMPARISON	31
<b>ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS</b>	<b>34</b>
CONSUMER EDUCATION	35
CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS	35
<b>PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>HOW TO REACH CSD</b>	<b>39</b>



## **Executive Summary**

The Consumer Services Division (CSD) is the Illinois Commerce Commission's principal contact with utility consumers from throughout the state who have questions about utility service or wish to file a complaint against a utility company. In 2005, approximately 145,000 consumers called the division via telephone for information or assistance. An automated distribution system delivers calls to consumer counselors who work to resolve customer issues. Consumers also receive information on a variety of current topics through a recorded message that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with the option for specific information to be mailed to them.

In 2005, the division received, recorded, researched and responded to more than 39,000 calls, the majority of which focused on energy issues. Another 3,320 consumers contacted the division through alternative methods such as letters or email. The majority of calls in 2005 sought information or assistance in arranging payment plans for utility bills. The greatest number of calls after that were for reconnection of disconnected service and billing complaints.

Consumer Services staff were able to save consumers approximately \$1.8 million last year by working with callers and the utilities to resolve billing and service complaints.

This report includes a breakdown of the types of inquiries/complaints that were received and how they were resolved; approaches to resolving inquiries and complaints, resolution time and problems identified through investigations consumer complaints. Utility performance in responding to customer concerns is also reviewed.

CSD staff participate in consumer education efforts, rulemakings, certification cases, informal investigations into industry practices and offer testimony representing consumer interests in formal cases before the Commission. The division also assists in identifying trends in complaints as they develop in order to provide the Commission and Illinois consumers with timely information in the interest of consumer protection.

As the complexity of issues related to competitive natural gas providers, telephone service options and a changing electricity rates increase in 2006 and 2007 the CSD staff will again be called on to provide the latest information to customers.

Michael C. Fountain  
Director

# **CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY**

---

The Commission's Consumer Services Division (CSD) is the agency's principle contact with the utility consumers in the state. CSD is uniquely positioned to provide important information to the Commission. Our Staff consists of management; administrative support; consumer counselors, whose primary responsibility is to interface with consumers; and members involved in consumer programs, which includes consumer education, development of rules, carrier/supplier certification, and compliance issues.

Dialogs with consumers and utilities/service providers, allow us to provide useful information to other divisions within the Commission and to the Commissioners concerning issues that develop. On an informal basis, CSD contacts regulated utilities when issues of compliance and potential problems are raised by trends identified through consumer contacts.

The role of Consumer Services as educator increases as the regulated utility industry changes, particularly as competition develops. CSD responds to consumer questions about regulations, services and products. Program Staff and Consumer Counselors reference laws, Commission orders, company tariffs, new services and products, marketing and consumer reactions on regulatory issues. CSD has the important responsibility of helping consumers understand choices.

## **CONSUMER EDUCATION**

Counselor Staff answers consumer inquiries regarding customer rights and responsibilities; Commission programs and rules; telecommunication carrier options and alternative energy supplier options.

## **RECORDING CONSUMER OPINION**

Counselor Staff records consumer observations and opinions regarding utility issues such as cost of service, rate case protests, utility policy and practices, customer service issues, location of transmission lines, utility service territories, area codes and other issues.

## **RESOLVING DISPUTES**

In addition to education, a primary responsibility of CSD is to provide assistance to consumers in the resolution of informal complaints and disputes with regulated utilities and other entities. Informal complaints, as the designation implies, are those handled by Staff, not formally considered by the Commission, and which do not result in an order by the Commission. The formal complaint process, which requires Commission action, is available when complaints cannot be satisfactorily resolved through Staff intervention.

Following is a description of methods used by counselors in addressing complaints and inquiries.

### ***3-Way Calling***

This is a process, which permits a direct interface with the company while the consumer is still on the phone. Certain problems and requests for assistance are well suited to this type of resolution. These include requests for payment arrangements, payment extensions, final notice prior to disconnection, repairs, medical certificates and billing issues that can be resolved during the initial contact. This method increases efficiency and, in most cases, results in a high degree of customer satisfaction. In 2005, more than 9,200 complaints were handled in this manner.

### ***Investigative Complaints***

Using this method, counselors notify the company of an informal complaint filed by the customer. The company must investigate the complaint and typically contacts the customer during the investigation. The company is required to furnish a report of the outcome along with supporting documentation. The counselor reviews the report to ensure that the company's action complies with Commission rules. CSD Staff may call on other divisions to provide answers to technical questions, getting advice from engineers, economists and financial experts. After the review, the counselor contacts the consumer with an explanation of the results.

### ***Consumer Services Online***

Through its e-mail address, CSD receives contacts from consumers concerned with a wide variety of non-emergency issues. Site instructions advise consumers with a service related emergency to contact CSD by telephone. Electronic access to CSD provides a useful alternative to traditional mail and the toll free telephone hotline. Our records indicate that 2,622 complaints were received by e-mail during 2005.

## **DISTRIBUTING CALLS, RECORDING, AND TRACKING DATA**

The Consumer Services Division uses an Automated Call Distribution system (ACD) to connect callers to the member of our Staff best able to address the caller's issue, and offer options to callers. Calls from TTYs are routed to counselors via Textnet, an interactive computer application. Callers can access recorded informational messages 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can leave a voice message asking for a return call or order printed informational material. Statistics including the number of callers waiting and how long callers have waited are available to counselors. Monitoring, tracking and reporting capabilities help management determine appropriate levels of staffing, facilitate scheduling, assist in training counselors and identifying the needs of consumers.

The ACD works with Consumer Services' Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS), a computerized complaint tracking system that provides an accurate and readily available record of consumer contacts. Using the ACTS, complaints are identified in such general categories as billing, credit and deposits, rates, service and termination; they are also identified in very specific terms. Our reporting capabilities

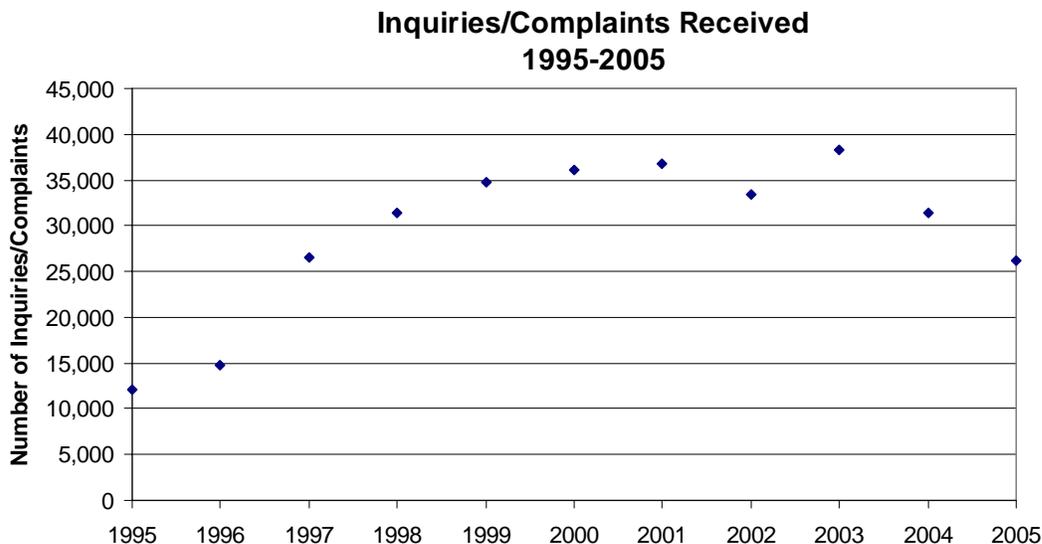
allow flexibility in searching the records created in individual cases and compiling data. Reporting functions allow us to track information, identify problems and analyze trends.

In 2005 CSD worked on updating ACTS. The new Windows based version of the application is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2006. It will offer several improvements over the current DOS version including better reporting capability, easier complaint data entry and a more user friendly interface.

## INFORMAL INQUIRY/COMPLAINT DATA

---

Counselors record informal inquiries, complaints, and opinions from consumers. Consumer education inquiries are typically answered during the initial contact. Customer opinions are also recorded during the initial contact. Based upon the nature of the problem, the counselor determines if there is a need for investigation requiring contact with the company.

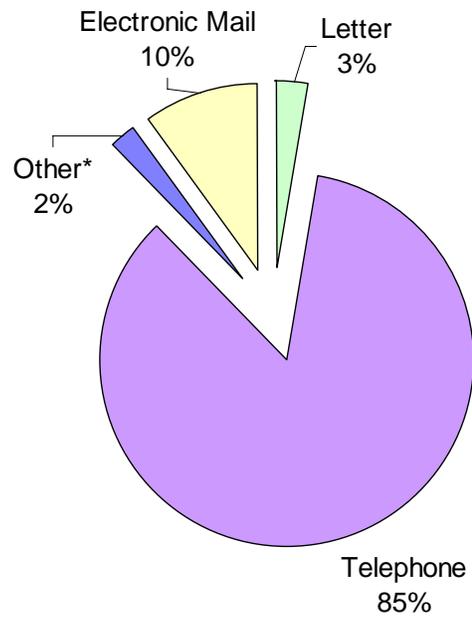


During 2005, CSD Staff recorded 26,169 contacts. The graph depicts the number of inquiries and complaints received from 1995 through 2005.

### TELEPHONE SUMMARY

Total Calls: 188,822  
Calls to IVR: 144,657  
Calls Answered: 39,150  
Number of Inquiries/Complaints: 26,169

## Origin of Inquiries/Complaints

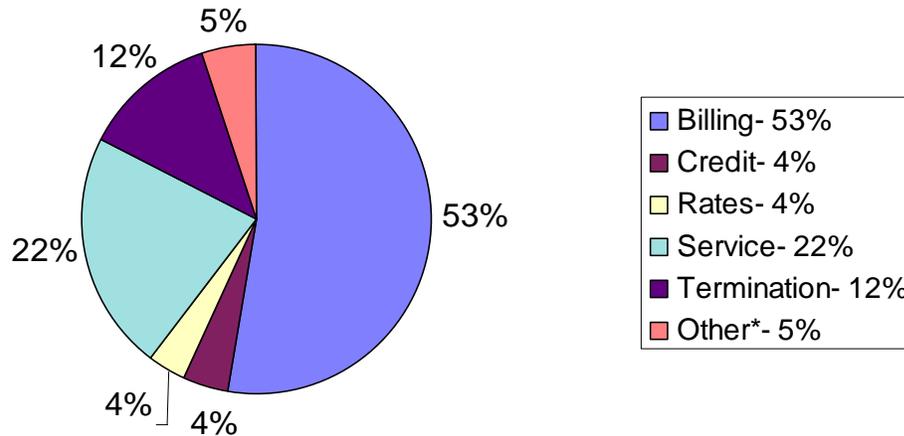


\*Contacts include those made via fax and teletypewriter.

Most of the 26,169 cases recorded (85%) began with a telephone call to our toll-free number.



## PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION



**\*Includes issue-oriented contacts**

The graph above represents the total number of inquiries/complaints that were opened during 2005, categorized by problem type. These categories include billing, credit/deposit, rates, service, termination and other. This graph illustrates that 53% of the inquiries/complaints opened related to the consumer's bill.

## TOP 10 INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS

REASON FOR CONTACT	NUMBER
Need payment arrangements	2,993
Seeking reconnection	2,397
Accuracy of bill- responsibility for account	1,786
Accuracy of bill- usage/consumption	1,454
Deferred payment agreement	1,166
Timeliness of performed service- reconnection/disconnection	1,094
Timeliness of performed service- installation of new service/transfer	809
Timeliness of performed service- scheduling or repair	787
Other	781
Accuracy of bill- meter	759

Complaints and inquiries are categorized by these general problem types: billing, credit/deposit, rates, service, termination and other. At the time of closing, more specific codes are added. The Top 10 Inquiries/Complaints are listed in descending order beginning with the most frequently recorded issue. Charts showing the “Top 10” complaints by industry type can be found in the Energy section and Telecommunications section of this report.

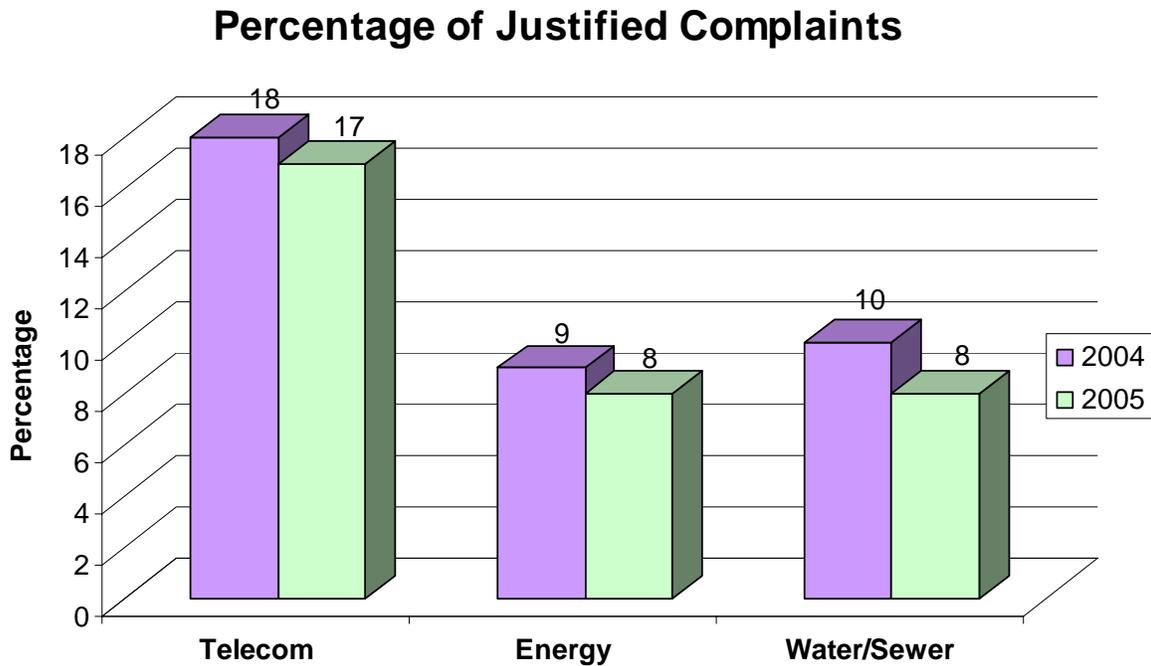
## MEANS OF RESOLVING INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS

RESOLUTION CODE	NUMBER
Information or explanation provided	18,935
Company compromised to settle	3,058
Company agrees to correct mistake or error	1,678
Unable to reach complainant	648
ICC had no jurisdiction	446
Referral to other agency or division	352
Miscellaneous (resolution by means not on list)	206
Action initiated to correct problem	193
Duplicate action by another counselor	164
Formal hearing sought	143
Meter tested; billing correct	73
Company unresponsive	65
Pending long term utility action	65
Complaint dismissed; groundless	45
CSD received carbon copy response	36
Customer withdraws complaint	26
Mediation	12
Company does not have a certificate	6
Chronic complainant (same issue)	5
Issue beyond time limit for complaint filing	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,161</b>

Staff successfully worked with utilities to provide nearly \$1.8 million to customers in savings or avoided charges. During the calendar year 2005, CSD closed 26,161 inquiries/complaints. Although most of these cases were opened and closed during 2005, some were opened in 2004. After utilities research and reply to investigative complaints, CSD must review the response and contact the consumer with the outcome. Therefore, investigative complaints opened late in the year are often closed during the following year. The table above shows the number of cases closed in 2005 by resolution category.

## JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS

Counselors evaluate cases to determine if correct procedures were followed by the company in responding to the consumer's complaint prior to CSD intervention. A case is justified when, in the counselor's judgment, the company did not handle the dispute properly or effectively, or in handling the dispute, the company violated rules, regulations, orders, tariffs, or policy. Cases that are evaluated are those in which contact with the company is initiated and include 3-way and investigative cases. The graph below compares justified complaints to the total number of 3-way and investigative cases. The comparison is made by industry type and by year.



## **MEDIATION**

By law mediation is available to consumers to resolve telecommunication disputes. Effective July 1, 2001, residential consumers or business consumers with fewer than 20 lines have the right to request mediation when they have been unable to reach resolution through the informal complaint process. Telecommunication carriers are required to participate in mediation. The process must be completed within 45 days. If the parties are unable to reach agreement or after 45 days, whichever comes first, the consumer may file a formal complaint with the Commission. In 26 cases, consumers expressed an interest in pursuing their complaints through mediation; Staff notified the Commission's Chief Clerk to send a letter informing the consumer how to proceed.

## **FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

If a resolution is not reached through the informal process (including mediation), the consumer may file for a formal hearing. After the fully completed and notarized forms are submitted to the Commission, a hearing is scheduled. An Administrative Law Judge presides over the case in a manner similar to a court proceeding, considers testimony presented, reviews evidence and makes a recommendation to the Commission which renders a decision.

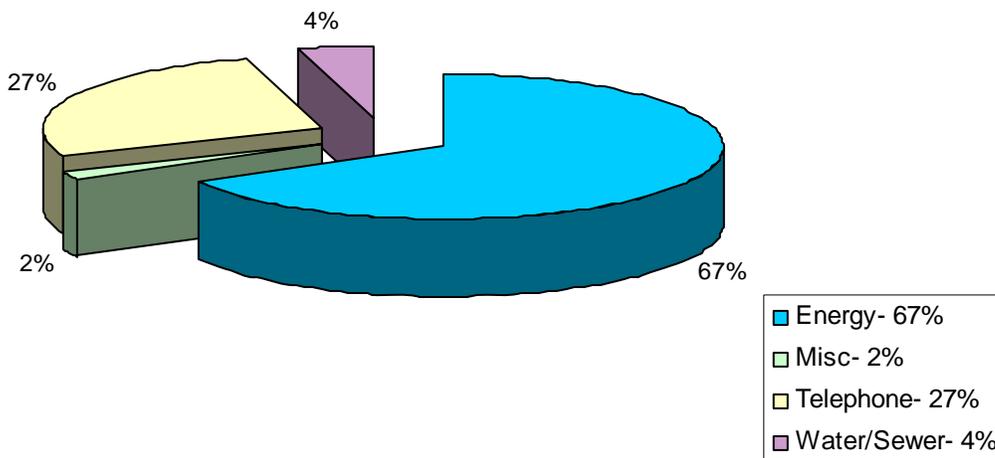
The Consumer Services Division makes every effort to achieve resolution of disputes between consumers and utilities in the informal process. Of the 26,161 contacts from consumers closed during 2005, 143 consumers requested formal complaint forms and 43 formal hearings were actually docketed. Of the docketed cases, 18 were dismissed by the Commission and 25 are still pending.

## REVIEW OF INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS DATA

---

This section addresses and highlights trends in the numbers and types of inquiries and complaints for each industry. CSD categorizes the inquiries/complaints it receives according to the following industries: telephone, energy, water/sewer and miscellaneous.

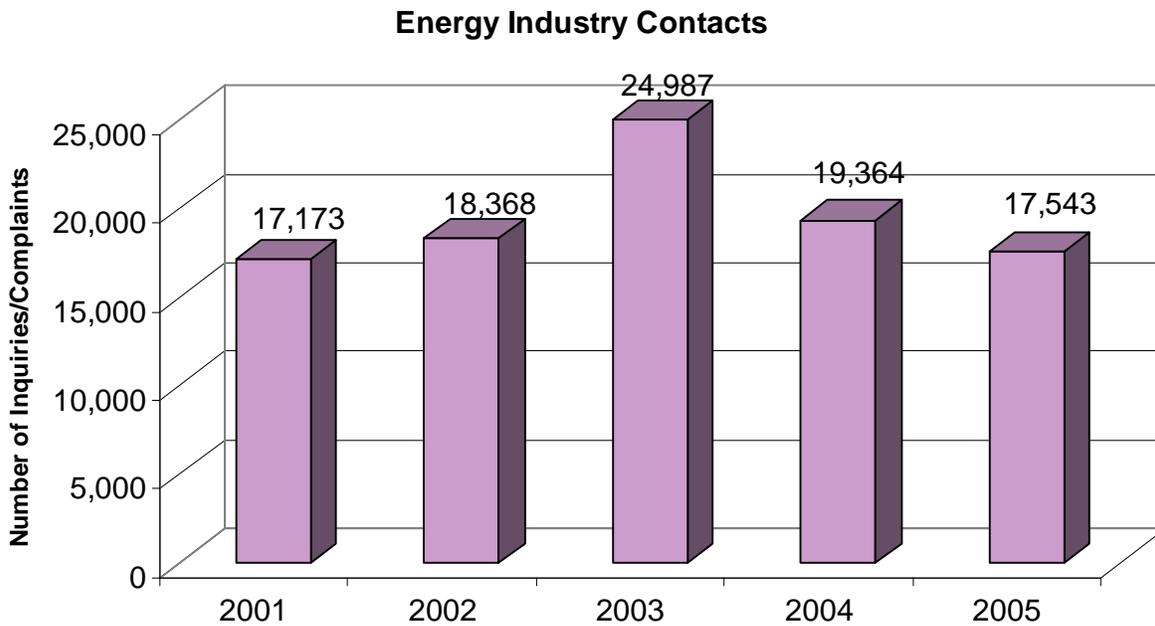
### 2005 Inquiries/Complaints by Utility Type



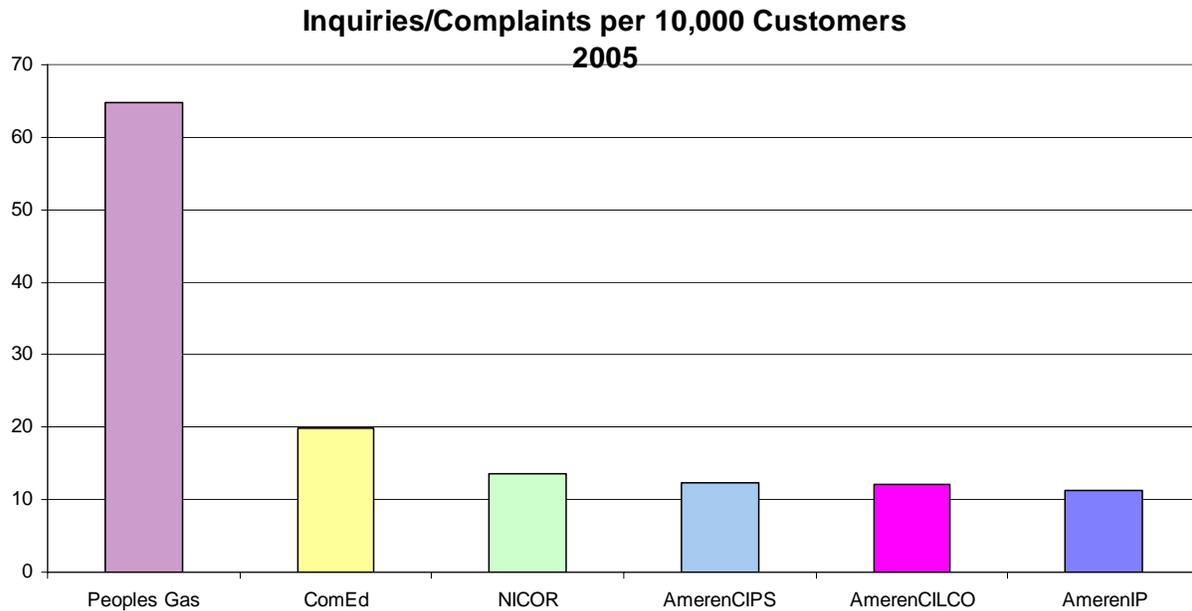
Combining gas and electric cases results in 67% of the total inquiries/complaints attributed to the energy industry. Telephone inquiries/complaints comprise 27% of the total number received during 2005. The miscellaneous category includes companies that were not specified and contacts that included more than one type of utility. The water and sewer industry accounts for 4% of the inquiries/complaints.

## **ENERGY INDUSTRY**

Inquiries and complaints included in the “Energy Industry” category are those concerning companies that provide only electric service, companies that provide only gas service and companies that provide both gas and electric service.



The graph above illustrates the number of inquiries and complaints that were received each year by CSD for the electric and gas companies from 2001 through 2005.



The graph above illustrates the number of inquiries/complaints received per 10,000 customers for the major companies in the energy industry. Peoples Gas led in the number of calls related to billing, estimated meter readings, termination and payment arrangements.

### 2005 ENERGY INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS FOR SMALLER ELECTRIC AND GAS COMPANIES

Company	Customers*	Contacts
North Shore	149,300	169
AmerenUE	63,200	72
Atmos Energy	23,700	36
MidAmerican	83,900	17
Interstate	12,800	12
Mt. Carmel	5,600	6
Illinois Gas	10,100	3
Consumers Gas	5,800	1

\*Estimated Number

The complaint and inquiry volume for electric and gas companies with less than 150,000 customers is shown in the chart above, beginning with the utility with the largest volume of contacts.

## JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS

Counselors evaluate cases to determine if correct procedures were followed by the company in responding to the consumer's complaint prior to CSD intervention. A case is justified when, in the counselor's judgment, the company did not handle the dispute properly or effectively, or in handling the dispute, the company violated rules, regulations, orders, tariffs, or policy. The following table compares the energy companies' justified complaints of 2004 to those in 2005. Only energy companies with more than 50 complaints are included in the table. The companies are listed in descending order, beginning with the company that has the largest percentage of justified complaints in 2005.

	2004 Complaints			2005 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
Peoples Gas	433	4,089	11%	408	4,499	9%
ComEd	449	5,086	9%	457	6,044	8%
AmerenCILCO	7	147	5%	14	196	7%
AmerenIP	31	541	6%	35	508	7%
Santanna*	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	137	7%
Nicor	173	1,976	9%	137	2,212	6%
North Shore	10	94	11%	8	144	6%
AmerenCIPS	14	246	6%	11	304	4%
AmerenUE	10	119	8%	2	56	4%

\*Less than 50 complaints in 2004

## RESPONSE TIME

The following table shows a comparison of the average response time for energy companies during 2004 and 2005. Response time is the number of days the utility takes to respond to CSD. The companies shown are those that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2005. Investigative complaints are those, which are not suited to or are not resolved through 3-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation. The companies are listed alphabetically.

	<b>2004 Response Time (in Days)</b>	<b>2005 Response Time (in Days)</b>	<b>Change in Days (2004 to 2005)</b>
AmerenCILCO	10.8	10.3	-.5
AmerenCIPS	7.8	10.5	2.7
AmerenIP	14.0	11.7	-2.3
ComEd	12.5	13.3	.8
Nicor	12.8	10.2	-2.6
North Shore	10.0	7.7	-2.3
Peoples Gas	11.7	9.8	-1.9

## PROBLEM CODE COMPARISON

Complaints and inquiries are first categorized in one of six general problem types. At the time of closing, more specific codes are added. The table below compares the general problems categories of the total number of inquiries/complaints that were opened during 2004 and 2005.

### Comparison of Problems – 2004 and 2005

	2004	2005
Billing	8,328	8,973
Credit/Deposit	1,190	1,115
Rates	4,032	298
Service	2,747	3,482
Termination	2,496	2,786
Other	530	862

## TOP 10 ENERGY COMPLAINTS

At the time of closing, when details about the reason for contact are known, more detailed problem codes are added. The following table identifies the top ten energy complaints attributed to these specific codes.

REASON FOR CONTACT (detail problem codes)	NUMBER
Needs Payment Arrangements	2,713
Termination- Seeking Reconnection	2,054
Questions Responsibility for Account	1,307
Deferred Payment Arrangements	1,081
Usage- Consumption	971
Reconnection or Disconnection	807
Accuracy of Bill- Meter	722
Credit/Deposits/Deposit Request	543
Service/Timeliness of Performed Service- Installation	496
Other	467

## ENERGY INDUSTRY CONTACTS

The tables below illustrate the breakdown of the issues raised by consumers. As the counselors close complaints, they are categorized by the general headings of billing, service, rates, etc. They are then further broken down into the more specific complaint classification. The number of contacts used in these tables includes all inquiries and complaints that were closed by the counselors during 2005.

<b>BILLING</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Payment Arrangements	4,091
Responsibility for Account	1,307
Usage/Consumption	971
Meter	722
Payment- Other	653
Bill/Statement	398
Accuracy	295
Payment Posting Problem	239
Disputes Rate Class/Plan	130
Tampering	85
Repair/Service	62
Extension/Installation Dispute	20
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>8,973</b>

<b>CREDIT/DEPOSIT</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Deposit Requirement	543
Service Denial	364
Deposit Amount/Conditions	139
Deposit Administration	69
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>1,115</b>

<b>RATES</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Inquiry	97
Opinion- Rate in Effect	86
Rate Structure	71
Proposed Rate Change	44
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>298</b>

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Timeliness- General	1,198
Timeliness of Reconnection or Disconnection	807
Conduct of Personnel	742
Interruptions	227
Service Quality	165
Extension/Availability	149
Safety	141
Equipment Problems	53
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>3,482</b>

<b>TERMINATION – SEEKING RECONNECTION</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Seeks Assistance	2,054
Medical Certificate	263
Questions Regarding Procedures	175
Other	120
Tampering	75
Terminated in Error	71
Disputed Bill/Deposit	28
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>2,786</b>

<b>OTHER</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Other	681
ICC Actions or Regulations	90
No Jurisdiction	63
Issues-Oriented Contacts	28
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>862</b>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CLOSED ENERGY CONTACTS: 17,516**

## **RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC SUPPLIER CHOICE**

Since May 2002, residential customers have been eligible to choose their electric supplier. Electric public utilities have the necessary tariffs and systems in place to provide delivery services. Although in 2005 the first residential supplier applied for and was granted approval to provide service, no supplier has entered the market to serve residential customers. The Commission maintains a consumer education web site at: [www.icc.illinois.gov/pluginillinois](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/pluginillinois)

## **RESIDENTIAL NATURAL GAS SUPPLIER CHOICE**

Unlike the electric industry, which by law restructured the state's electric industry to promote customer choice and create a competitive marketplace, natural gas supplier choice is not mandated. Nicor Gas, North Shore Gas and Peoples Gas voluntarily offer programs that allow their residential customers to choose their gas supplier. Customer participation is also voluntary; eligible customers are free to choose an alternative gas supplier or remain with the utility and receive bundled (delivery and supply) gas service.

The Commission has approved the choice programs and the utility tariffs that state the terms and conditions of the service. The Commission also required utilities offering residential choice to develop consumer education material. The tariffs governing suppliers include standards of conduct for participating alternative suppliers.

After the choice programs began, Section XIX was added to the Public Utilities Act. Under this law, alternative gas suppliers offering service to residential and small commercial retail customers are required to be certified by the Commission. In addition to certification, the law also provides for consumer protections and Commission oversight including consumer complaints.

Nicor gas reports that approximately 157,096 residential customers participated in the Customer Select Program during 2005; Peoples and North Shore indicate that approximately 16,552 residential customers participated in their Choices For You Program. A list of certified suppliers and other information can be found on the Commission's web site: [www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)

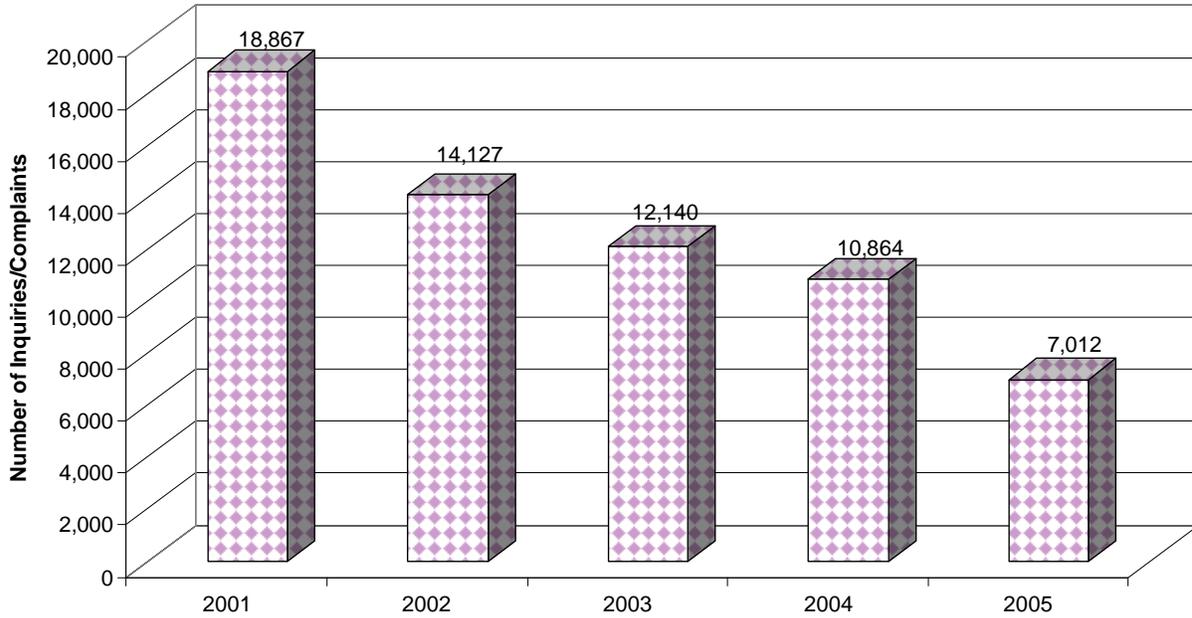
## 2005 ENERGY INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS FOR ALTERNATIVE GAS SUPPLIERS

Company	Contacts
US Energy Savings Corp.	221
Santanna	188
Illinois Natural Gas Corp.	179
Utility Resource Solutions	100
Dominion Retail	27
Interstate Gas Supply	23
Peoples Energy Services	18
MxEnergy	14

The chart above shows the number of contacts regarding alternative gas suppliers recorded by CSD during 2005. These contacts concerning residential consumers include inquiries and complaints. Complaints included such issues as failure to abide by the terms of the agreement or contract, unauthorized customer switch (slamming), protests regarding supplier marketing methods, and misleading marketing practices. Inquiries include questions about Commission rules, the utility choice programs through which suppliers offered their services to customers and whether the alternative supplier is authorized to provide service.

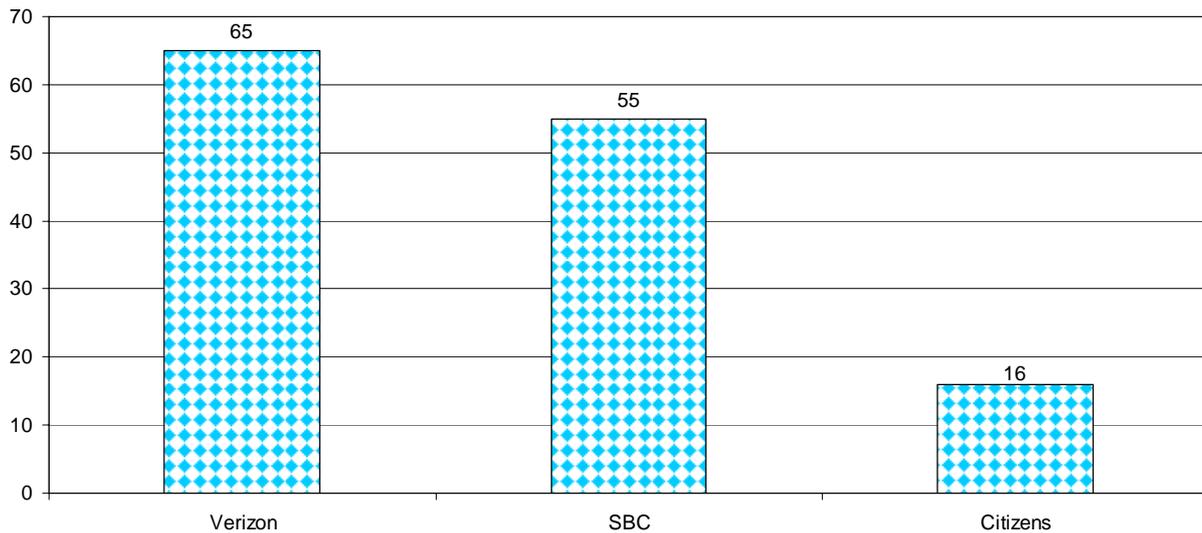
# TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Telecommunications Industry Contacts



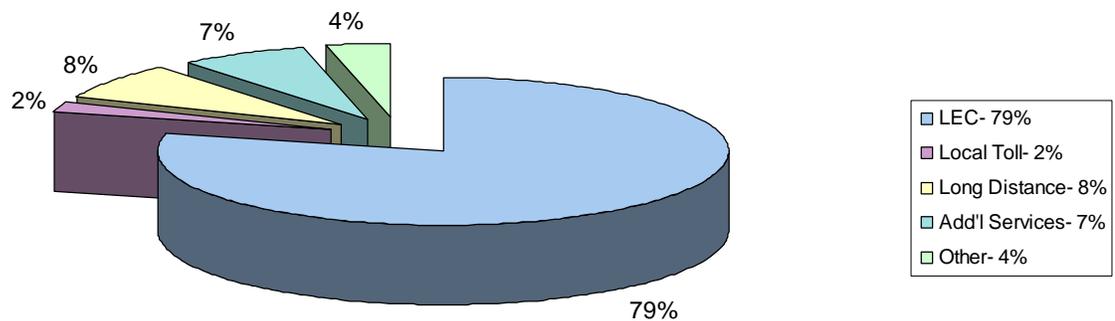
The graph above shows the number of inquiries and complaints concerning the telecommunications industry that were received each year by CSD from 2001 through 2005.

Inquiries/Complaints per 100,000 Access Lines  
2005



The graph on the previous page does not include combination carriers (resale and facilities based). This graph illustrates the number of inquiries and complaints per 100,000 access lines that were received for major local exchange carriers for 2005. Access lines include the number of residential and business phone lines used.

**2005 Telecommunications Inquiries/Complaints by Company Type**



Definitions for the above graph:

**LEC** – Local Exchange Carrier – a company that provides local exchange service

**Local Toll** – local calls that are made to locations outside the local exchange boundary, but within the Market Service Area (MSA) otherwise known as the Local Access Transport Area (LATA)

**Long Distance** – a company that provides service between LATAs

**Provider of Additional Services** – a company that provides services such as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), voice mail and calling cards

**Other** – Includes services such as cellular/mobile and customer-owned pay telephones

## JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS

Counselors evaluate cases to determine if correct procedures were followed by the company in responding to the consumer's complaint prior to CSD intervention. A case is justified when, in the counselor's judgment, the company did not handle the dispute properly or effectively, or in handling the dispute, the company violated rules, regulations, orders, tariffs, or policy. The following tables compare the telecommunications carriers' justified complaints closed in 2004 to those closed in 2005. The charts are divided by the type of service provided: local exchange carriers, carriers that provide local toll service and those that provide long distance service.

The Local Exchange Carrier chart includes those companies that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2005. The chart for Local Toll Carriers includes companies that received 20 or more investigative complaints. The Long Distance Carrier chart includes companies that received 40 or more investigative complaints. Investigative complaints are those that are not suited to or are not resolved through 3-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation. The carriers are listed in descending order beginning with the company that had the largest percentage of justified complaints in 2005.

### *Local Exchange Carriers*

	2004 Complaints			2005 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
AT&T	182	800	23%	132	424	31%
Verizon	59	273	22%	80	333	24%
McLeod	14	83	17%	14	71	20%
MCI	152	742	20%	121	649	19%
Frontier	13	81	16%	9	51	18%
Comcast	45	221	20%	24	154	16%
RCN	21	142	15%	16	108	15%
Talk America	23	157	15%	16	120	13%
SBC	366	2,609	14%	234	1,993	12%
Global Teldata	14	100	14%	5	66	8%

**Local Toll Carriers**

	2004 Complaints			2005 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
AT&T	10	84	12%	8	26	31%
SBC	5	41	12%	3	33	9%
MCI	8	33	24%	1	22	5%

**Long Distance Carriers**

	2004 Complaints			2005 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
MCI	19	101	19%	13	45	29%
AT&T	87	374	23%	16	80	20%
SBC LD	23	131	17%	9	83	11%

## RESPONSE TIME

The following tables compare the average response time for telecommunications carriers during 2005. Response time is the number of days the utility takes to respond to CSD. The Local Exchange Carrier table includes those companies that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2005. The table for Local Toll Carriers includes companies that received 20 or more investigative complaints. The Long Distance Carrier table includes companies that received 40 or more investigative complaints. Investigative complaints are those, which are not suited to or are not resolved through 3-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation. The carriers are listed alphabetically.

### *Local Exchange Carriers*

	2004 Response Time (in Days)	2005 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2004 to 2005)
AT&T	12.2	10.1	-2.1
Comcast	15.7	16.5	.8
Frontier	12.4	10.1	-2.3
Global Teldata	13.7	2.8	-10.9
MCI	10.6	12.5	1.9
McLeod	10.2	9.3	-.9
RCN	21.5	16.3	-5.2
SBC	11.1	10.1	-1.0
Talk America	12.1	11.1	-1.0
Verizon	12.4	11.0	-1.4

### *Local Toll Carriers*

	2004 Response Time (in Days)	2005 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2004 to 2005)
AT&T	13.9	10.3	-3.6
SBC	22.1	17.2	-4.9

**Long Distance Carriers**

	<b>2004 Response Time (in Days)</b>	<b>2005 Response Time (in Days)</b>	<b>Change in Days (2004 to 2005)</b>
AT&T	11.8	9.5	-2.3
MCI	12.2	17.9	5.7
SBC LD	15.6	17.0	1.4

**PROBLEM CODE COMPARISON**

Complaints and inquiries are first categorized in one of six general problem types. At the time of closing, more specific codes are added. The following table compares the number of telecommunications inquiries/complaints in each of the general problem categories for the inquiries/complaints that were closed during 2004 and 2005. Billing continues to be the most frequently identified problem.

**Comparison of Problems – 2004 and 2005**

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Billing	5,780	3,174
Credit/Deposit	90	79
Rates	363	180
Service	3,713	2,123
Termination	801	472
Other	670	480

## TOP 10 TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPLAINTS

At the time of closing, when details about the reason for contact are known, more specific codes are added. The following table identifies the top ten telecommunications complaints attributed to these specific codes beginning with the most frequently recorded issue. Billing issues was the leading telecommunications complaint category in 2005.

<b>REASON FOR CONTACT (detail problem codes)</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Dispute Rate Class or Plan	455
Questions Responsibility for Account	410
Schedule for Repair	375
Accuracy of Bill	349
Usage- Consumption	324
Termination- Seeking Reconnection	291
Installation of New Service	282
Reconnection or Disconnection	256
Needs Arrangements	227
Other	221

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY CONTACTS

The following tables illustrate the breakdown of the issues raised by customers. As the counselors close complaints, they are categorized by the specific complaint classifications. The number of contacts used in these tables includes all inquiries and complaints that were closed by the counselors during 2005.

<b>BILLING</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Dispute- Rate Classification/Plan	455
Accuracy- General	451
Responsibility for Account	410
Payment Arrangements	365
Usage/Consumption	324
Payment- General	260
Bill Statement	226
Disputed Bill by Other Company	201
Bill for Feature Not Ordered	192
Repair/Service	146
Posting Problems	143
Extension/Installation Dispute	1
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>3,174</b>

<b>CREDIT/DEPOSIT</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Deposit Amount/Conditions	53
Service Denial	17
Deposit Administration	9
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>

<b>RATES</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Rate Structure	61
Rate Inquiry	46
Opinion- Rate in Effect	39
Proposed Rate Change	34
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>180</b>

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Timeliness of Performed Work	1,056
Conduct of Personnel/Reps	349
Availability of Features & Equipment	221
Quality	220
Service Interruptions	153
Equipment Problems	105
Service Extensions	12
Safety	7
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>2,123</b>

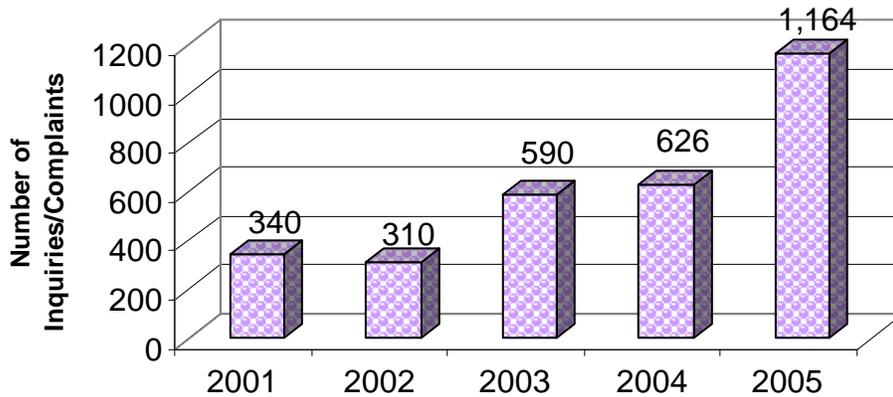
<b>TERMINATION/SEEKING RECONNECTION</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Seeks Assistance	291
Medical Certificate	56
Other	44
Questions Regarding Procedures	44
Disputes	37
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>472</b>

<b>OTHER</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Issues-Oriented Contacts	343
No Jurisdiction	137
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>480</b>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CLOSED TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONTACTS:  
6,508**

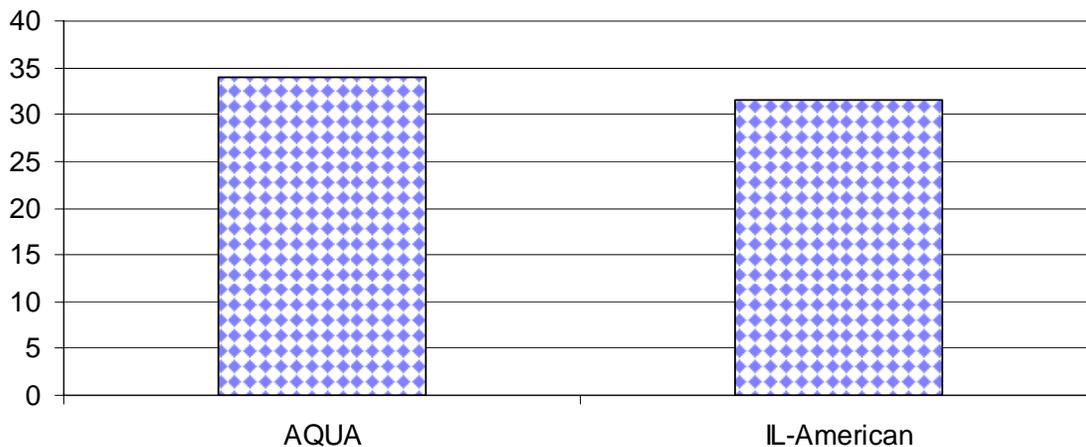
## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

### Water-Sewer Industry Contacts



The chart above illustrates the number of inquiries/complaints that were received each year by CSD for the water/sewer industry from 2001 through 2005.

### Inquiries/Complaints per 10,000 Customers 2005



The chart above shows the number of inquiries and complaints per 10,000 customers that were received for the major companies in the water/sewer industry for 2005.

## RESPONSE TIME

The table below shows a comparison of the average response time for those water and sewer utilities that received 20 or more investigative complaints during 2005. Response time is the number of days the utility takes to respond to CSD. Investigative complaints are those, which are not suited to or are not resolved through 3-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation.

	2004 Response Time (in Days)	2005 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2004 to 2005)
AQUA	15.8	15.3	-.5
Illinois-American	27.1	11.9	-15.2

## PROBLEM CODE COMPARISON

Complaints and inquiries are first categorized in one of six general problem types. At the time of closing, more specific codes are added. The following table compares the number of water/sewer inquiries/complaints in each of the general problem categories for the inquiries/complaints that were closed during 2004 and 2005.

### Comparison of Problems – 2004 and 2005

	2004	2005
Billing	174	393
Credit/Deposit	4	8
Rates	296	571
Service	66	77
Termination	37	76
Other	44	39

## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY CONTACTS

The following tables illustrate the breakdown of the issues raised by customers. As the counselors close complaints, they are categorized into specific complaint classification. The number of contacts used in these tables includes all inquiries and complaints that were closed by the counselor during 2005.

<b>BILLING</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Usage/Consumption	159
Accuracy	95
Payment Arrangements	46
Payment/Billing General	42
Bill Statement	28
Responsibility for Account	20
Extension/Installation Dispute	3
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>

<b>CREDIT/DEPOSIT</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Service Denial	6
Deposit Amount/Conditions	2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>RATES</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Opinion- Rate in Effect	505
Proposed Rate Change	35
Rate Inquiries	20
Rate Structure	11
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>571</b>

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Timeliness of Performed Service	28
Service Quality	23
Conduct of Personnel	17
Equipment Problems/Safety/Interruption	7
Service Extension/Availability	2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>

<b>TERMINATION/SEEKING RECONNECTION</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
Seeks Assistance	38
Miscellaneous	28
Questions Regarding Procedures	10
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>

<b>OTHER</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>
No Jurisdiction	25
Other	9
ICC Actions or Regulations	3
Issues-Oriented Contacts	2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CLOSED WATER AND SEWER CONTACTS:  
1,164**

## ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

---

### ***Consumer Outreach and Education***

Staff develops consumer information that can be accessed through the Commission's web site or can be mailed to consumers. Our Staff is available to conduct meetings associated with rate increase requests of small water companies when community interest is demonstrated. To keep abreast of consumer issues and concerns, CSD Staff is represented on the Chicago Energy Council; the Department of Healthcare and Family Services' Policy Advisory Council and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs.

### ***Reorganization and Mergers***

Where Commission approval for reorganization and mergers is required, Consumer Services Staff members participate both informally and when necessary through the formal process. Participation by CSD Staff helps ensure that quality customer service is maintained and that communications to customers are stated in plain language and style to minimize customer confusion especially with respect to any changes or decisions customers might be required to make.

### ***Review and Monitoring of Sales and Marketing and Customer Notification***

Statements concerning prices, terms and conditions of service must disclose information accurately and adequately. A supplier must provide written information adequately disclosing prices, terms and conditions before switching a customer. Formally, at the Commission's direction and informally CSD Staff reviews sales and marketing materials and when appropriate makes recommendations to correct deficiencies and improve material. Staff has been directed by the Commission to review sales and marketing materials in telecommunications and alternative gas supplier cases and in complaint cases filed by telecommunications carriers.

In addition to reviewing materials, CSD Staff reviews sales practices such as the unauthorized change of carrier or supplier (slamming).

### ***Rulemaking***

During 2005, CSD Staff participated in the rulemaking case listed below:

#### **83 Illinois Administrative Code**

- Part 280 Proposed changes to procedures for gas, electric, water, sewer utilities governing eligibility for service, deposits, payment practices and discontinuance of service.

## CONSUMER EDUCATION

### ***Consumer Education - Electric Restructuring***

In designing the law that restructures the electricity industry in Illinois, lawmakers recognized that consumers would need meaningful information allowing them to evaluate goods and services offered by new marketers and sellers. The law required the Commission to implement and maintain a consumer education program to provide residential and small commercial retail customers with information to help them understand their service options in a competitive electric services market, as well as their rights and responsibilities. As required by Section 16-117 of the Public Utilities Act, a working group formed by the Commission created educational materials to be distributed to electric customers. Utilities and Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers (ARES) are required to send the Commission-approved bill insert in their first mailing to potential customers or prior to executing an agreement or contract with a customer.

In Illinois, electric choice has been implemented in phases. As of December 31, 2000, all non-residential customers became eligible; residential customers became eligible beginning May 1, 2002. In 2005, the first supplier to request authority to serve residential customers was approved by the Commission but has not begun marketing

The Commission maintains a consumer education web site at: [www.icc.illinois.gov/pluginillinois](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/pluginillinois) that has sections for business and residential consumers containing an overview of the electric service restructuring and customer choices including brochure content in text form as well as the brochures and bill inserts in downloadable formats, a list of suppliers, frequently asked questions and other information. The residential web page is available in English and in Spanish. This year the Plug In Illinois web site recorded more than 11,198 “visitors”.

## CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

### ***Assistive Telecommunications Equipment Distribution And Telecommunications Relay Service***

Through a program designed by the Commission telecommunications carriers provide assistive telecommunications equipment to persons with hearing and speech disabilities or organizations whose primary purpose is serving persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities. The telecommunications carriers also provide a telecommunications relay service (TRS), which links people using assistive equipment and people who use a standard telephone. A Commission approved surcharge is assessed on each subscriber line to offset the costs incurred by the telecommunications carriers.

The distribution program and relay center are administered by the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation (ITAC), a not-for-profit corporation that includes all the telecommunications carriers in Illinois. An Advisory Council comprised of 7 members who are participants of the distribution program and TRS users provides input to ITAC as well as to the Commission Staff Liaison.

***Universal Telephone Assistance Program (UTSAP)  
Lifeline and Link Up Programs***

The FCC requires states to implement Link Up and Lifeline Programs to ensure the delivery of affordable telecommunications service to all Americans, including low-income consumers.

Link Up is a federally funded program that assists households by paying 50% (up to \$30) of the cost of installing local telephone service in their principal place of residence. Lifeline is a federally funded program that provides assistance with the monthly charge for local telephone service.

The Universal Telephone Service Assistance Program (“UTSAP”), funded by voluntary contributions from Illinois telephone consumers, provides supplemental assistance to individuals who receive assistance from the Link Up and Lifeline Programs. The amount of supplemental assistance is reviewed on an annual basis by the Commission according to the level of voluntary contributions.

UTSAP is administered by a not-for-profit group, Universal Telephone Assistance Corporation (UTAC). The UTAC Board of Directors has nine members consisting of five representatives from local exchange companies, two members representing ratepayers, and two members representing low-income consumers.

The Illinois Commerce Commission determined the amount and form of supplemental assistance to be provided by the Illinois local exchange carriers to each eligible subscriber or eligible new subscriber under the Universal Telephone Service Assistance Program. Voluntary contributions to the program during 2005 were nearly \$803,890.

***Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)***

Financial assistance is available to low income households in Illinois for energy bills. A household is eligible if its income is at or below 150% of the federal poverty guideline. Prior to July 1, 2004, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity was responsible for administering the program. Now The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services administers the program through thirty-five agencies that operate in all Illinois counties. Funding for the program comes from two sources. One source is a federal government block grant through the Department of Health and Human Services. Beginning in January 1998, state funding has been made available as a result of a surcharge, which is added to the electric, and gas bills of all customers of investor owned

utilities. Electric cooperatives, municipally owned gas, and electric systems have a choice of whether to assess the surcharge. If the charge is not assessed, the customers do not benefit from the assistance. The amounts, which are collected, are added to the federal LIHEAP funds. A portion of LIHEAP funds is also used for weatherization and program administration.

### ***Illinois Restricted Call Registry***

Illinois law adopts the National Do-Not-Call Registry, which is managed by the Federal Trade Commission, giving Illinois consumers the benefit of being included in both state and national registries with the convenience of free one-step enrollment. Illinois residential subscribers can register their telephone numbers by Internet or telephone according to methods established by the FTC. Since its inception, more than 5,067,079 registrations have been submitted by Illinois consumers. More information about the Illinois Restricted Call Registry is available on the Commission's web site.

---

## **PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE**

---

The Illinois Commerce Commission has developed a series of publications for consumer education and outreach. Following is a listing of those, which may be of interest to both utility consumers and individuals needing information on the Commission. Printed copies may be requested by calling Consumer Services toll free number 1 800-524-0795. This and other information is available through the Commission's web site at: [www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)

***Consumer Issues and Assistance:*** describes the services provided by the Consumer Services Division.

***Restricted Call Registry:*** describes registration methods and other information for consumers who want to reduce telephone solicitation calls.

***Your Quick Reference Guide to Preparing for a Formal Complaint Hearing:*** is a consumer's "how-to" guide for preparing for a formal complaint hearing with topics such as: setting the hearing date, obtaining witnesses, supplying the necessary documentation, following the hearing procedures, accepting or appealing the Commission's decision, and filing for a rehearing.

### ***ENERGY and WATER/SEWER***

***InfoCards:*** (informational postcards) offer consumers practical information pertaining to rules for electric, gas, water/sewer utilities in an easy-to-read, single sheet format. There are six unique Info Cards that address consumers' rights and responsibilities with regard to: 1. Utility Bills; 2. Payment Plans for Utility Service; 3. Disconnecting Utility Service; 4. Reconnecting Utility Service; 5. Deposits for

Utility Service and 6. Resolving Your Utility Problems. The post card format allows counselors to expeditiously send useful information to consumers.

***Understanding Natural Gas Prices:*** provides an explanation of why prices fluctuate, what charges are regulated, and some energy saving tips.

## ***ELECTRIC RESTRUCTURING***

***It's Time to Get Plugged In:*** provides information regarding electric choice for small business customers.

***A Residential Consumer's Guide To Electric Service Restructuring:*** provides information regarding electric choice for residential customers.

Our consumer guides listed above are available in business and residential versions. They contain information about electric service restructuring in Illinois. The brochures explain what is changing, what consumers will be choosing, when options are available, and a glossary of key terms. The residential guide is available in English and Spanish. Both brochures can be downloaded from our web site.

## ***TELECOMMUNICATIONS***

***Local Telephone Service Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Consumer:*** provides an overview of consumer rights and responsibilities related to local exchange service.

***Smart Shoppers Guide to Using Phones Away from Home:*** is a postcard that provides the maximum rates per minute for intrastate calls and the maximum surcharges for making operator-assisted calls. In addition, it explains what consumers can do if they have been overcharged. This is updated annually based on the approved rates.

***What You Should Know About Using "900" Numbers:*** highlights 83 Illinois Administrative Code Part 772 by providing information on pay-per-call services. Included is information about the preamble that information providers must provide and customer rights regarding charges.

## HOW TO REACH CSD

---

Our Staff of Consumer Counselors is available to assist consumers with questions or complaints regarding utility service from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- Toll Free Hotline number is: 1-800-524-0795 (calls initiated within Illinois)
- Toll Free TTY number is: 1-800-858-9277 (calls initiated within Illinois)
- Our facsimile line is: 217-524-6859
- Our mailing address is: 527 East Capitol Avenue, Springfield, Illinois 62701
- An online complaint form is available at: [www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)
- Consumers initiating calls from outside of Illinois, utilities and others with an interest in Illinois regulations may contact the ICC's Consumer Services Division at: 217-782-2024.