



ILLINOIS  
COMMERCE  
COMMISSION

CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION  
2012 ANNUAL REPORT



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION  
Consumer Services Division  
[www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)

2012 Annual Report

# ANNUAL REPORT

## CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION

### 2012

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

527 East Capitol Avenue  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

**800-524-0795(V)**  
217-782-2024(V)  
800-858-9277(TTY)  
217-785-7413(FAX)  
[www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)



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## Table of Contents

<b>CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS .....	1
DISTRIBUTING CALLS, RECORDING AND TRACKING DATA .....	4
<b>INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FORMAL COMPLAINT DATA .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>REVIEW OF CONSUMER CONTACT DATA .....</b>	<b>12</b>
ENERGY INDUSTRY .....	13
RESIDENTIAL SUPPLIER CHOICE .....	21
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.....	25
WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY .....	33
<b>PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>CONSUMER INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>HOW TO CONTACT CSD .....</b>	<b>47</b>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Consumer Services Division (CSD) of the Illinois Commerce Commission provides the agency's principal contact with utility ratepayers throughout the State of Illinois. Utility customers are connected to an experienced team of CSD counselors who work exclusively to field questions about utility service and resolve their issues. The CSD's integration of its Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS) and Automated Call Distribution System (ACD) allow for CSD Staff to efficiently track the types of inquiries and complaints that were received and how they were resolved, monitor resolution times, and identify trends by investigating consumer complaints.

In addition to managing consumer contact, CSD Staff participates in consumer education efforts, rulemakings, certification cases, informal investigations into industry practices, and formal cases before the Commission. This report provides a descriptive overview of CSD and an annual review of consumer contact information.

In 2012, the CSD assisted more than 18,900 consumers with questions and complaints, the majority of which focused on energy issues. Approximately 15,200 complaints and inquiries were received by phone while another 3,700 consumers contacted the division via alternative methods including online complaints, letters and email. Through these various channels of customer communication, the CSD successfully worked with utilities to provide approximately \$1.8 million in savings directly to individual consumers. Examples of savings calculated by the CSD include, but are not limited to: correction of billing errors and rate classifications, waivers of service fees for reconnection, and removal of late charges and deposit requirements.

The CSD would like to thank you for your interest and express CSD's commitment to continue to provide quality services in assisting and educating Illinois consumers. The CSD will also continue to develop and implement innovative solutions for providing utility related consumer services to the State of Illinois.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A. Muntaner'.

Peter A. Muntaner  
Director



## **CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY**

The 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. The CSD Staff consists of management; administrative support; consumer counselors, whose primary responsibility is to interface with consumers; and policy analysts involved in consumer programs, which include consumer education, development of rules, carrier/supplier certification, and compliance issues.

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



### **CONSUMER EDUCATION**

The role of the CSD as educator increases as the regulated utility industry changes, particularly as competition grows. The CSD responds to consumer questions about regulations, services and products. In assisting consumers, members of CSD Staff reference laws, Commission orders, company tariffs, and information related to the competitive markets. The CSD has the important responsibility of helping consumers understand choices.

Counselor Staff answer consumer inquiries regarding customer rights and responsibilities, Commission rules, telecommunication carrier options and alternative energy supplier options. Staff also inform consumers of information available on the Commission's website and directs consumers to supplier information on the Commission's websites.



## CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

A law that took effect in August, 2007 requires the Commission to provide a website and a toll-free telephone number to accept comments from Illinois residents regarding any matter under the auspices of the Commission or before the Commission. Public comments are reported by Staff to the full Commission prior to all relevant votes of the Commission. The CSD records all public comments submitted by telephone and reviews all comments submitted electronically. The ICC received 1,124 public comments in 2012. Of that total, 1,063 comments were posted directly to docketed cases by consumers via the ICC website and 61 comments were posted to docketed cases with the assistance of the CSD via telephone, written and e-mail submissions.

#### To File a Public Comment

ICC toll-free number 800-524-0795

ICC Website: [www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov)

### NON-PUBLIC CONSUMER COMMENTS

Contacts are recorded as “consumer opinion” when a consumer expresses an opinion but does not want the opinion made available to the public. Observations and opinions regarding utilities include cost of service, rate case protests, utility policy and practices, customer service issues, location of transmission lines, and utility service territories.



## CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY RESOLVING DISPUTES

In addition to education, a primary responsibility of the 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.

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

### Three-Way Calling

Three-Way Calling 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 2012, 6,665 informal complaints were handled in this manner.

### Investigative Complaints

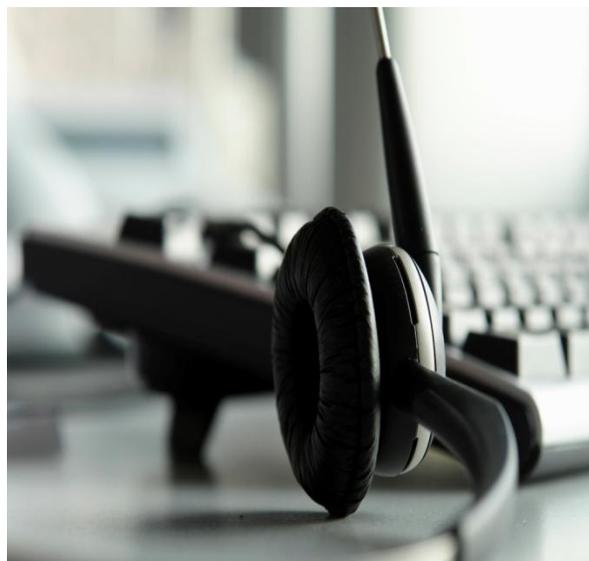
Using the Investigative Complaints method, counselors notify the company of an informal complaint filed by the customer with the Illinois Commerce Commission. The company must investigate the complaint and typically contacts the customer during the investigation. The company is required to furnish a report of the outcome along with supporting documentation. The counselor reviews the report to ensure that the company's action complies with Commission rules. The CSD Staff may call on other divisions to provide answers to technical questions, getting advice from engineers, economists and financial experts. After review, the counselor contacts the consumer with an explanation of the results. In 2012, 8,226 complaints were handled in this manner.



## CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY DISTRIBUTING CALLS, RECORDING, AND TRACKING DATA

### Automated Call Distribution System (ACD)

The CSD uses an Automated Call Distribution system (ACD) to connect callers to a counselor for assistance with their problem or inquiry. Calls from TTYs are routed to counselors via Textnet, an interactive computer application. Monitoring, tracking, and reporting capabilities help management determine appropriate levels of staffing, facilitate scheduling, assist in training counselors, and identifying the needs of consumers.



### Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS)

The ACD is integrated 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 ACTS, counselors categorize complaints by the general headings of billing, service, rates, etc. They are then further broken down into intermediate coding and more specific complaint classification. The CSD's reporting capabilities allow flexibility in searching the records created in individual cases and compiling data. Reporting functions allow Staff to track information, identify problems and analyze trends.



## CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY DISTRIBUTING CALLS, RECORDING, AND TRACKING DATA

### e-ACTS

e-ACTS is a Web-Based electronic interface for utility companies to utilize in responding to complaints. With e-ACTS, a utility can view the status of its complaints, verify its responses to complaints that have been received by the CSD, and submit information in a centralized location. e-ACTS was implemented to resolve consumer complaints more efficiently.

### Consumer Services Online

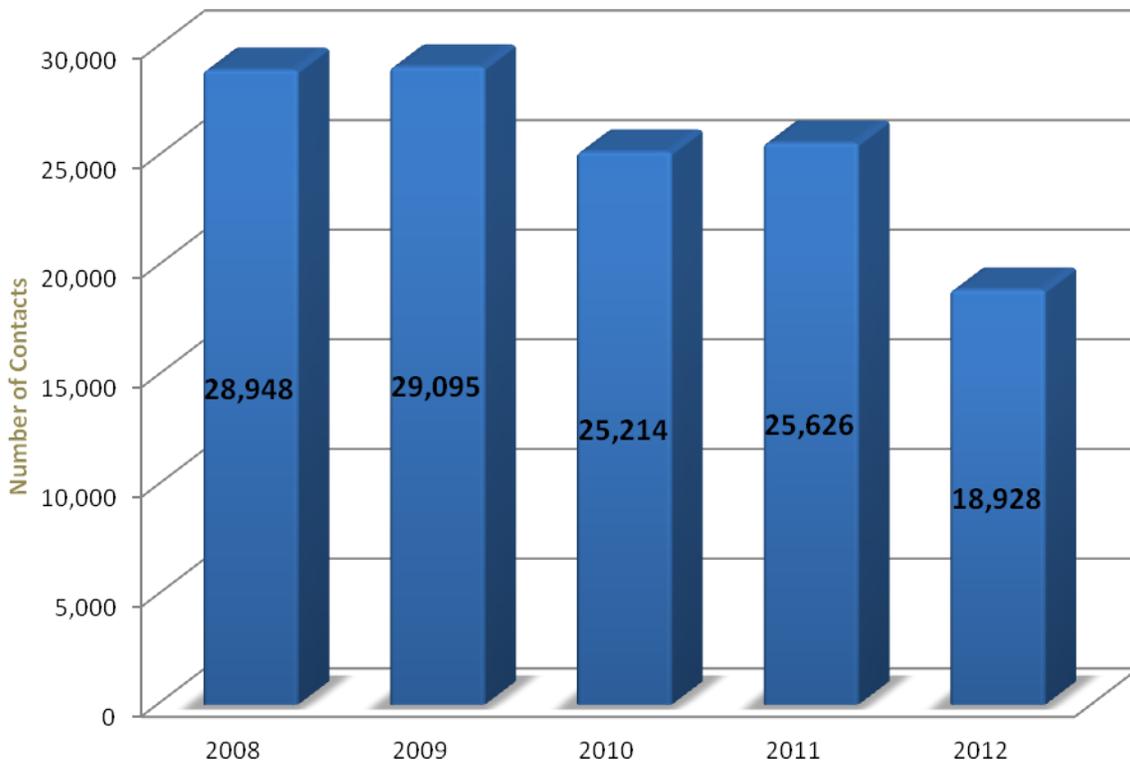
Through its online complaint system and e-mail address, the CSD receives contacts from consumers concerned with a wide variety of non-emergency issues. Instructions advise consumers with a service related issues requiring immediate attention to contact the CSD by telephone. Electronic access to the CSD provides a useful alternative to traditional mail and the toll free telephone service. The CSD's records indicate that 2,770 consumer contacts were received electronically during 2012.





## INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA

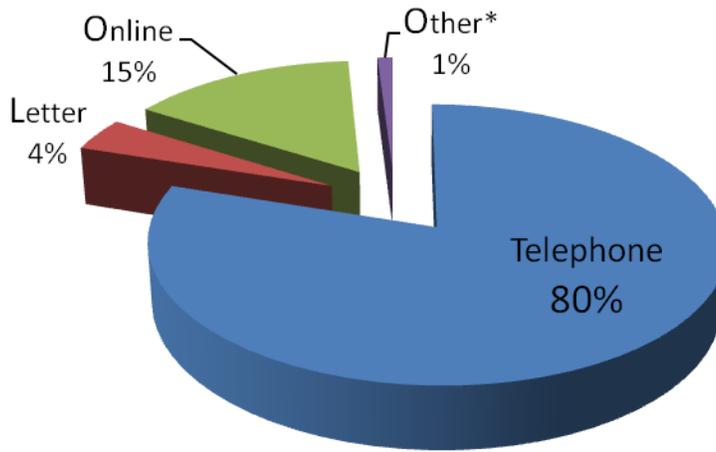
Counselors record informal inquiries, complaints, and opinions from consumers. Customer opinions and consumer education inquiries are typically answered during the initial contact. Based upon the nature of the problem, the counselor determines if there is a need for investigation requiring contact with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



During 2012, CSD Staff recorded 18,928 contacts. The graph depicts the number of consumer contacts received from 2008 through 2012. A reduction in contacts in the Energy Industry accounted for most of the reduction in overall contacts from 2011 to 2012 depicted above. CSD Staff attributes the reduction in contacts in the energy industry to improvements by utilities in the handling of customer issues. The CSD continues to work in a cooperative fashion with utilities on compliance and process issues that reduce customer complaints. The Energy Industry contact reduction is further analyzed in the Energy section of this report.



## INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA ORIGIN OF CONTACTS



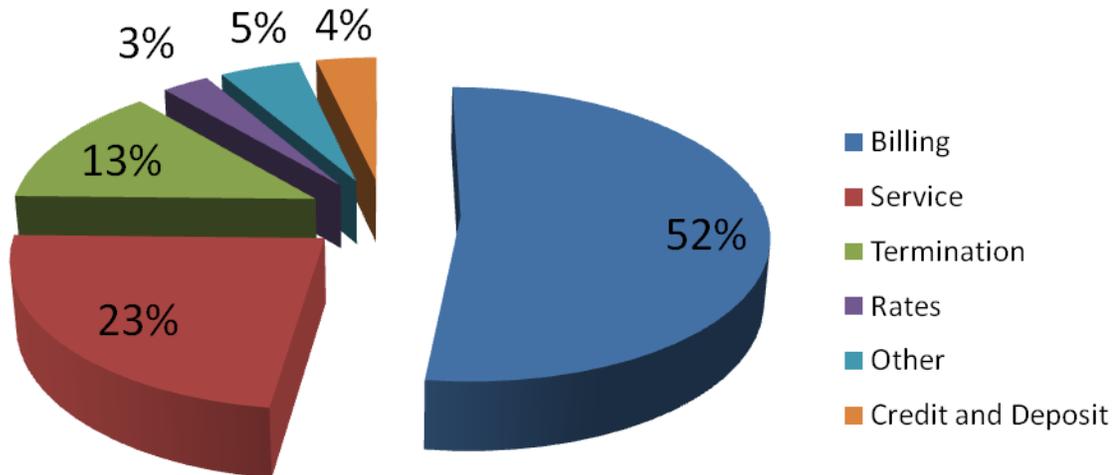
Most of the 18,928 cases recorded (80%) began with a telephone call to CSD's toll-free number.

\*Other contacts include those made via fax, teletypewriter and referrals.





## INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION



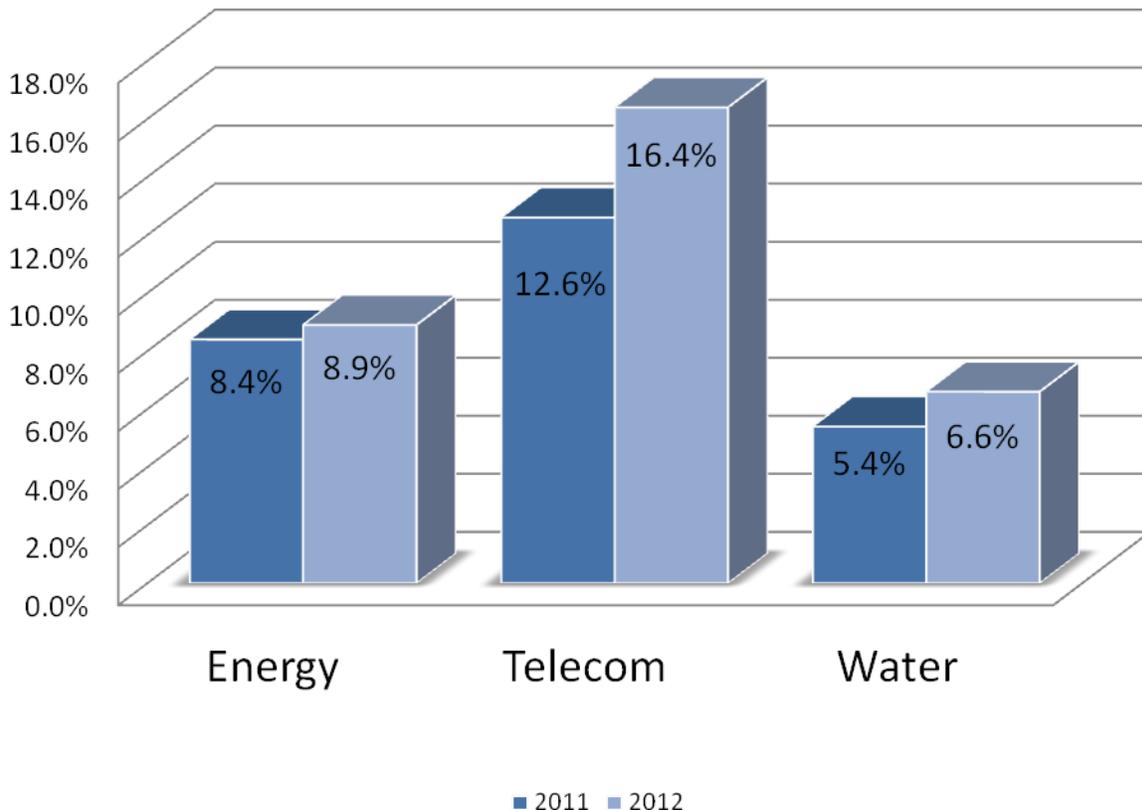
The graph above represents the total number of consumer contacts that were opened during 2012, categorized by problem type. These general categories include billing, credit and deposit, rates, service, termination and other. This graph illustrates that 52% of the contacts opened related to the consumer's bill.



## INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS

Counselors evaluate cases to determine if correct procedures were followed by the company in responding to the consumer's complaint prior to the 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 following graph compares 2011 and 2012 percentages of complaints that were justified by industry type.

Number of Justified Complaints





## FORMAL COMPLAINT DATA

### MEDIATION

By law mediation is available to consumers to resolve telecommunication disputes. 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.

### 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.

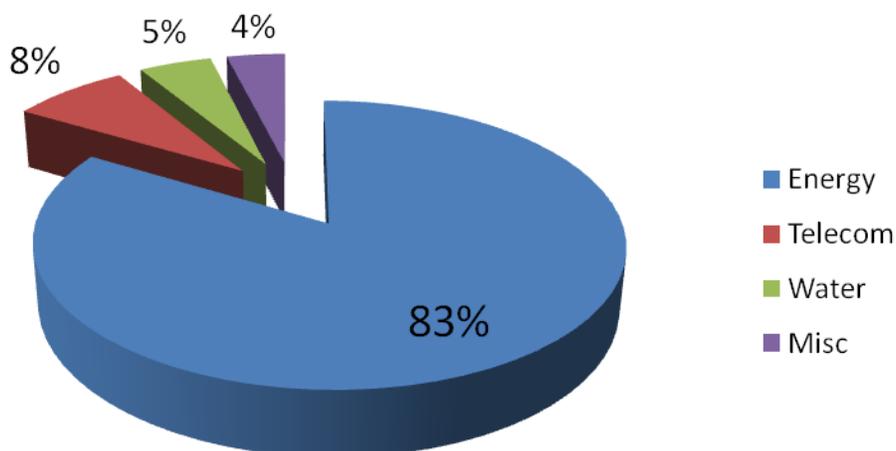
The CSD makes every effort to achieve resolution of disputes between consumers and utilities in the informal process. Of the 18,928 contacts from consumers in 2012, 333 consumers requested formal complaint forms and 80 formal hearings were actually docketed.



## REVIEW OF CONSUMER CONTACT DATA

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

### 2012 Consumer Contacts by Utility Type



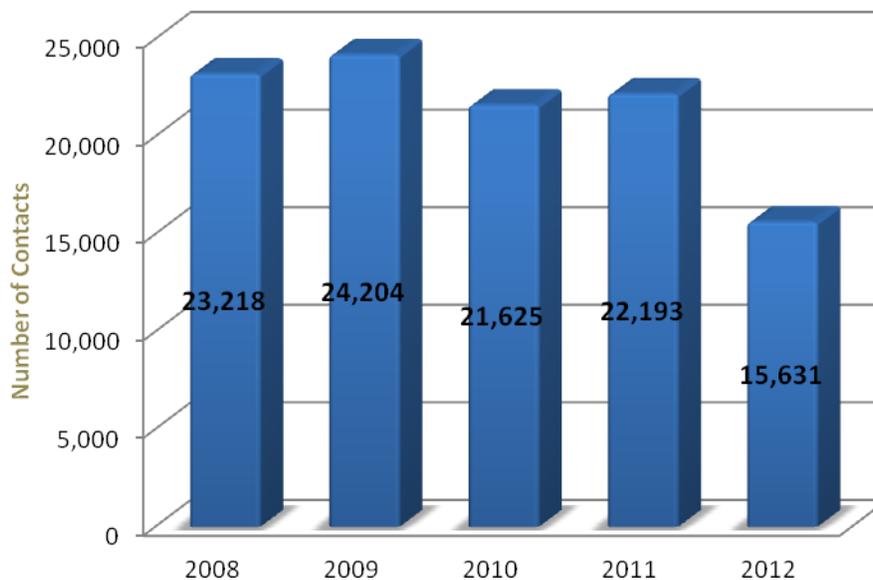
Gas and electric cases combined result in 83% of the total contacts. Contacts pertaining to telecom issues comprise 8% of the total number received during 2012. The water and sewer industry accounts for 5% of the consumer contacts.



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

Contacts 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.

### Energy Industry Contacts



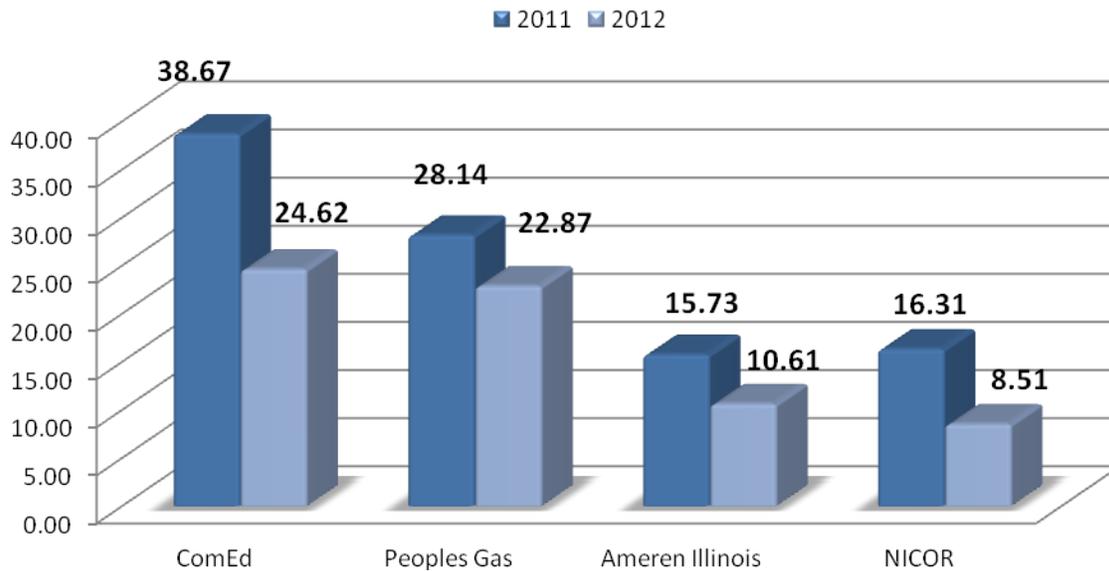
The graph above illustrates the number of consumer contacts that were received each year by the CSD for electric and gas companies from 2008 through 2012. In 2012, there was a reduction in contacts across all large utilities in the energy industry. A reduction in regulatory contacts can be attributable to many different factors. The reduction of contacts in 2012 illustrated above may be primarily reflective of utility improvements in the handling of customer issues at the customer service representative (CSR) level. Frontline elasticity, routine training, cross-functional communication and sound supervisory support at the CSR level are customer service characteristics that are indicative of fewer regulatory contacts. The CSD communicated suggested modifications to company operations when its analysis of consumer contact data provided for opportunities to develop recommended changes as they related to compliance and process improvements.



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

### 2012 Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Customers

#### Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Customers



The graph above illustrates the number of consumer contacts received per 10,000 customers for the larger companies in the Energy Industry. There was a sizeable reduction in contacts related to customer billing issues in the Energy Industry that attributed to a large part of the descending trend depicted above.



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

### 2012 Energy Consumer Contacts for Smaller Electric and Gas Companies

Company	Customers*	Contacts
North Shore	146,500	93
MidAmerican	84,800	13
Atmos Energy	22,500	3
Illinois Gas	9,700	1
Mt. Carmel	5,500	1

\*Estimated Number

The contact 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.



**ENERGY INDUSTRY**  
 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 2011 to those in 2012. 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 had the largest percentage of justified complaints in 2012.

	2011 Complaints			2012 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
North Shore	7	113	6.2%	11	81	14%
Peoples Gas	115	1,896	6.1%	127	1,600	8%
NICOR	210	2,780	7.5%	112	1,449	7.7%
ComEd	1,118	12,294	9.1%	570	7,464	7.6%
Ameren Illinois	50	1,059	4.7%	69	934	7.4%



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

### Response Time

The following table shows a comparison of the average response time for energy companies during 2011 and 2012. Response time is indicated by the number of days the utility takes to respond to CSD investigative complaints. The companies shown are those that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2012. Investigative complaints are those, which are not suited to or are not resolved through three-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation. The companies are listed alphabetically.

	2011 Response Time (in Days)	2012 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2011 to 2012)
Ameren Illinois	8.9	8.9	0
ComEd	10.9	6.9	-4
Nicor	12.2	9.5	-2.7
North Shore	7.5	5.9	-1.6
Peoples Gas	7.8	5.8	-2

Timely response is important to complaint resolution. Using e-ACTS, a web based version of ACTS, assists utilities in tracking and responding to open complaints. CSD contacts the utility when the number of days taken to address a complaint exceeds expectations.



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

### General Code Comparison

Consumer Contacts are first categorized in one of six general problem types. When a complaint is closed, more specific codes are added. The table below compares the general categories of the total number of energy contacts that were closed during 2011 and 2012.

#### Comparison of General Categories – 2011 and 2012

	2011	2012
Billing	13,189	7,910
Credit and Deposit	837	708
Rates	986	135
Service	2,630	2,053
Termination	3,264	2,397
Other	703	456



**ENERGY INDUSTRY**

Detailed Reason for Contact

The tables below illustrate the breakdown of the most common 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 intermediate coding and more specific complaint classification. The following tables identify the most common of the specific categories in 2011 and 2012. CSD closed 13,659 Energy contacts in 2012.

<b>BILLING</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Payment Arrangements	6,956	4,121
Responsibility for Account	1,428	949
Meter- estimates and makeup bills	1,479	705
Usage/Consumption	923	504

<b>CREDIT/DEPOSIT</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Deposit Requirement	430	338
Service Denial	230	135
Deposit Amount/Conditions	111	118

<b>RATES</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Proposed Rate Change	844	41
Opinion- Rate in Effect	90	33



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

SERVICE	2011	2012
Timeliness- General	926	690
Timeliness- Reconnection or Disconnection	521	388
Conduct of Personnel	304	335
Interruptions	384	202

TERMINATION	2011	2012
Seeks Assistance	2,143	1,565
Medical Certificate	526	400



## ENERGY INDUSTRY Supplier Choice

### Residential Electric Supplier Choice

Since May 2002, residential customers have been eligible to choose their electric supplier and public utilities have the necessary tariffs and systems in place to provide delivery services. The first residential customers switched to alternative suppliers during 2008. Consolidated billing and purchase of electric supplier receivables implemented by Ameren and ComEd have provided incentives to alternative suppliers to market their services to residential customers. By the end of 2012 approximately 1,735,130 customers had switched to alternative suppliers. The availability of municipal aggregation has significantly increased the number of residential customers served by alternative suppliers. The Commission maintains a related consumer education website at: [www.pluginillinois.org](http://www.pluginillinois.org). In addition, detailed electric customer switching statistics can be viewed on the Commission's website.



### 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, Article 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. During 2009, comprehensive changes to the Alternative Gas Supplier Law significantly strengthened consumer protections and offered educational information to consumers. Among the important protections, the law ensures that residential and small commercial customers who choose to purchase natural gas from an alternative natural gas



## ENERGY INDUSTRY

supplier have the right to rescind an agreement without penalty within ten business days. It also limits early termination fees to \$50, and protects consumers from unauthorized switching, or “slamming.” In addition to the other protections, the law requires the Commission to develop and maintain information to assist customers in understanding their gas supply options.

A list of certified suppliers and information regarding various product offerings and guidelines for comparing prices and terms can be found at the Commission’s website:

[www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov).

Nicor Gas reports that approximately 233,298 residential and 36,551 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers through the Customer Select Program during 2012. Peoples Gas indicates that approximately 43,587 residential and 8,669 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers through the Choices For You Program. North Shore Gas reports approximately 10,056 residential and 1,095 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers.

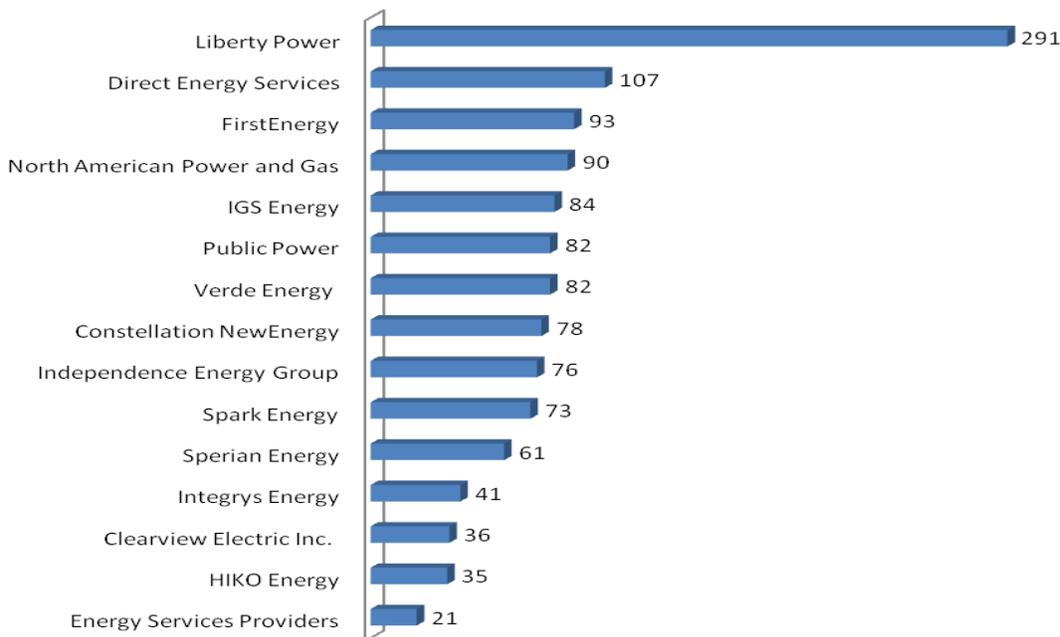


**ENERGY INDUSTRY**

**2012 Consumer Complaints for Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers**

The chart below shows the number of informal complaints regarding alternative retail electric suppliers with more than 20 informal residential complaints recorded during 2012. The 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, misleading marketing practices, and early termination penalties. The summaries provide the total number of complaints received for each Alternative Gas Supplier and do not account for the number of customers served. Additional complaint information regarding retail electric suppliers including a ranking of suppliers can be found at [www.pluginillinois.org](http://www.pluginillinois.org).

**2012 Informal Alternative Retail Electric Supplier Complaints**



**2012 Formal Alternative Retail Electric Supplier Complaints**

The table below shows the number of formal residential complaints regarding alternative retail electric suppliers filed during 2012

Integrys Energy	1
Spark Energy	1

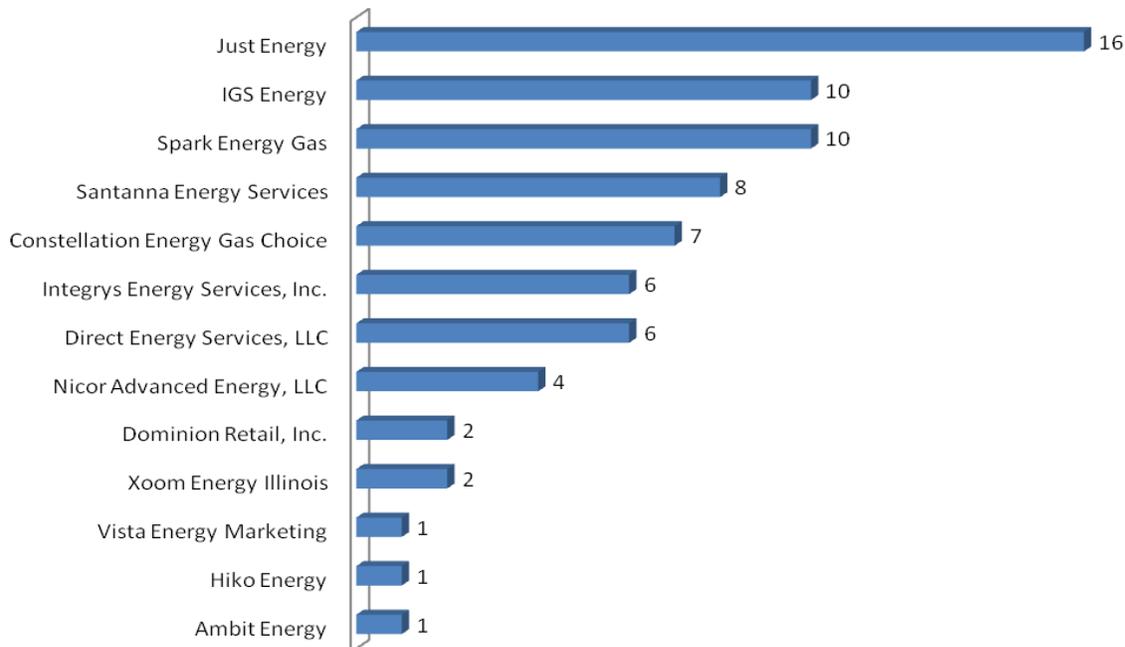


## ENERGY INDUSTRY

### 2012 Consumer Complaints for Alternative Gas Suppliers

The Illinois Commerce Commission maintains a summary of consumer complaints it receives from residential and small commercial customers regarding Alternative Gas Suppliers. The summaries below provide the total number of informal complaints and formal complaints reported to the ICC quarterly. All Alternative Gas Suppliers with certificates to serve residential and small commercial customers in Illinois with at least one recorded complaint are included in the summary, regardless of whether they are currently marketing to consumers or serving customers. The summaries provide the total number of complaints received for each Alternative Gas Supplier and do not account for the number of customers served. Additional alternative gas supplier complaint information can be found at [www.icc.illinois.gov](http://www.icc.illinois.gov).

#### 2012 Informal Alternative Gas Supplier Complaints



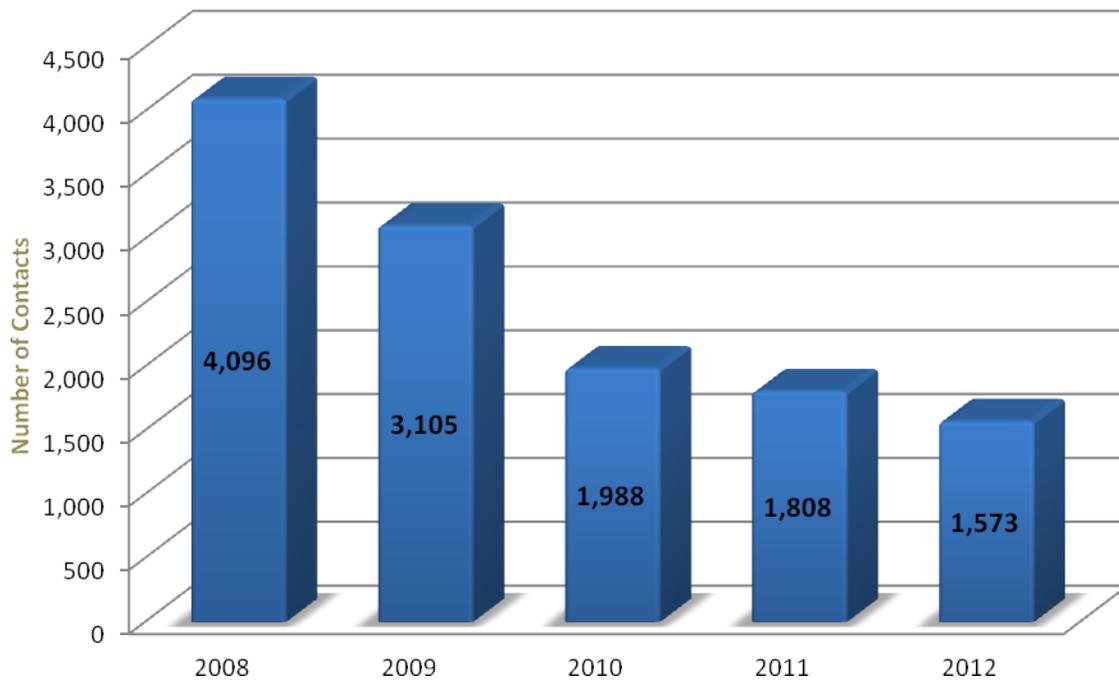
#### 2012 Formal Alternative Gas Supplier Complaints

There were no formal alternative gas supplier complaints filed in 2012.



## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

### Telecommunications Industry Contacts



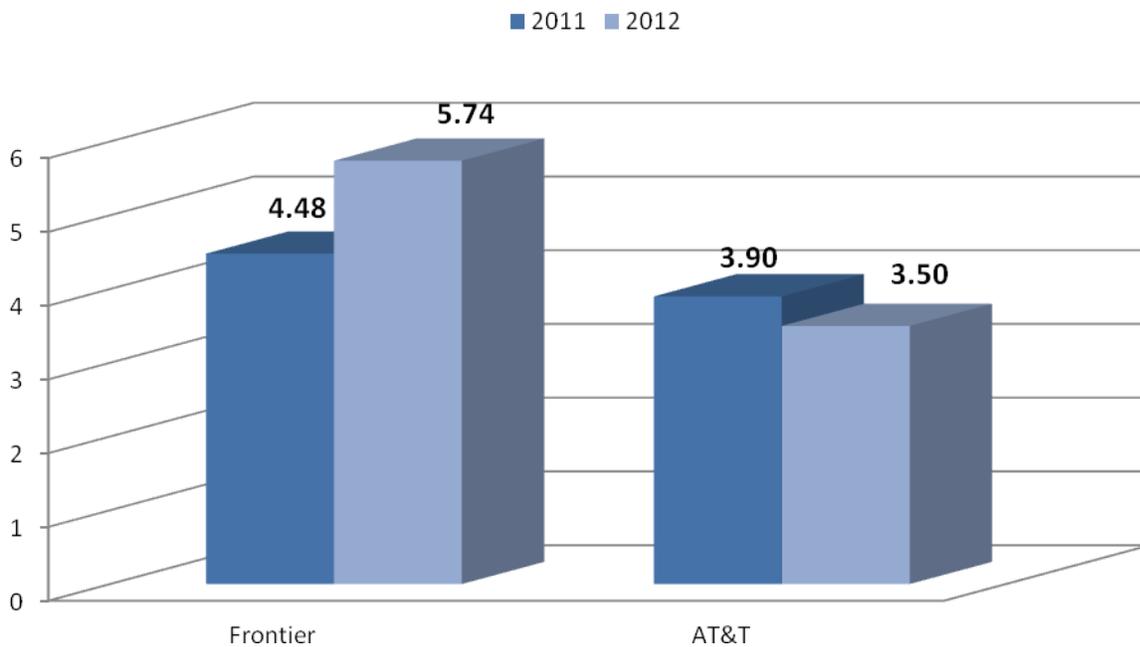
The graph above shows the number of consumer contacts concerning the telecommunications industry that were received each year by CSD from 2008 through 2012.



## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

### 2012 Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Access Lines

### Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Access Lines

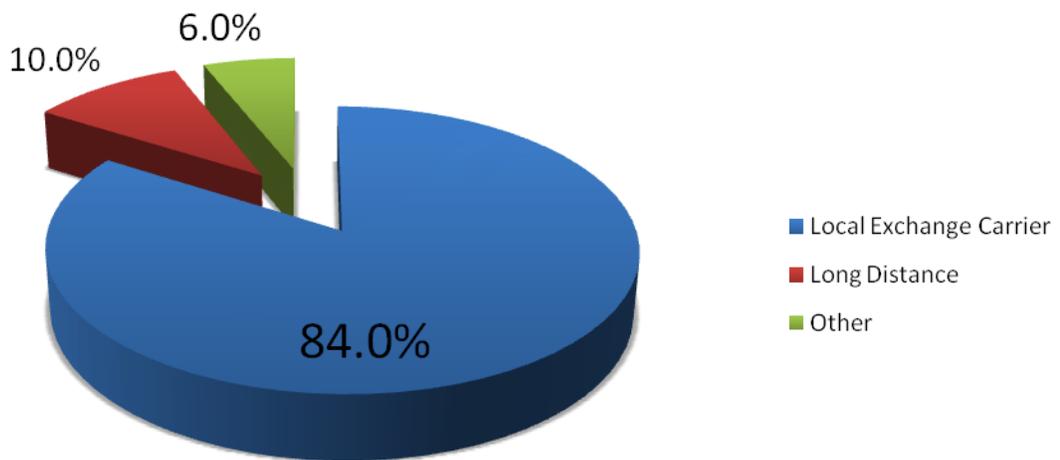


The graph above illustrates the number of contacts per 10,000 access lines that were received for major local exchange carriers for 2012. Access lines include the number of residential and business phone lines used.



**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**  
Consumer Contact by Company Type

**2012 Telecommunications  
Consumer Contact by Company Type**





**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**  
**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 tables on the following page compare the telecommunications carriers’ justified complaints closed in 2011 to those closed in 2012. The charts are divided by the type of service provided: local exchange carriers and those that provide long distance service.

The Local Exchange Carrier chart includes those companies that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2012. The Long Distance Carrier chart includes companies that received 20 or more investigative complaints. Investigative complaints are those that are not suited to or are not resolved through three-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 2012.

**Local Exchange Carriers**

	2011 Complaints			2012 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
Frontier	33	159	20.8%	58	189	30.7%
AT&T	137	1,095	13.5%	116	843	13.8%

**Long Distance Carriers**

	2011 Complaints			2012 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
AT&T	4	58	6.9%	6	52	11.5%



**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**

**Response Time**

The following tables compare the average response time for telecommunications carriers during 2012. Response time is the number of days the utility takes to respond to the CSD. The Local Exchange Carrier table includes those companies that received 50 or more investigative complaints during 2012. The Long Distance Carrier table includes companies that received 20 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**

	2011 Response Time (in Days)	2012 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2011 to 2012)
AT&T	10.6	11.1	.5
Frontier	11	11.2	.2

**Long Distance Carriers**

	2011 Response Time (in Days)	2012 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2011 to 2012)
AT&T	7.3	14.8	7.5



## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

### General Code Comparison

Consumer Contacts 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 contacts in each of the general categories for the contacts that were closed during 2011 and 2012. Billing continues to be the most frequently identified issue.

#### Comparison of General Categories – 2011 and 2012

	2011	2012
Billing	887	770
Credit and Deposit	3	0
Rates	54	17
Service	621	482
Termination	76	86
Other	135	152



**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**  
 Detailed Reason for Contact

The tables below illustrate the breakdown of the most common 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 intermediate coding and more specific complaint classification. The following tables identify the most common of the specific categories. The CSD closed 1,507 Telecommunications contacts in 2012.

<b>BILLING</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Payment- General	134	138
Accuracy- General	183	131
Dispute- Rate Classification/Plan	147	124
Bill Statement	73	104
Payment Arrangements	64	77
Responsibility for Account	92	69
Bill for Feature Not Ordered	90	59
Disputed Bill by Other Company	55	41
Usage/Consumption	49	26

<b>CREDIT/DEPOSIT</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Deposit Amount/Conditions	2	0



## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

RATES	2011	2012
Rate Inquiry	13	8
Rate Structure	17	7

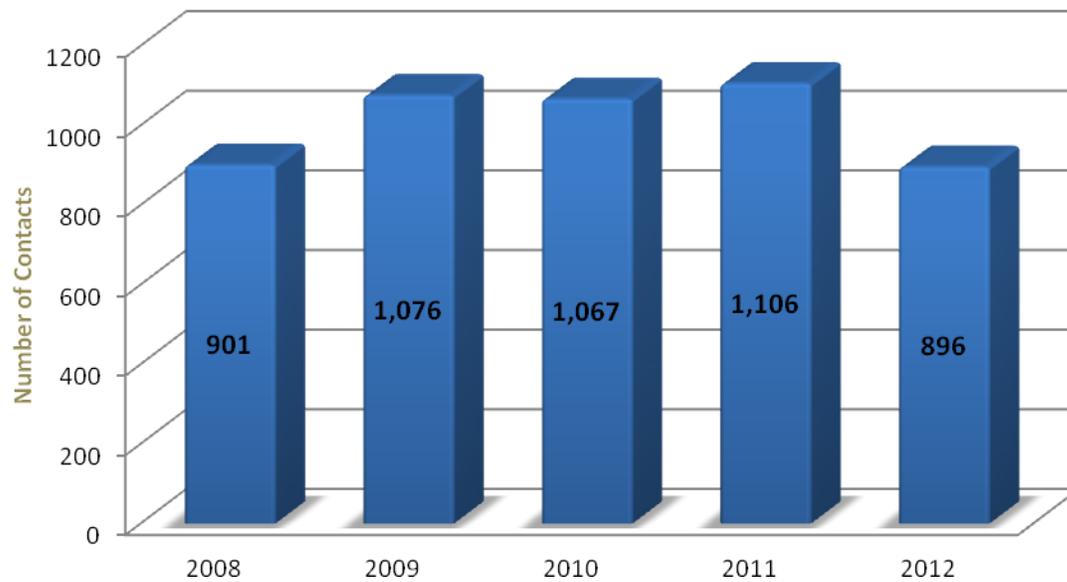
SERVICE	2011	2012
Timeliness of Performed Work	210	162
Quality	160	121
Conduct of Personnel/Reps	88	75
Service Interruptions	59	40
Availability of Features & Equipment	57	40

TERMINATION	2011	2012
Seeks Assistance	44	61



## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

### Water and Sewer Industry Contacts



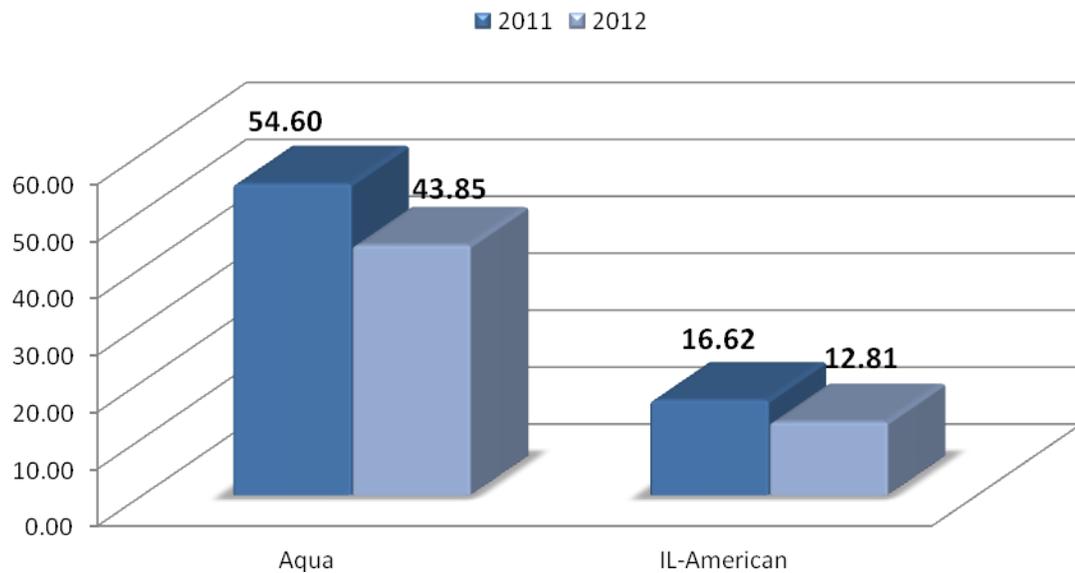
The graph above illustrates the number of consumer contacts that were received each year by CSD for the water and sewer industry from 2008 through 2012. Contacts regarding proposed rate changes decreased significantly in 2012 as compared to 2011.



## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

### 2012 Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Customers

### Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Customers



The graph above shows the number of consumer contacts per 10,000 customers that were received for the major companies in the water and sewer industry for 2012. Aqua led in the number of contacts per 10,000 customers with a majority of its contacts being issues concerning rates and billing.



**WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY**  
 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 Aqua’s and Illinois American’s justified complaints of 2011 to those in 2012. The companies are listed in descending order, beginning with the company that had the largest percentage of justified complaints in 2012.

	2011 Complaints			2012 Complaints		
	Justified	Total	Percent Justified	Justified	Total	Percent Justified
Illinois American	15	349	4.3%	16	263	6.1%
Aqua	12	138	8.7%	9	169	5.3%

**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 2012. 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 three-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation.

	2011 Response Time (in Days)	2012 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2011 to 2012)
Aqua	5.84	6.9	1.06
Illinois-American	9.15	6.0	-3.15



## **WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY**

### **General Code Comparison**

Consumer Contacts 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 and sewer contacts in each of the general categories for the consumer contacts that were closed during 2011 and 2012.

#### **Comparison of General Categories – 2011 and 2012**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Billing	377	358
Credit and Deposit	5	6
Rates	505	357
Service	78	71
Termination	101	82
Other	34	20



## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

### Detailed Reason for Contact

The tables below illustrate the breakdown of the most common 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 intermediate coding and more specific complaint classification. The following tables identify the most common of the specific categories. CSD closed 894 Water and Sewer contacts in 2012.

BILLING	2011	2012
Accuracy	99	211
Usage/Consumption	118	114
Payment Arrangements	110	90

CREDIT and DEPOSIT	2011	2012
Service Denial	4	6

RATES	2011	2012
Proposed Rate Change	432	205



## WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY



SERVICE	2011	2012
Timeliness of Performed Service	34	25
Conduct of Personnel	12	7

TERMINATION	2011	2012
Seeks Assistance	59	43



## **PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES**

### **CONSUMER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

Staff develops consumer information that can be accessed through the ICC's website or can be mailed to consumers. Staff is available to participate in 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 Commerce and Economic Opportunity's 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 OF SALES MARKETING AND CUSTOMER NOTIFICATION**

Statements concerning prices, terms and conditions of service must disclose information accurately and adequately. Written information adequately disclosing prices, terms and conditions must be provided 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. When directed by the Commission, Staff has reviewed 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 investigates sales practices such as the unauthorized change of carrier or supplier (slamming).



## PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

### RULEMAKING

During 2012 efforts continued to rewrite 83 Illinois Administrative Code 280 that establishes procedures for gas, electric, water and sewer utilities governing eligibility for service, deposits, payment practices and discontinuance of service. A proposed order was issued June 6, 2012.

A change in law required the Commission to promulgate rules applicable to electric and gas utilities regarding military personnel. CSD is leading the rulemaking to establish Part 281. This rulemaking will implement the statutory requirement to establish what documents or proof the service member must provide to the public utility to establish that the residential premises was the primary residence of the service member immediately before the service member entered military service and what constitutes hardship to the consumer as the term applies to military personnel returning from military service. The rule also establishes the mechanism by which certain public utilities can recover the uncollectible costs it incurs in complying with the requirements.

During 2012 in cooperation with the Commission's Telecommunications Division, CSD Staff continued its participation in the revision of administrative rules made necessary by significant changes to the telecommunications law. Among these changes, the revised law (Public Act 96-0927) allows local exchange carriers (LECs) to elect market regulation for their competitive retail telecommunications services. Pending revisions to Part 735 proposed by Staff specify that the provisions of Part 735 apply to the stand-alone residential network access lines and packages (required pursuant to Section 13-506.2 of the Public Utilities Act) of LECs that elect market regulation.

During 2012 CSD Staff participated with members of the Energy Division in a review of Part 500 that establishes standards of service for gas utilities. This effort will continue in 2013 and is expected to result in the initiation of a rulemaking.

CSD Staff also participated in cases involving requests for waiver of certain provisions in existing rules. In considering whether to grant a waiver, the Commission must find that the provision is not statutorily mandated, that no party will be injured, and whether the provision of the rule could be unnecessarily burdensome. The role of CSD Staff in these proceedings is to help ensure that the waiver does not remove important consumer protections.



## PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

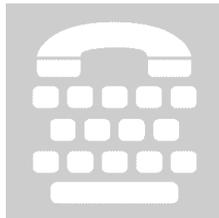
### CERTIFICATION CASES

In 2012, CSD Staff participated in the review of certification applications of alternative gas suppliers and alternative retail electric suppliers seeking to serve residential and small commercial retail customers. CSD Staff also participated in the review of applicants for licensure of Agents, Brokers, and Consultants.

### COMPLAINT CASES

During 2012, CSD Staff continued implementation of the Commission's order finding that Just Energy (formerly U.S. Energy Savings Corp.) had violated the Alternative Gas Supplier Law and utility standards of conduct tariff. The Commission imposed monetary penalties, required Just Energy to implement corrective measures, established reporting requirements, and ordered a compliance and management audit to be paid for by Just Energy.

### 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 seven members who are participants of the distribution program and TRS users provides input to ITAC as well as to the Commission Staff Liaison.



## PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

### CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

#### Universal Telephone Service 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.

#### Federal Telephone Assistance Programs

Lifeline Assistance provides discounts on basic monthly service for qualified telephone customers. These discounts can be up to \$10 per month. A deposit may be required unless the consumer voluntarily chooses toll blocking that will prevent outgoing long distance calls.

#### State Telephone Assistance Program

The Universal Telephone Service Assistance Program (“UTSAP”), funded by voluntary contributions from Illinois telephone consumers, provides supplemental assistance to eligible low income residential individuals. Currently, the state’s program provides for a reduction in the cost of installation charges for wireline subscribers. The amount of 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 determines the amount and form of 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.





## PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

### CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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

The Energy Assistance Act provides for a Policy Advisory Council consisting of 20 members who advise the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) on the administration of the Illinois Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). A member of CSD Staff is a member of the Policy Advisory Council. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity administers the program through thirty-five agencies that operate in all Illinois counties. 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. 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.

The Illinois Energy Assistance Act (305 ILCS 20/18) establishes a Percentage of Income Payment Plan ("PIPP") for low-income residential customers of utilities serving more than 100,000 retail customers. Under PIPP, the eligible customer will pay a percentage of their income, receive a monthly benefit towards their utility bill, and lower their overdue bills for every on-time payment they make by the bill due date. Information about LIHEAP is available at: [www.LIHEAP.illinois.gov](http://www.LIHEAP.illinois.gov)

#### 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 @[donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov) or telephone 1-888-382-1222 according to methods established by the FTC. Since its inception, nearly 9,547,900 registrations have been submitted by Illinois consumers. More information about the Illinois Restricted Call Registry is available on the Commission's website.



## CONSUMER INFORMATION INTERNET INFORMATION

The Consumers Section of the Commission's website offers useful information that is readily accessible to consumers at their convenience. CSD Staff is available during business hours to assist consumers in locating information and navigating the site.

### Alternative Retail Electric Supplier Choice

[www.pluginillinois.org](http://www.pluginillinois.org)

This site offers information regarding electric choice, how to choose a supplier, rights of customers, ways to save energy, a list of alternative suppliers, a glossary of terms, and frequently asked questions. The site also includes information to help consumers compare supplier offers and a ranking and summary of Alternative Electric Supplier complaints by provider.

### Natural Gas Supplier Choice

[www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/consumereducation](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/consumereducation)

This site offers information about natural gas choice, how to choose a supplier, rights of customers, a glossary of terms, and frequently asked questions. In addition, the site provides alternative gas supplier offers along with a product comparison worksheet to help consumers compare offers. The site also contains procedures for addressing complaints and a summary of Alternative Gas Supplier complaints by provider.

### Telephone Assistance Programs – Lifeline and Link-Up

[www.icc.illinois.gov/Consumer/LifelineAndLinkUp.aspx](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/Consumer/LifelineAndLinkUp.aspx)

This site offers information about federal and state telephone assistance programs that provide financial assistance to income-eligible consumers initiating telephone service.



## CONSUMER INFORMATION

### INTERNET INFORMATION

#### Additional Information

In addition to information about public utility service, the Commission's website offers useful consumer information regarding JULIE, household goods moving firms, towing relocation, rail crossing safety, and 9-1-1 emergency services systems.

The Commission's website has links to legal authority including the Public Utilities Act, other state and federal laws, as well as administrative rules.

A wealth of information about formal cases considered by the Commission is available on *e-Docket*, the electronic docket system of the Illinois Commerce Commission. *e-Docket* was developed to process and manage public information about the Illinois Commerce Commission's official cases and rule-making proceedings. Anyone interested in case proceedings conducted by the Illinois Commerce Commission may visit the *e-Docket* website at [www.icc.illinois.gov/e-docket](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/e-docket) and view information about cases initiated on or after January 3, 2000. All documents that are not confidential are available electronically to case participants and to the public.

### PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

The Illinois Commerce Commission has developed 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 about the Commission. The following publications are made available by the CSD:

*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

*InfoPac:* Offers consumers practical information pertaining to rules for electric, gas, and water/sewer utilities in an easy-to-read format. The topics covered in this brochure address consumers' rights and responsibilities with regard to: utility bills; payment plans



## CONSUMER INFORMATION PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

for service; disconnecting service; reconnecting service; deposits for service; and resolving utility problems.

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

*Bill of Rights for Water and Sewer Customers:* provides information regarding rights pertaining to rates, billing and payment, make-up bills, disconnection of service, and dispute procedures.

*Electric Choice Basics:* explains what choices are available to customers, how to choose an alternative electric supplier and how the choice of a supplier affects customer service. This fact sheet also provides contact information customers can use to address questions or problems.

*Electric Choice: Local Government Aggregation:* explains how local governments can, with the approval of voters, combine the buying power of citizens to obtain a favorable price when selecting a supplier. This fact sheet also explains customer options and contact information to address questions or problems.

### Telecommunications

*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.



## HOW TO CONTACT CSD

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)
- Facsimile line is: 217-785-7413
- Mailing address is: 527 East Capitol Avenue, Springfield, Illinois 62701
- Consumer complaints and public comments can be placed online 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.