



ILLINOIS
COMMERCE
COMMISSION

CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION
2013 ANNUAL REPORT



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

Consumer Services Division

www.icc.illinois.gov

2013 Annual Report

ANNUAL REPORT

CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION 2013

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

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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 2013, the CSD assisted more than 15,400 consumers with questions and complaints, the majority of which focused on energy issues. Approximately 12,700 complaints and inquiries were received by phone while another 2,700 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 \$1.3 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 blue 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 679 public comments in 2013. Of that total, 630 comments were posted directly to docketed cases by consumers via the ICC website and 49 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

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 2013, 5,003 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 2013, 7,353 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. In 2013, CSD migrated to a new ACD system. The new system provides improved system reliability and redundancies and flexibility in the routing of consumer calls.



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

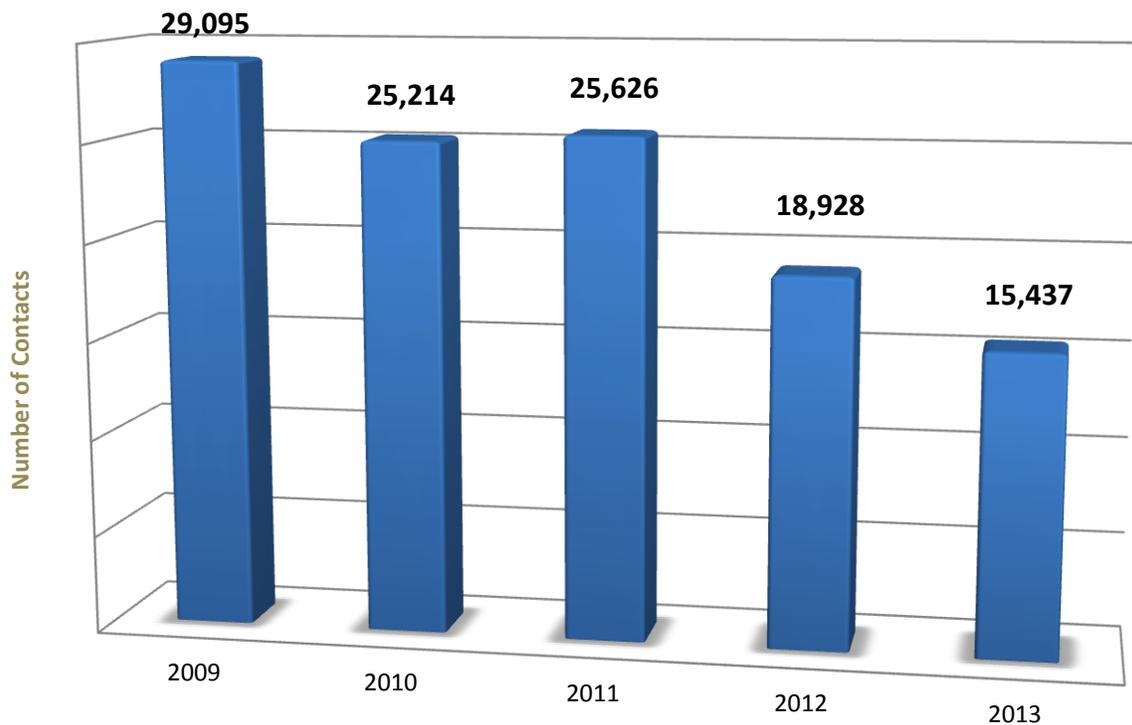
Through its online complaint system and e-mail address, the CSD receives contacts from consumers concerned with a wide variety of non-emergency issues. Instructions advise consumers with service related issues requiring immediate attention to contact the CSD by telephone. Electronic access to the CSD provides a useful alternative to traditional mail and the toll free telephone service. The CSD's records indicate that 2,048 consumer contacts were received electronically during 2013.





INFORMAL CONSUMER CONTACT DATA

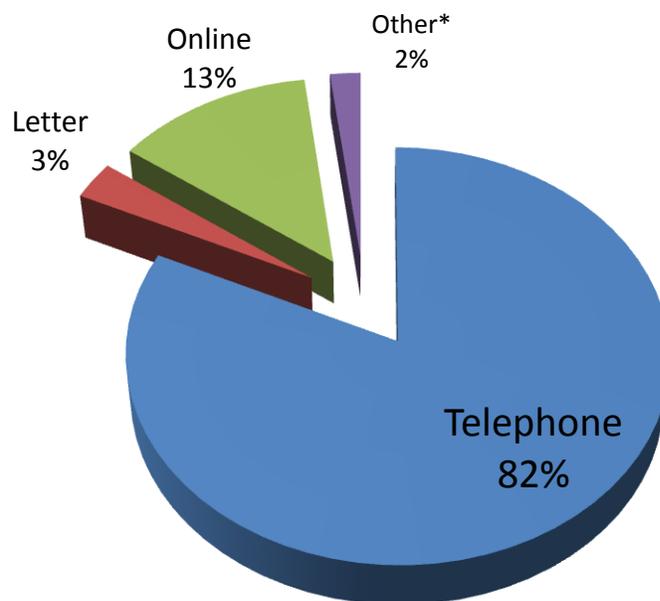
Counselors record informal inquiries, complaints, and opinions from consumers. Customer opinions and consumer education inquiries are typically answered during the initial contact. Based upon the nature of the problem, the counselor determines if there is a need for investigation requiring contact with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



During 2013, CSD Staff recorded 15,437 contacts. The graph depicts the number of consumer contacts received from 2009 through 2013. A reduction in contacts in the energy industry accounted for most of the reduction in overall contacts from 2011 through 2013 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

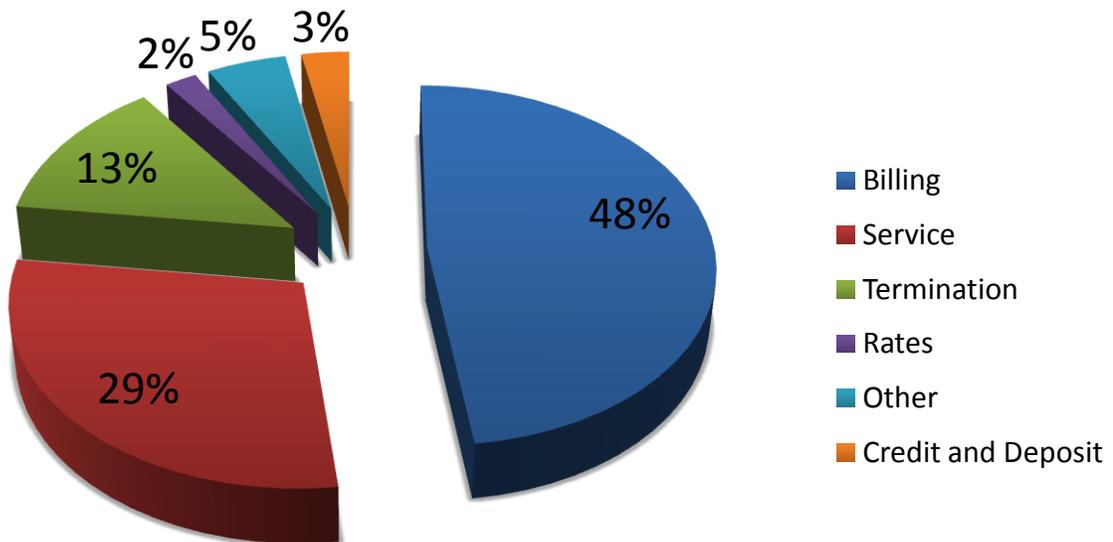


Most of the 15,437 cases recorded (82%) began with a telephone call to CSD's toll-free number.

*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 2013, categorized by problem type. These general categories include billing, credit and deposit, rates, service, termination and other. This graph illustrates that 48% of the contacts opened related to the consumer's bill.



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.

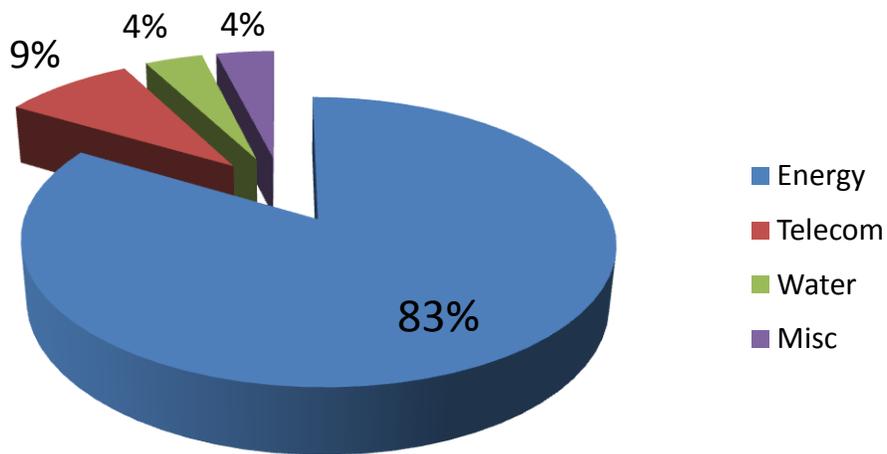
The CSD makes every effort to achieve resolution of disputes between consumers and utilities in the informal process. Of the 15,437 contacts from consumers in 2013, 285 consumers requested formal complaint forms and 55 formal hearings were actually docketed.



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.

2013 Consumer Contacts by Utility Type



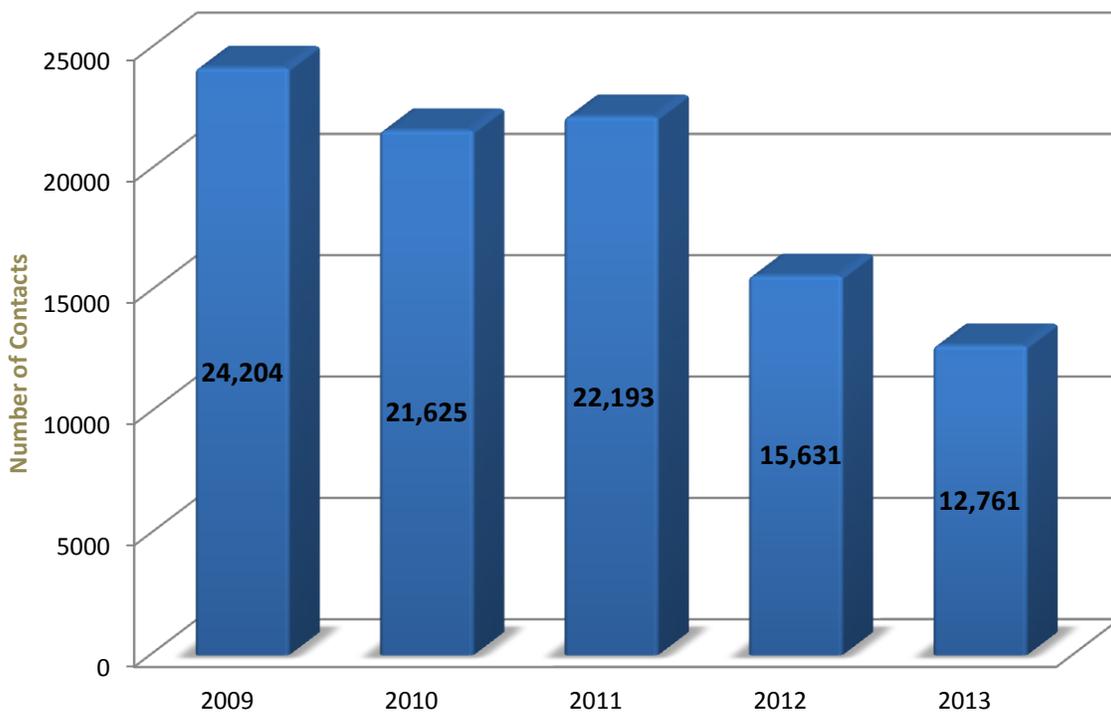
Gas and electric cases combined result in 83% of the total contacts. Contacts pertaining to telecom issues comprise 9% of the total number received during 2013. The water and sewer industry accounts for 4% of the consumer contacts.



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



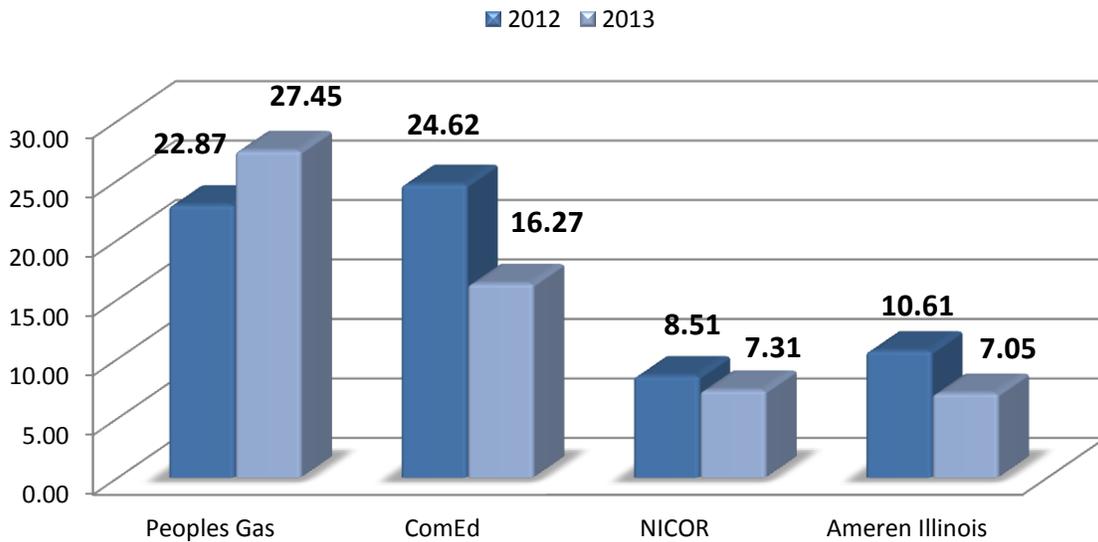
The graph above illustrates the number of consumer contacts that were received each year by the CSD for electric and gas companies from 2009 through 2013. In 2013, there were reductions in contact from customers of Ameren Illinois, ComEd and Nicor Gas. ComEd’s decrease in contacts from 2012 to 2013, is the primary source of the reduction of contacts in the industry. Staff attributes the reduction in complaints to improvements in utilities’ frontline customer interactions, including improvements in call center average wait time and abandoned call rates.



ENERGY INDUSTRY

2013 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, specifically consumer contacts pertaining to payment arrangements in the energy industry.



ENERGY INDUSTRY

2013 Energy Consumer Contacts for Smaller Electric and Gas Companies

Company	Customers*	Contacts
North Shore	147,100	105
MidAmerican	84,900	22
Liberty Energy	22,400	13
Mt. Carmel	3,500	5
Illinois Gas	9,600	2

*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

Response Time

The following table shows a comparison of the average response time for energy companies during 2012 and 2013. 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 2013. 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.

	2012 Response Time (in Days)	2013 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2012 to 2013)
Ameren Illinois	8.9	11.6	2.7
ComEd	6.9	6.9	0
Nicor Gas	9.5	10.5	1
North Shore Gas	5.9	6.4	.5
Peoples Gas	5.8	5.9	.1

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 2012 and 2013.

Comparison of General Categories – 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Billing	7,910	5,756
Credit and Deposit	708	517
Rates	135	98
Service	2,053	2,115
Termination	2,397	1,876
Other	456	384



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 2012 and 2013. CSD closed 10,786 Energy contacts in 2013.

BILLING	2012	2013
Payment Arrangements	4,121	2,955
Responsibility for Account	949	755
Meter- estimates and makeup bills	705	441
Usage/Consumption	504	434

CREDIT/DEPOSIT	2012	2013
Deposit Requirement	338	205
Service Denial	135	167
Deposit Amount/Conditions	118	79

RATES	2012	2013
Opinion- Rate in Effect	33	33
Proposed Rate Change	41	14



ENERGY INDUSTRY

SERVICE	2012	2013
Timeliness- General	690	723
Timeliness- Reconnection or Disconnection	388	445
Conduct of Personnel	335	314
Interruptions	202	172

TERMINATION	2012	2013
Seeks Assistance	1,565	1,263
Medical Certificate	400	252



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 2013 approximately 2,941,540 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. 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.

Nicor Gas reports that approximately 233,611 residential and 39,038 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers through the Customer Select Program during 2013. Peoples Gas indicates that approximately 50,932 residential and 9,574 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers through the Choices For You Program. North Shore Gas reports approximately 10,712 residential and 1,248 non-residential customers chose alternative gas suppliers.

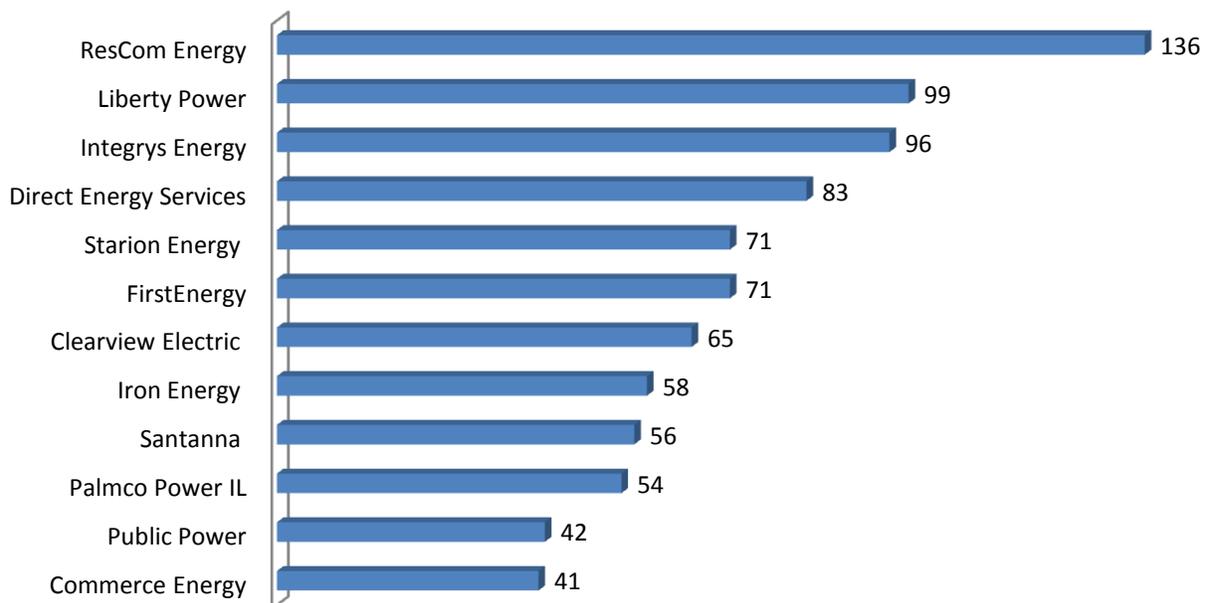


ENERGY INDUSTRY

2013 Consumer Complaints for Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers

The chart below shows the number of informal complaints regarding alternative retail electric suppliers with more than 40 informal residential complaints recorded during 2013. 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 Electric 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.

2013 Informal Alternative Retail Electric Supplier Complaints



2013 Formal Alternative Retail Electric Supplier Complaints

There were no formal alternative retail electric supplier complaints filed in 2013.

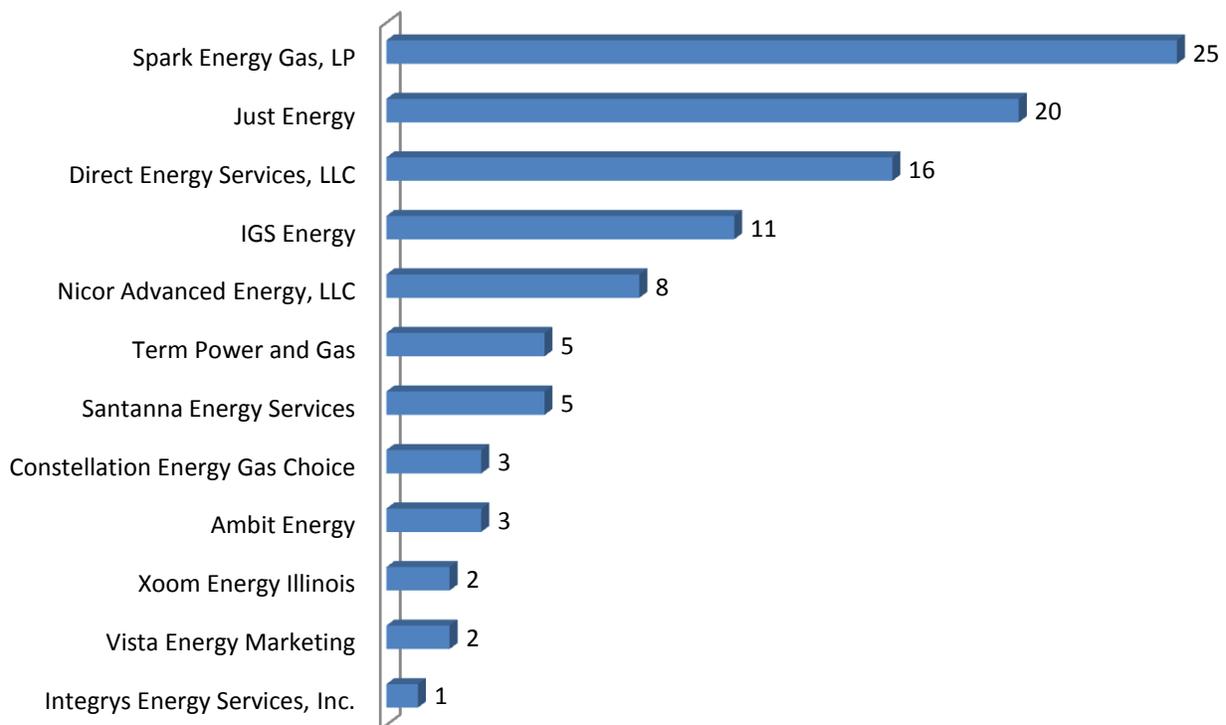


ENERGY INDUSTRY

2013 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. 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.

2013 Informal Alternative Gas Supplier Complaints



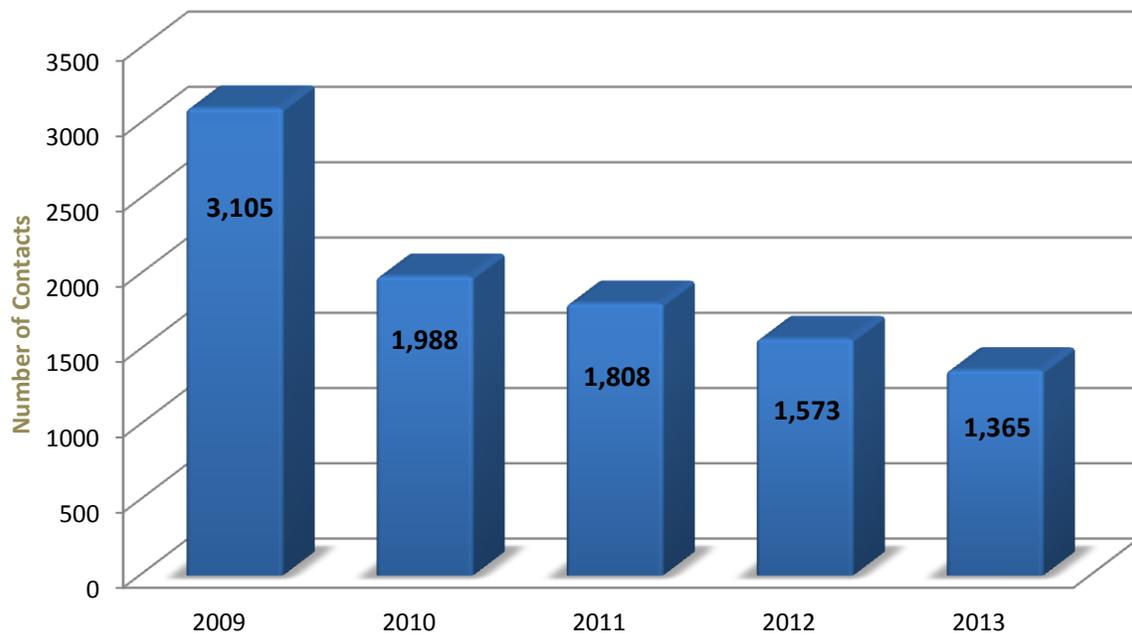
2013 Formal Alternative Gas Supplier Complaints

There were no formal alternative gas supplier complaints filed in 2013.



TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Telecommunications Industry Contacts



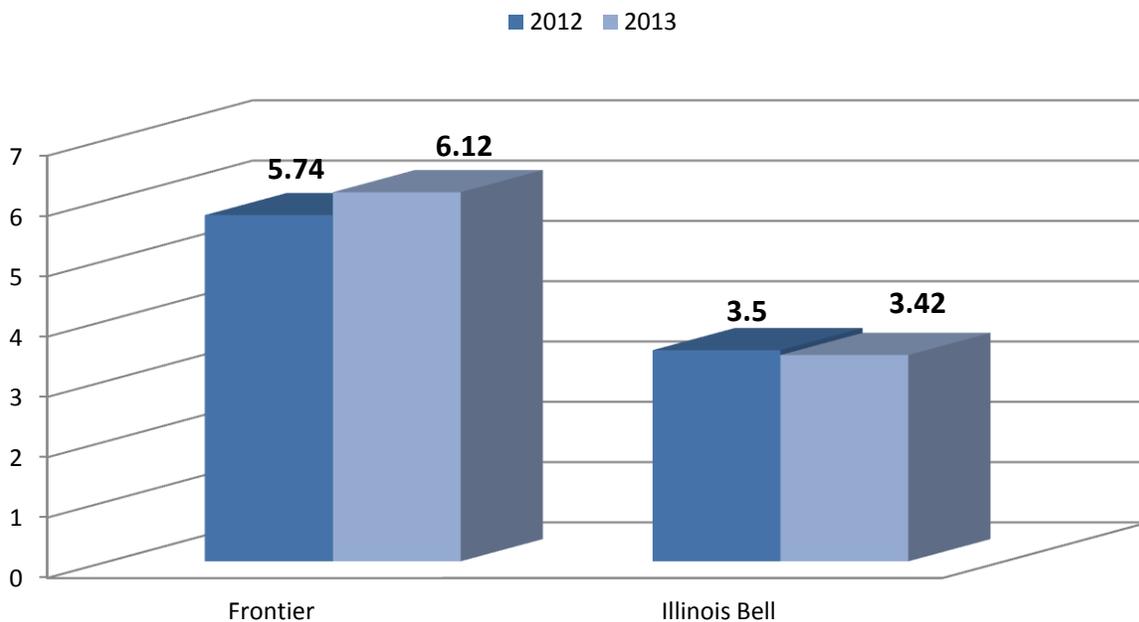
The graph above shows the number of consumer contacts concerning the telecommunications industry that were received each year by CSD from 2009 through 2013.



TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

2013 Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Access Lines

Consumer Contacts per 10,000 Access Lines

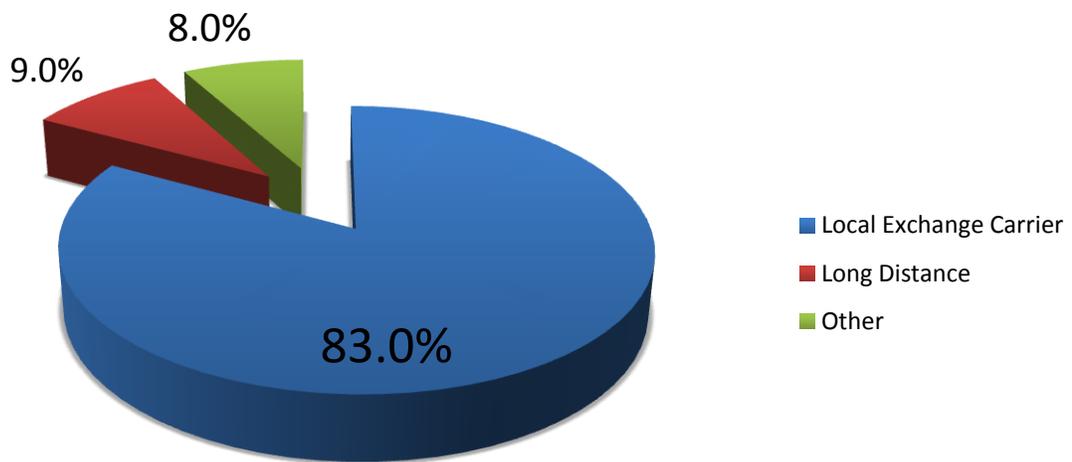


The graph above illustrates the number of contacts per 10,000 access lines that were received for major local exchange carriers for 2013. Access lines include the number of residential and business phone lines used.



TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY
Consumer Contact by Company Type

**2013 Telecommunications
Consumer Contact by Company Type**





TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Response Time

The following tables compare the average response time for telecommunications carriers during 2013. 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 2013. 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

	2012 Response Time (in Days)	2013 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2012 to 2013)
Frontier	11.2	9.8	-1.4
Illinois Bell	11.1	11.8	0.7

Long Distance Carriers

	2012 Response Time (in Days)	2013 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2012 to 2013)
Illinois Bell	14.8	9.6	-5.2



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 2012 and 2013. Billing continues to be the most frequently identified issue.

Comparison of General Categories – 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Billing	770	627
Credit and Deposit	0	5
Rates	17	23
Service	482	432
Termination	86	90
Other	152	105



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 1,293 Telecommunications contacts in 2013.

BILLING	2012	2013
Accuracy- General	131	149
Dispute- Rate Classification/Plan	124	100
Payment- General	138	84
Bill Statement	104	74
Responsibility for Account	69	72
Payment Arrangements	77	58
Usage/Consumption	26	39
Bill for Feature Not Ordered	59	31
Disputed Bill by Other Company	41	19

CREDIT/DEPOSIT	2012	2013
Deposit Amount/Conditions	0	1



TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

RATES	2012	2013
Rate Inquiry	8	10
Rate Structure	7	6

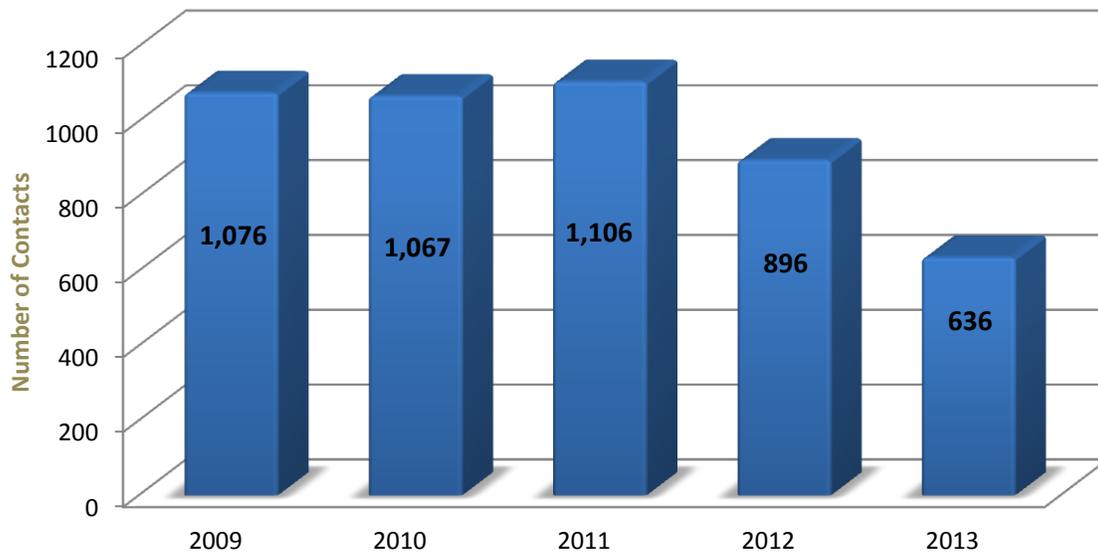
SERVICE	2012	2013
Timeliness of Performed Work	162	143
Quality	121	114
Conduct of Personnel/Reps	75	68
Service Interruptions	40	42
Availability of Features & Equipment	40	34

TERMINATION	2012	2013
Seeks Assistance	61	61



WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

Water and Sewer Industry Contacts



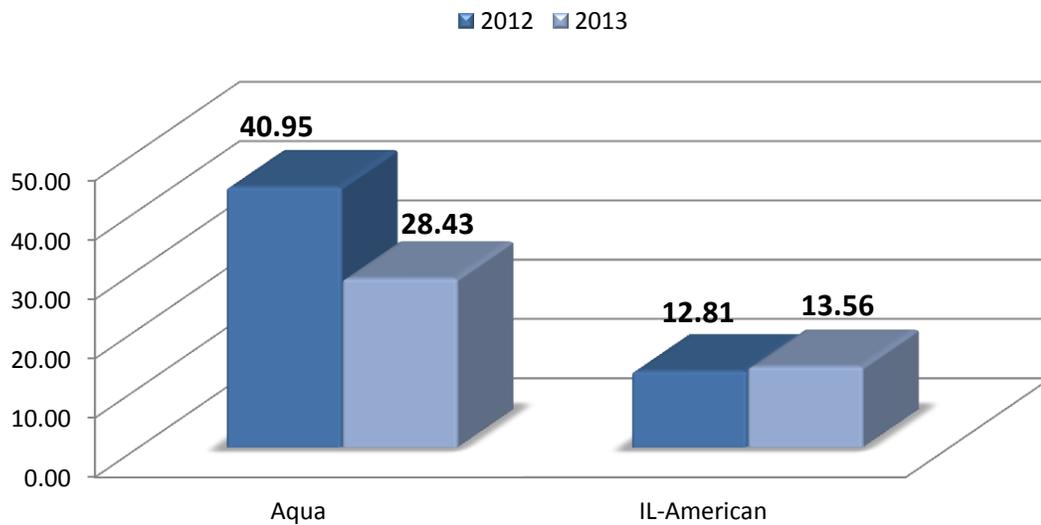
The graph above illustrates the number of consumer contacts that were received each year by CSD for the water and sewer industry from 2009 through 2013. Contacts regarding proposed rate changes decreased significantly in 2012 and 2013 as compared to 2011.



WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

2013 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 2013. Aqua led in the number of contacts per 10,000 customers with a majority of its contacts being issues concerning billing accuracy. Aqua's reduction in contacts per 10,000 is primarily attributable to fewer contacts protesting rates.



WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

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 2013. 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.

	2012 Response Time (in Days)	2013 Response Time (in Days)	Change in Days (2012 to 2013)
Aqua	6.9	7.3	.4
Illinois-American	6.0	11.6	5.6

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 2012 and 2013.

Comparison of General Categories – 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Billing	358	359
Credit and Deposit	6	7
Rates	357	75
Service	71	104
Termination	82	64
Other	20	26



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 635 Water and Sewer contacts in 2013.

BILLING	2012	2013
Accuracy	211	115
Usage/Consumption	114	104
Payment Arrangements	90	53

CREDIT and DEPOSIT	2012	2013
Service Denial	6	5

RATES	2012	2013
Proposed Rate Change	205	42



WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

SERVICE	2012	2013
Timeliness of Performed Service	25	32
Conduct of Personnel	7	13

TERMINATION	2012	2013
Seeks Assistance	43	39



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 2013 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.

During 2013 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.

During 2013 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 2014 and is expected to result in the initiation of a rulemaking.

CSD Staff also participates 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.

CERTIFICATION CASES

In 2013, 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 applications for licensure of Agents, Brokers, and Consultants.



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

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.

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.



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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.



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 percent 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



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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

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 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

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



CONSUMER INFORMATION

INTERNET INFORMATION

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

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

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

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. The ICC's *e-Docket* was developed to process and manage public information about 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 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.



CONSUMER INFORMATION 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 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.



CONSUMER INFORMATION PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Natural Gas Choice Basics: explains what choices are available to customers, how to choose an alternative gas 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.

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
- 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.