



State of Utah
Department of Commerce
Division of Public Utilities

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MEMORANDUM

To: Public Service Commission

From: Division of Public Utilities
Chris Parker, Division Director
Marialie Wright, Customer Service Manager
Cynthia Dumas, Office Specialist II

Date: September 25, 2017

Re: Docket No. 17-057-14, In the matter of Formal Complaint of Kathryn D. Bezyack-Blackett vs. Dominion Energy Utah.

RECOMMENDATION: DISMISS

COMPLAINT ANALYSIS:

On June 29, 2017, the Division of Public Utilities (Division) received and processed Mrs. Bezyack-Blackett's (Complainant) informal complaint against Dominion Energy Utah (Company).

Complainant has had billing problems with the Company. Complainant's monthly bill was \$125 for as long as she can remember. Her February statement showed a balance due of \$22 with a credit of \$345.55. Complainant then contacted the Company and the customer service representative explained that her account was recently re-evaluated and her monthly payments will change to about \$22 per month.

Complainant adds that in May the Company replaced the transponder on her meter. The following month, an amount of \$614 was debited from her account by the Company. Complainant is concerned about the Company's billing practices. Complainant feels that she should not be billed for the billing error caused by the Company's equipment.

COMPANY RESPONSE:

On July 7, 2017, Elia Lopez, Company's Consumer Affairs representative responded to Complainant's informal complaint. Ms. Lopez explained that the Company meters are equipped with both an index and a transponder to record usage. Due to having low usage in March the Company scheduled an inspection for the gas meter and transponder on May 25, 2017. The Company deemed the transponder to be failing after performing the scheduled inspection. The Company adds that because the meter index continued to record accurate usage, the Complainant was not billed for the actual gas used.

On June 2, 2017, the Company sent the Complainant a letter advising of the adjustment, and an itemization showing the amounts that were originally billed, and the corrected billing. Ms. Lopez also included a copy of the Utah Natural Gas Tariff, which states in part, "When incorrect billings occur, the Company will have the right to make billing corrections regardless of the cause of error."

DIVISION REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION:

Complainants' billing was corrected according to the approved Utah Natural Gas Tariff, which states, "A transponder-related billing error is limited to a back-bill of 6 months, and may be paid over 12 months on an interest-free payment arrangement." According to Ms. Lopez, Complainant dropped the budget billing plan and was set up on a DPA installment on July 7, 2017.

It is not apparent that the Company has violated any Commission Administrative Rules, Commission ruling or Company tariff. However, it might be useful for the Commission to consider addressing how the Company responds to a "low usage" situation of the type it described to Complainant in her February call. If, rather than making such a significant change to the billing amount and crediting the account, the Company had initially investigated whether there was an equipment problem, much of the variation in Complainant's billings might have been avoided.