

## STARTING POINT



By Doug Dean  
Director

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) reminds consumers to check posted rates and verify fares with taxi drivers before commencing trips to and from Denver International Airport (DIA).

The PUC established flat-rated fares for airport trips via taxi back in 1999 to simplify the various rate structures used by the metro-area taxi companies in serving the airport and to reduce confusion among both passengers and drivers. The PUC sets maximum rates for taxi service between the airport and four zones—downtown Denver, the Denver Tech Center, Boulder, and Tower Road.

Taxi companies may charge less than the maximum rate if they have a different rate on file with the PUC, but it cannot exceed the maximum flat rate.

Current maximum rates for trips between DIA and various zones are as follows:

- Between DIA and Zone A (downtown Denver) the maximum rate is \$51.
- Between DIA and Zone B (Denver Tech Center) the maximum rate is \$57.
- Between DIA and Zone C (Boulder) the maximum rate is \$84.
- Between DIA and Zone D (Tower Road) the maximum rate is \$24.

In addition, taxis may include access/gate fees as established by DIA (currently \$4.57 for trips originating at the airport). Taxis may not use meters, or include any charge for mileage, waiting time or traffic delay for flat-rated airport trips.

Under PUC rules, a map displaying the four zones and the applicable maximum flat rate to each zone must be posted in each taxi, and drivers are required to inform passengers of the total fare prior to beginning the trip.

All taxi trips to and from destinations outside the four zones must be charged on a metered basis. For example, a trip from a downtown Denver hotel to Union Station cannot be a flat-rated fare, but must use the meter.

The maximum flat rates to and from the airport apply only to taxi companies. The PUC does not regulate rates for transportation network carriers such as Uber and Lyft, or luxury limousines.

If you have a complaint or questions about a taxi fare, you may use the PUC's on-line complaint form at [www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments).

## Xcel electric rate request set for hearing

*Company's proposal would increase rates by net \$153.8 million*

Hearings are scheduled in November at the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on a proposal by Xcel Energy to increase its electric rates by a net \$153.8 million.

The company's proposal, if approved, would increase monthly bills for residential customers by about \$4.46 a month on an annual basis, or about 6.5 percent. Monthly bills for commercial customers would rise by \$6.75, or about 6.7 percent.

Xcel's filing, submitted May 20, seeks a total increase in its electric base rate revenues of approximately \$408 million. Roughly \$249 million of that amount, however, is the result of transfers from three ongoing riders:

- Approximately \$79 million would move to base rates from the Clear Air-Clean Jobs Act rider, which closed coal plants, converted coal plants to natural gas, and installed state-of-the-art equipment to reduce emissions at power plants across the state;
- Approximately \$40 million would move to base rates from the Transmission Cost Adjustment; and
- Approximately \$131 million would be recovered through a General Rate Schedule Adjustment (GRSA) to collect costs associated with the Rush Creek Wind Project that are currently recovered through the company's Electric Commodity Adjustment (ECA).



A main driver of the proposed rate increase, according to Xcel, is \$4.1 billion of investment that the company has made in the last five years, including investments in next-generation technology to strengthen and improve the resiliency of the electric grid. Benefits of these investments include faster outage restoration times, meters that provide real-time information to help customers adjust usage and save money, and the infrastructure needed to serve more than 80,000 additional residential customers since the last review in 2014.

Additional components of the proposal include accelerating wildfire safety, prevention and mitigation efforts and upgrading infrastructure to reduce the risk of damage due to wildfires; and an initiative to help commu-

nities and businesses achieve their sustainability goals through better tracking of their use of renewable energy.

Xcel is seeking a 10.35 percent return on equity (ROE), up from the current 9.83 percent. The ROE is the profit that a utility is authorized to earn on its investments. The PUC sets a maximum ROE, but it is not guaranteed.

The evidentiary hearing is scheduled to run November 4–8 and 12–13 at the PUC. The company is looking for new rates to take effect on January 1, 2020.

Members of the public may submit written comments about the proposal by using the PUC's on-line comment form at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/puc/puccomments) under proceeding number 19AL-0268E.

## Tri-State resource plan rules proposed

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has issued proposed rules governing electric resource planning for wholesale electric cooperatives.

Senate Bill 19-236, signed by Governor Jared Polis in May, requires the PUC to develop new rules that address applications from wholesale electric cooperatives for PUC approval of their integrated or electric resource plans. In developing such rules, the PUC must consider, among other factors, whether wholesale electric cooperatives service a multi-state oper-

ational jurisdiction, have a non-for-profit ownership structure, and have a resource plan that meets the energy policy goals of Colorado.

The PUC's proposed rules, issued July 31, build substantively on the stakeholder process already applicable to Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, while taking into account differences between wholesale electric cooperatives and Colorado's investor-owned electric utilities.

Interested persons will have opportunities to submit written comments

on the proposed rules, and to provide oral comments at a hearing scheduled for 9 a.m. on October 15 at the PUC.

Written comments may be submitted by using the PUC's on-line comment form at [www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments) under proceeding number 19R-0408E.

Visit [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc\\_legislation\\_implementation](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc_legislation_implementation) to access the proposed rules and for updates on all PUC proceedings related to 2019 legislation.

## Proposed telecom rules protect open internet

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) issued proposed changes in August to its telecommunications rules to protect an open internet.

Senate Bill 19-078, signed by Governor Jared Polis this spring, requires the PUC to take action upon learning that the Broadband Deployment Board has found that an Internet Service Provider (ISP) engaged in certain practices that interfere with the open internet. The proposed revisions to the telecom rules establish the process and direction for the PUC to comply with the new law.

The new law declares that an ISP is no longer eligible to receive High Cost

Support Mechanism grant money if the broadband board determines the ISP interferes with net neutrality by blocking any lawful internet content, application, services or devices; engaging in paid prioritization; regulating network traffic by throttling bandwidth or otherwise impairs or degrades lawful internet traffic; or failing or refusing to disclose its network management practices.

If the broadband board finds an ISP has violated the law, the PUC must issue a written order requiring the ISP to refund any high cost fund money that the ISP has received in the prior 24 months.

Interested persons have the opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed rules, and to provide oral comments at a hearing scheduled for 9 a.m. on October 21 at the PUC.

Interested persons may submit written comments by using the PUC's on-line comment form at [www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments) under proceeding number 19R-0458T.

Visit [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc\\_legislation\\_implementation](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc_legislation_implementation) to access the proposed rules and for updates on all PUC proceedings related to 2019 legislation.

# Complaint unit nets consumer savings

The Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) External Affairs section secured \$1.7 million in credits and refunds on behalf of utility customers during the 2018-19 fiscal year, according to the section's annual consumer assistance summary.

The section works to resolve disputes between customers and utilities, including transportation companies. For the 12 months ending June 30, the Consumer Assistance unit fielded 4,911 calls, a decrease from 5,700 calls in the previous fiscal year. More than half of the calls were resolved or answered by staff without the need to refer them to a utility or transportation company.

In all, the consumer assistance staff addressed inquiries regarding 240 different telecommunications, gas, electric, water and transportation companies in its efforts to resolve a wide

variety of consumer concerns. The unit took in 1,795 contacts and closed 1,812 for the fiscal year, compared to 2,021 contacts and 1,983 closed contacts a year ago.

A contact is a phone call, letter, email or on-line complaint that requires some follow-up action from the consumer assistance staff. The number of contacts received and closed is not the same because a contact is not necessarily opened and closed within the same fiscal year.

The unit resolved 98.0 percent of its contacts within 15 business days for the fiscal year.

For the most recent fiscal year, the section closed 529 complaints concerning Xcel Energy (Public Service Company of Colorado), up from 476 contacts during the previous fiscal year. The PUC closed 233 complaints

related to Qwest (CenturyLink QC), compared to last year's total of 386.

When closing a contact, the staff determines the appropriate category. If the consumer files a general inquiry requiring follow-up by a specialist, the contact is closed as an "information" request. If the complaint is in opposition to a proposed rate increase or a utility's service or actions, it is counted as an "objection." When the staff determines that a utility has not complied with PUC rules or regulations, the complaint is closed as "not in compliance."

The section also handled a total of 293 media contacts and issued 14 news releases for the fiscal year.

The complete 2018-19 consumer assistance summary is available on the PUC website at [www.colorado.gov/dora/puc](http://www.colorado.gov/dora/puc) under the "For Consumers" tab.

## POSITIVE CHARGES

The Colorado PUC's application for a \$2.3 million federal grant to upgrade the state's 9-1-1 network was approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Commerce in August.

With \$1.6 million in matching funds already approved by the PUC, the grant will allow every local 9-1-1 governing authority in the state to be reimbursed for their non-recurring charges for the migration to an IP-based core infrastructure, which is the first step toward implementing Next Generation 911 (NG911). A fully deployed NG911 network will allow Colorado's 9-1-1 call centers to accept not only voice calls, but also data from 9-1-1 callers.

Congratulations to **Daryl Branson** and the PUC telecom section for working to secure this grant.

The PUC hosted 11 Colorado university students in June as part of the Colorado Science & Engineering Policy Fellowship program sponsored by State Rep. Chris Hansen and State Sen. Bob Rankin. The fellowship, in its second year, is designed to give policy-making experience to undergraduate and graduate students with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and mathematics through writing, research, seminars and industry site visits.

Kudos to PUC staffers **Drew Bolin**, **Eric Haglund**, **James Lester** and **Seina Soufianni** for putting together an informative program for the students.

Congratulations to several PUC staffers for recent promotions to new positions. **Erin O'Neill** was named Section Head of the Economists, and **Gabe Dusenbury** was named the new Section Head of the Rate Financial Analysts. **Vanessa Condra** was named Manager of the Rates & Authorities and the Administrative Support units in the Transportation section. And **Jennifer Adamitis** was promoted to Administrative Assistant II in the Transportation Support unit.

A big pat on the back goes to **Raenette Rodriguez** in the Transportation Rates & Authorities section for her diligent work to ensure that Colorado collected its full allotment under the federal Unified Carrier Registration system (UCR). Colorado motor carriers paid \$1,801,615 for the 2019 registration year.

Welcome to new PUC employee **Joe McCabe**, an engineer in the Fixed Utilities section.



Joe McCabe

## INSIDE CONNECTIONS

Engineers have a language of their own and at the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) that is especially true of **Cindy-Rose Terry**.

Terry, who was born and raised in the Philippines, speaks fluent Tagalog, a language whose standardized form (Filipino) is the national language of the Philippines, and is one of the country's two official languages, alongside English.

"Not a lot of people know that all kids in the Philippines take English as a class, every year starting in first grade. When you go to college, almost all our textbooks are in English—how else could we translate pi, tangent, derivative, logarithm, etc.?" Terry said in engineering jest.

Terry is a State Safety Oversight Engineer for the PUC's Rail and Transit Safety Section, a program mandated by Congress to oversee the safety and security of rail fixed guideway systems. For Colorado, that means the Regional Transportation District's light rail system. In her role, she inspects, investigates, analyzes data, and audits transit agency safety plans, and maintains safety oversight over rail fixed

guideway system operations, design, construction and maintenance.

"What I like about my job are my team, the combination of office and field visits, the training and all the people at the PUC—they are all nice and professional," Terry said.

Terry graduated at the age of 20 from the University of Santo Tomas, Philippines, with a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. She took both her Engineer-in-Training (EIT) and Professional Engineer (PE) exams in the United States. Prior to coming to the PUC, she worked as a Project Engineer for a private firm, designing roadways, water systems, sewer systems and drainage systems for 20 years.

Terry started at the PUC in September of 2017, and has taken extensive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) certification training over the past two years to prepare for her new role.

Terry and her husband have three children—ages 21, 18 and 7, and love to travel, with a goal of visiting at least two countries a year. She also enjoys Karaoke, which she considers a Filipino national pastime, and taking professional pictures (mostly prom



Cindy-Rose Terry

and senior photos) for people.

She strives on a daily basis to live out the biblical teachings of not judging others and being quick to listen and slow to speak.

"When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know," she said. "But if you listen, you may learn something new."

*(Inside Connections will feature a PUC employee each edition as selected by PUC section chiefs.)*

## Portal tracks 2019 legislation implementation

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has created an on-line portal to provide easy access to all information related to actions taken to implement 2019 legislation directed at the PUC. The webpage will provide a convenient repository for information about all rulemakings, investigations and other proceedings opened by the PUC to implement the policies and directives of the General Assembly.

The 2019 legislative session resulted in the passage of a number of bills involving the PUC, including Senate Bill 236, which reauthorized the PUC for seven years while adding various requirements related to clean energy planning, energy impact bonds, and wholesale electric cooperative resource planning. The legislature also approved a number of other bills in 2019 that require PUC implementation.

From the webpage, interested parties

can find links to all of the PUC-related bills, as well as descriptions of projects that will be undertaken to meet the requirements of the new laws. Links to news releases, decisions and other documents, as well as ways for the public to participate in the proceedings, will be posted as work progresses.

The 2019 legislation implementation page can be found at [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc\\_legislation\\_implementation](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc_legislation_implementation).



*Economist Eric Haglund addresses students from the Colorado Science & Engineering Policy Fellowship program during the group's visit to the PUC in June. The program provides policy-making experience to college students with STEM backgrounds.*



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Regulatory Agencies  
Public Utilities Commission

CONNECTIONS is the newsletter of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. It covers Commission cases and actions of importance to consumers, utilities, consumer groups, and decision makers.

Comments, suggestions, and requests for more information should be directed to:

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# Xcel seeks approval of electric vehicle charging tariff

A PUC Administrative Law Judge will conduct a hearing September 23–24 on a proposal by Xcel Energy to implement a new rate structure for electric vehicle charging for large commercial and industrial customers.

Xcel filed a request on May 25 to implement a new, time-of-use tariff that would be available to large commercial and industrial customers charging their own electric vehicles or who provide a charging service to third parties for a fee. Xcel stated that the proposed tariff would not directly affect any other service or customer class.

Currently, most fleet and public fast charging uses Xcel's existing Secondary General (SG) and Secondary General Low-Load Factor (SG-L) rates. The proposed tariff makes key design changes, including (1) a shift to a time-of-use energy price structure; (2) a significantly reduced demand charge, and (3) a critical peak pricing element.

"The current rate structure makes developing charging facilities more economically challenging, and also may be a disincentive to fleet electrification. Our proposal is designed to correct for that," Xcel stated in its application.

The proposal aligns with Governor Jared Polis' Executive Order, issued in January of this year, to support wide-



*Xcel Energy is seeking approval of a new rate structure for electric vehicle charging that would be available for large commercial and industrial customers. Hearings on the proposal are scheduled for September 23-24 at the PUC. (Photo by Dennis Schroeder/NREL).*

spread transportation electrification, as well as Senate Bill 19-077 which, in part, directs utilities to propose new electric vehicle charging rates for commercial and industrial customers by May of 2020.

PUC staff requested a hearing on the proposal to further investigate the reasonableness of the various compo-

nents of the proposed rate structure, the robustness of the load data used to establish the rate, and to evaluate any potential cross-subsidization between customers who take service under the rate and those who don't.

Xcel has requested a January 1, 2020 effective date for the new tariff.

All documents associated with the

proposal can be found in the PUC's E-Filings system [https://www.dora.state.co.us/pls/efi/EFI\\_Search\\_UI.search](https://www.dora.state.co.us/pls/efi/EFI_Search_UI.search) by entering 19AL-0290E in the Proceeding Number box.

Comments on the proposal may be filed prior to the hearing via the PUC website at [www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments).

## Xcel provides bill credits for service quality misses

Xcel Energy was expected to issue bill credits of \$397,431 to Colorado customers for missing electric service quality standards in 2018.

The credits are required under the Quality of Service Monitoring and Reporting Plan, which was established by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) in 2007. The plan provides for bill credits of up to a possible \$11 million annually depending on how the company performs in reliability and other categories.

Under the plan, a reliability threshold is established for each of Xcel energy's nine operating regions, and bill credits are payable to customers

within an operating region if the company's performance fails to meet the standard for two consecutive years.

Under 2018 results reported in April, Xcel met the reliability standard in eight of its nine regions, including Denver, Boulder, Front Range, Greeley, High Plains, Mountain, Northern and Western regions. It fell below the required standard for the San Luis Valley region, and because it also missed the standard in 2017, it was expected to refund \$121,081 to customers in that region, or about \$5.06 per customer.

Xcel received a warning in 2017 for missing reliability standards in its

Mountain region. But because it met the standard for that region in 2018, no refunds were required.

The service quality plan also contains thresholds to measure the level of service delivered to individual customers. Xcel is required to issue a \$50 bill credit to each customer who experiences more than five outages a year lasting longer than five minutes, or for each instance in which electric service is not restored within 24 hours following an interruption. Certain major events, such as major storms and other interruptions beyond the company's control are excluded.

For 2018, the company had 5,329

customers who experienced five or more sustained outages for a total credit of \$266,450. It also reported 198 customers, nearly all of them in the Denver region, experiencing outages of 24 hours or more, for a total credit of \$9,900.

The service quality plan also measures the company's telephone response times and PUC complaint levels, and provides up to \$1 million in credits in each category if the thresholds are exceeded. For 2018, Xcel met the standards in both categories.

Xcel files its service quality results on April 1 for the previous calendar year. Any bill credits are to be issued during the July billing cycle.

## Decision on Black Hills gas case expected early next year

A decision is not expected until early next year on a proposal by Black Hills Colorado Gas to increase natural gas base rates by approximately \$2.5 million, or 3.5 percent, above its current annual revenues.

A week-long hearing was held in August before an administrative law judge (ALJ), who will issue a recommended decision on the proposal to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). The ALJ also scheduled an additional day of hearing on October 24 to take testimony on cost-of-service matters.

Black Hills Colorado Gas is the entity created by the consolidation of Black Hills Gas Utility and Black Hills Gas Distribution (formerly SourceGas) last fall. The rate proposal, filed in February, seeks to combine base rates, general tariffs, gas cost adjustments, construction allowances, existing revenue riders and extension policies of the two former utility companies.

The company also is proposing to combine the three existing base rate areas into two newly-defined rate areas, and the seven existing gas cost adjustment (GCA) areas into three newly-defined GCA regions.

While the overall impact of the proposal would increase company revenues by 3.5 percent, residential and small commercial customers of Black Hills

Colorado Gas could see either monthly increases (up to 8 percent) or decreases (down by 8 percent) on their bills, depending on their current rate area.

Black Hills Colorado Gas serves territories on both the western slope—including the towns of Glenwood Springs, Aspen, Snowmass, Delta, Montrose, Ouray, Telluride, Bayfield and Pagosa Springs—and in eastern Colorado—including the towns of Castle Rock, Monument, Woodland Park, Fountain, Firestone, Erie, Akron, Yuma, Limon, Burlington, Ordway, Fowler and La Junta.

Black Hills Colorado Gas is asking for a 10.3 percent return on equity (ROE), up from its currently authorized 9.6 percent. The ROE is the profit that a utility is authorized to earn on its investments. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) sets a maximum ROE, but it is not guaranteed.

The company also is proposing to establish a new adjustment mechanism—the Distribution System Integrity Rider—to recover the costs, between rate cases, of investments related to the company's safety programs to improve system data and to accelerate the replacement of higher risk pipe. The new rider is proposed to become effective on March 1, 2020, to recover costs incurred in 2019 and 2020.

## Hearings slated for November in Xcel gas rate design case

Hearings are scheduled in November at the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on Xcel Energy's Phase II rate case for its natural gas operations.

The proposal would not increase the company's overall revenue requirement, but changes how the costs of providing gas service are allocated among the various Xcel customer classes.

A PUC Administrative Law Judge has scheduled formal evidentiary hearings on the proposal for November 14, 15 and 18 at the PUC. The company is seeking new rates to be placed into effect by March 1, 2020.

The principal purpose of the case is to eliminate the current General Rate Schedule Adjustment (GRSA) of about \$22 million and roll those costs into revised base rates for all customers. Public Service also seeks to implement other revised rates, charges, and terms and conditions, especially for its commercial transportation customers that buy their gas commodity from competitive suppliers.

In total, the proposed new base rates are designed to recover the annual gas department net revenue requirement of about \$473.8 million, which reflects the \$22 million base rate

revenue increase previously approved by the PUC in 2018. Additionally, the company seeks to recover \$150,000 from transportation customers through the Service and Facilities charges on an annual basis for the Public Service Gas Affordability program.

The company estimates that the typical monthly gas bill for residential customers will increase from \$44.05 to \$44.34 based on the proposed changes, including an increase in the monthly Service and Facilities charge from \$11.15 to \$14.15. Monthly bills for small commercial customers would decrease from \$180.12 to \$176.77, despite an increase in the Service and Facilities charge from \$32.08 to \$45.58.

Parties to this proceeding include Xcel Energy, PUC staff, the Office of Consumer Counsel, Energy Outreach Colorado, Atmos Energy, WoodRiver Energy, Colorado Natural Gas, Tiger Natural Gas, Climax Molybdenum Company and Black Hills Colorado Gas.

Members of the public may submit written comments about the proposal by using the PUC's on-line comment form at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/puc/puccomments) under proceeding number 19AL-0309G.

# PUC approves surcharge hikes for two 911 authorities

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has approved requests by Eagle County E-911 Emergency Telephone Services Authority and Ouray Emergency Telephone Service Authority to increase monthly E-911 surcharges.

The PUC in May granted Eagle County authority's request to increase the monthly surcharge from \$1.25 to \$1.65. The authority provides funding to the Vail Public Safety Communications Center, which provides emergency telephone services in the Eagle Valley portion of Eagle County.

In its application, the Eagle County authority said an increase is needed to maintain a 911 system with the capacity necessary to handle calls from its large

tourist population, noting that per the U.S. Census Bureau only 56 percent of its residential units were occupied by permanent residents in 2016. Additionally, the Eagle County authority is purchasing a 911 phone system replacement and additional workstation consoles this year.

The increase is expected to provide sufficient 911 funding for at least the next five years.

In July, the PUC granted the Ouray authority's request to increase its monthly 911 surcharge from \$0.70 to \$1.25.

The Ouray authority does not provide its own 911 call-taking and dispatching services, but rather has an inter-govern-

mental agreement with the Montrose Emergency Telephone Service Authority (METSA), which in turn funds the Western Colorado Regional Dispatch Center (WCRDC) in Montrose. The WCRDC takes 911 calls and dispatches first responders for Ouray County as part of this arrangement.

The Ouray authority board requested the surcharge increase to pay increased costs of its payments to METSA for dispatching services. The increase is expected to provide adequate funding to at least the next five years.

Land-line and wireless customers in Colorado pay a monthly surcharge to fund the equipment and operational expenses of the 9-1-1 system. Individual

authority boards establish the amount needed to cover the costs of equipment, personnel and access to telephone lines. The surcharge is collected by the telephone provider and passed on to authority boards.

Under Colorado law, a 9-1-1 authority may assess a surcharge of up to 70 cents per customer per month for emergency telephone services without permission from the PUC. Anything above that amount requires PUC approval.

The Eagle County and Ouray requests are the second and third 911 surcharge increases approved by the PUC in 2019. Six requests by authority boards throughout Colorado for surcharge increases were approved in 2018.

## Relay surcharge jumps from 4 to 6 cents on October 1

The telephone surcharge that is used to support the Colorado Telephone Users with Disabilities Fund (TUDF) will increase from 4 cents per access line per month to 6 cents per line on October 1.

The surcharge, identified on monthly bills as the "Colorado Telecommunications Relay Service Surcharge," provides funding for Relay Colorado, a free service that provides full telephone access to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled.

The current relay surcharge of 4 cents has been in effect since March 1, 2018. Since then, certain trends and events have taken place, including an additional \$1.1 million in appropriations from the TUDF fund for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. These appropriations include an additional \$700,000 appropriated annually to the Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Cash Fund for the Rural Interpreting Services project;

an increase in the Reading Services for the Blind Cash Fund from \$360,000 to \$510,000 annually; and a new appropriation of \$250,000 to the Talking Book Library.

In August, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which administers the Relay program, determined the two-cent increase was needed to pay all direct and indirect expenses of the program, fund the additional appropriations directed by the legislature, and maintain a sufficient fund balance.

The relay program was created by the Colorado Legislature in 1989. The statute placed jurisdiction for administering the fund and setting the surcharge with the PUC. In 2016, the legislature expanded the number of customers obligated to pay the relay surcharge from those customers receiving telecommunications services from voice service providers using traditional wired telephone access lines to also include customer receiving

telecommunications services from both wireless and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) providers.

Relay Colorado allows text-telephone (TTY) users to communicate with regular telephone users through trained relay

operators. The operator will dial the requested number and relay the conversation between the two callers. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To use Relay Colorado, simply dial 711.

## Xcel proposes 2-year course for renewable energy programs

Xcel Energy is proposing a two-year roadmap for its renewable energy programs that it says will advance its efforts toward a more sustainable energy future and less carbon-intensive fuel sources.

The company on June 28 filed its 2020-21 Renewable Energy Compliance Plan, which it describes as a "bridge plan" that largely continues existing programs while potential Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rule changes and other factors are resolved.

Under the state's renewable energy standard, Xcel must provide 30 percent of its electricity through renewable sources by 2020. All customers pay a 2 percent monthly surcharge on electric bills to fund renewable programs to meet the standard.

Xcel has met Colorado's statutory Renewable Energy Standard (RES) requirements every year since the inception of the RES, and the company states it will continue to exceed the RES requirements in the foreseeable future. Its 2020-21 compliance plan proposes a measured increase in renewable energy programs and related customer choice market activities.

"The company's overall strategy with this plan is to continue the progress we have made to date while proposing some minor modifications to our programs and offerings in order to 'right size' them to customer demand," Xcel stated in its application.

With regards to Solar\*Rewards, Xcel proposes to:

- Obtain up to 52.35 megawatts (MW) of solar capacity for each year in 2020 and 2021;
- Keep incentive payment levels for Solar\*Rewards Small and Medium programs at 2019 levels;
- Double the annual Solar\*Rewards Large capacity from 10 MW to 20MW, based on "robust demand for the large offering;
- Maintain Rooftop Low-Income Solar, implemented in conjunction with the Colorado Energy Office, at 3.5 kW per year;
- Obtain up to 48 MW of solar capacity each year through its Solar\*Rewards Community program;
- Develop a total of 8 MW of additional company-offered Community Solar Gardens each year that will be offered exclusively to eligible low-income customers.

For its Windsource program, Xcel anticipates no pricing changes from the 2017-19 plan. Xcel also states that the Renewable\*Connect program is fully subscribed and no expansion is anticipated in the 2020-21 plan.

Concurrent with its application, Xcel filed a motion to extend the 2017-19 plan through the first quarter of 2020, in the event that the PUC does not issue a decision on the application prior to the expiration of the current plan.

On August 7, the PUC assigned the proceeding to an administrative law judge to conduct hearings and issue a recommended decision.

## PUC seeks stakeholder input on rail safety fining authority

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is soliciting input from stakeholders about how to implement fining authority for railroad crossing safety matters granted by the passage of Senate Bill 19-236.

The bill, which reauthorized the PUC for seven years, added a provision allowing the Commission to impose a civil penalty of up to \$2,000 per offense on railroad companies that fail to comply with a PUC order or rule on railroad crossing safety.

Written comment was due August 15 about what should be included when it initiates a rulemaking to imple-

ment the fining authority. PUC staff also intends to conduct workshops and webinars that would allow statewide participation from towns and cities, counties, state agencies, railroads and other interested entities.

The information received from this stakeholder input process will be used to develop proposed rules that will be issued in a separate proceeding at a later date.

Interested persons can still provide written comments by using the PUC's on-line comment form at [www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pacific/puc/puccomments) under proceeding number 19M-0379R.



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