

2009-548

Public Service Commission
PO Box 615
Frankfort, KY 40602

March 5, 2010

Dear Public Service Commission,

I am writing to complain about Kentucky Utilities. On March 2, 2010, a technician from KU arrived to turn off our electric. Apparently, our bill was two weeks overdue. I went out to speak with the technician and explained that I didn't realize that our bill was unpaid. Typically, I pay the bill online. I told him I would do that immediately, and I could give him a confirmation number in two minutes. He said he wasn't allowed to accept that and proceeded to turn our electric off.

I immediately called KU customer service. I was put on hold for 30 minutes, and then directed to the billing department, where I waited another 30 minutes to speak with someone. They directed me to their bill paying service, where I again waited on hold. Then I had to call back to confirm...another 20 minutes on hold. I said that we had children in our home, one with health issues, and I needed to know when the electric would be back on. I was then told that they could not give me any idea when the technician would return, because they had no way to contact him. (Nonsense!) I said that certainly KU had a way of contacting the technician to give me a time frame; however, the customer service rep said that they wouldn't do that. She said that all she could tell me was that it could take up to 24 hours. I then asked to speak with a supervisor. The rep said that I would have to leave my name and number for the supervisor to call back. I finally agreed to that, and we were then disconnected. No supervisor ever called me. Our electric was turned back on that afternoon, but I was extremely unhappy with their customer service. Customer service should actually provide a service, not just give robotic responses!

KU is a company that sells a product that everyone needs, and they have no competition. This puts them in a position of power over their customers that no other business has. This allows them to treat their customers dismissively and inhumanely.

Electricity is an essential service that people need to go about their daily life. Turning off a person's electricity should be the absolute last resort. No other business would get away with using the aggressive collection practices that KU uses. I have lived in other cities, and I have never seen a utility company get away with the things KU does. **The temperature was below freezing that day.** Many other states have laws protecting people from having their electric turned off when it's freezing cold outside. This causes families undue hardship! Why does Kentucky lack this law? Why do consumers have no rights with the utility company?? They should send a second notice or even an automated phone call before they turn off a person's electric. Instead, they send one notice, and a few days later, they're turning it off. **This is overly punitive to the customer.** As my story above illustrates, I was prepared to pay my bill right then, but KU doesn't allow this. Why not? If their goal was to simply be paid for services rendered, there would be no reason not to accept my payment. Instead, first they exploit the customer through reconnection fees and security deposits. Then they get to "spank" the bad

customer by putting them through hell by completely disrupting their life, putting them on eternal hold, possibly endangering their children, and leaving them hanging in limbo.

Let's weigh the impact of KU getting their money two weeks late against the risk of shutting off a family's electric for up to 24 hours in below freezing weather. Do I need to point out that these are not equal?! Given the extreme imbalance of power between KU and the absent minded mom who forgot to pay the electric bill on time, they should be a little more tolerant of the occasional late payment. Instead, they turn off people's electric without thought, and then won't allow customer service to tell people when they can expect it to be turned back on.

The Public Service Commission offers the only hope for some balance of power in the customer-KU relationship.

I propose that other measures be taken before electric service is cut off...perhaps a second notice?...an automated phone call? Also, when a person has been a customer for years, shutting off electric because a bill is 15 days overdue seems kind of extreme.

Also, unless an electric outage is caused by an unavoidable act of God, they should be able to tell people when their power will be restored with a two-hour time frame. They know exactly how many customers will be without power, and what it will take to turn it back on.

I understand that KU is now asking for another rate increase. They will likely get whatever they want, and the consumer will have no choice but to dish it out. This will allow them to continue to treat their customers like faceless, powerless blobs. They already gave themselves an increase through their aggressive, punitive fees. They already have late fees, reconnection fees, and security deposits they hit customers with. In this economy, where families are struggling to get by, KU is part of the problem!

Thank you for taking the time to read this. KU's monopoly is no good for consumers!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise K. Leonard".

Denise K. Leonard
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Brooksville, KY 41004