

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Eleanor Hickerson,)	
)	
Complainant,)	
v.)	Case No. GC-2007-0450
)	
Laclede Gas Company,)	
Respondent.)	

LACLEDE GAS COMPANY’S ANSWER TO COMPLAINT

COMES NOW Laclede Gas Company (“Laclede” or “Company”), pursuant to the Commission’s June 5, 2007 Notice of Complaint in the above captioned case, and submits its Answer to the Complaint filed against Laclede by Eleanor Hickerson (“Ms. Hickerson” or the “Customer”). In support thereof, Laclede states as follows:

1. In Ms. Hickerson’s complaint, she expresses difficulty in paying her gas bills and she hopes that relief will be provided in the form of a billing error that resulted in an overbilling of her account. In response to Ms. Hickerson’s high-bill complaint, Laclede performed an investigation at her home, and found that the metering and billing were correct, and that the source of Ms. Hickerson’s increased bills was a water leak that caused excessive use of her water heater. In the period since the leak was identified, Ms. Hickerson’s usage has decreased dramatically.

2. In response to Ms. Hickerson’s allegations in section 2 of her complaint, Laclede denies that Ms. Hickerson’s account was overbilled. Laclede admits that, in September 2006, it sent a service representative to the customer’s home to investigate the source of higher billings that appeared to begin in early 2006, and continued through the summer of 2006. Laclede admits that, as a result of its investigation, it informed the

customer that the meter was in proper working order and that a water leak was the source of her problem.

3. Laclede accepts the customer's allegation that she repaired the plumbing sometime after Laclede's high-bill investigation, but Laclede denies that the customer continued to receive high use bills after the investigation. Specifically, the customer experienced the following usage during the seven month period between November and June:

November to June	Usage in CCF
2004-05	943
2005-06	1237
September 19, 2006	Laclede identifies water leak as source of high gas bills.
2006-07	823

4. Laclede is without information or belief to respond to the customer's allegations as to her age, marital status, or race. Laclede admits that the customer's current balance is \$2136.40. Laclede admits that it encouraged the customer to seek assistance from community action agencies or other charitable organizations. Laclede is without information or belief regarding the substance of the customer's discussions with these organizations.

5. Ms. Hickerson has regularly entered into Cold Weather Rule arrangements, but has not kept up with the payment schedules in the recent past. It is possible that she could benefit from participation in Laclede's Low-Income Program.

6. Laclede denies each and every allegation in the complaint not admitted herein.

WHEREFORE, Laclede respectfully requests that the Commission accept Laclede's Answer and find that the Company has violated no laws, or rules, decisions, or orders of the Commission in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rick Zucker

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Certificate of Service

The undersigned certifies that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Answer was served on the Complainant, the General Counsel of the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel on this 5th day of July, 2007 by United States mail, hand-delivery, email, or facsimile.

/s/ Gerry Lynch