

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

In the Matter of Atmos Energy)
Corporation's Tariff Revision Designed to)
Consolidate Rates and Implement a)
General Rate Increase for Natural Gas)
Service in the Missouri Service Area of)
the Company.)

Case No. GR-2006-0387

**PUBLIC COUNSEL'S RESPONSE
TO ORDER DIRECTING FILING**

COMES NOW the Office of the Public Counsel and states:

1. On October 19, 2006, the Commission issued its Order Directing Filing. The *Order* directed the parties to address the issue of call center complaints against Atmos Energy Corporation. First, the Commission directed its Staff to provide detail of the nature of customer complaints received at the Commission since January 1, 2004. Second, the Commission directed the parties to address testimony received during the local public hearing in Kirksville regarding customer service and whether customer service could be improved if a local contact was available by telephone. Third, the Commission directs the parties to address any other issues involving improvement of customer service performance.

2. On the first issue, Public Counsel fully supports the requests by Staff witness Lisa Kremer that the Commission direct Atmos as follows: 1) To take necessary actions to stabilize and improve the performance of its call centers for Missouri customers; 2) To begin reporting its call center performance on a monthly basis rather than quarterly; and 3) To file a plan that presents steps and actions it will take to improve and maintain its call center performance, including its plans to respond to catastrophic events. These recommendations, if implemented,

would be a step forward in improving Atmos' call center performance and would provide the Staff and Public Counsel with the data necessary to help monitor whether call center performance is satisfactory.

3. The second issue addresses testimony received during the local public hearing in Kirksville. One Atmos customer, Ms. Smith, described her dissatisfaction with getting a question answered from Atmos' call center, and her satisfaction with the answer she received from the local Atmos office. Ms. Smith expressed concern with not having a local contact to address problems, and testified that she found it easier on the customer to get answers locally rather than through the call center.¹ A second Atmos customer, Ms. MacAuley, was also not happy with the response she received from the toll-free call center when she called to question the large increase in her bill. Ms. MacAuley was, however, pleased with the explanation she received from the local Atmos office.² This testimony underscores the frustration customers experience when attempting to resolve questions through the call center, and highlights the public's desire to have available a local office, where the customer service agent is a member of the same community and better able to relate to the concerns of the customer. This testimony further emphasizes the value of a local office where the customer has the option of having their questions and concerns handled by a customer service agent on a face-to-face basis. Public Counsel believes customer service could be greatly improved if a local contact was available to customers.

WHEREFORE, Public Counsel respectfully offers this response to the Commission's Order Directing Filing.

¹ Public Hearing, Kirksville, Mo., September 26, 2006, Tr. 16-18.

² *Id.*, Tr. 23-28.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been mailed, emailed or hand-delivered to the following this 1st day of November 2006.

Missouri Public Service Commission

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