

APR 03 2006

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF MISSOURI

Missouri Public
Service Commission

Complainant: Thomas C. DeClue

vs.

Respondent: Laclede Gas Company

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) Case No.
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COMPLAINT

Complainant resides at 2008 Cherokee Street, Saint Louis, Missouri, 63118

1. Respondent, Laclede Gas Company of Saint Louis Missouri, is a public utility under the jurisdiction of the public Service commission of the State of Missouri.

2. As the basis of this complaint, Complainant states the following facts:

1. I purchased my home in April of 2004, a 2 family with 2 gas meters. My residence is on the top 2 floors. At the time of purchase the first floor required rehabbing to be suitable for my purposes.
2. As required, Laclede Gas did a gas inspection at that time.
3. I was told "everything" was in working order by Laclede Gas and passed the inspection.
4. Shortly thereafter I began rehabbing the first floor and disconnected the furnace. The only gas appliance being used was the hot water heater, which was set to vacation mode.
5. Each month when I received my bill for the first floor, I assumed it was correct as it seemed in line with the amount due for the use of a hot water heater. This continued until October of 2005 when I finished rehabbing and re-connected the furnace.
6. Sometime in October a meter reader knocked on my door and asked to read the meters.
7. In November of 2005 I received a bill from Laclede Gas for \$426.88 as a make up bill for underpayment of gas usage on the first floor.
8. I called Laclede Gas to question the charges and was told they hadn't read my meter since April 2004 when I purchased my home and that my gas meter has been broken since September of 2003.
9. I disputed the charges, stating that I haven't been using gas except for the hot water heater and that I've been paying my bill each and every month.
10. Shortly thereafter a representative came to my home to investigate my overcharge complaint, and told me there was nothing he could do except read the meter again and file a report.
11. Laclede Gas is required to notify me after 3 months of failure to read my meter and arrange for a reading and to provide me the option to read my own meter.
12. Laclede Gas is required to physically read my meter once each year.
13. During the 20 months from April '04 till November '05 I did not receive ANY notice from Laclede Gas to come and physically read my meter or arrange for me to read the meter as they are required to do. For that matter they failed to notify me that the meter could not be read.
14. Laclede Gas KNEW my meter could not be read at the time they inspected it when I purchased my home. Rather than repair or replace the meter as they should have, they

told me everything was in working order and now due to their willful negligence, I am now facing \$426.88 in make up charges (plus penalties).

15. I am being told by Laclede Gas that the meter was working properly and that the readings taken in April 2004 and October 2005 are correct and I owe them the amount stated, however they have proven to me that they cannot be trusted by lying about the condition of my meter when I purchased my home and their continued negligence thereafter.
3. The complainant has taken the following steps to present this complaint to the Respondent.
1. Immediately after receipt of the make up bill I called Laclede Gas to ascertain why I was being billed this exorbitant amount, and to find out what could be done about it. I was told nothing could be done and that I owed the amount.
 2. I have notified Laclede Gas both by phone and in writing to dispute the charges as explained in item 2 above.
 3. I have informed Laclede Gas company of their failure to properly notify me of their inability to read the meter and offer options to read it myself, to which they adamantly denied and stated repeatedly they DID notify me, which was not true.
 4. I have requested that Laclede Gas wave the "make up bill" to make up for both their continual negligence and the fact that I could not have used that much gas with no working furnace, and got no response.
 5. I requested that Laclede Gas repair or replace the meter, which their representative, Mr. Johnson told me they would NOT do.
 6. The only way to get them to replace the meter was to demand that Laclede Gas test the meter. Mr. Johnson reluctantly agreed to do this, and upon the scheduled date, they replaced the meter with a working meter so the broken one could be tested. The meter was tested on Feb. 23rd. I was told that the meter tested within tolerances, however was not informed what those tolerances are, nor do I trust their word, as they have proven that Laclede Gas is more than willing to bend, if not completely break the rules set before them.

Note to the Public Service Commission:

My home has 3 floors and 2 gas meters. As described above, for most of 2005 the first floor had a hot water heater as the only gas appliance. I paid Laclede Gas \$285.92 in gas usage during that period. The 2nd and 3rd floors, my living quarters have a gas furnace, hot water heater, stove and clothes dryer. These appliances consume 99% of my gas usage. I paid \$944.62 for ALL of them in 2005. I cannot see how I could owe Laclede Gas an additional \$426.88 for the first floor, which would total \$712.80 for hot water.

As a resident of Saint Louis, I have no choice but to use Laclede Gas to supply me with natural gas for my appliances. I am held completely accountable by Laclede Gas to pay for the services rendered to me, which I am happy to do. However, I am their customer, and I also have rights. Therefore I ask you to hold Laclede Gas accountable for their negligence in providing me as their customer, equipment that reliably records the amount of gas used, proper notification of faulty equipment they knew was failing at the time I purchased my home, and diligence in finding a remedy to the problems caused by the failure of their equipment, and their failure to properly serve me, their customer.

I ask that Laclede Gas admit their negligence, accept responsibility for that negligence, and wave the \$426.88 bill caused by that negligence. That is all I ask.