

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DIVISION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS**

89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02888

Rules and Regulations Governing Digital Filings and
Website Information Required Under Rhode Island General
Laws Section 39-1-18

Date of Public Notice: May 1, 2003

Date of Public Hearing: June 5, 2003

Effective Date: September 1, 2003

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2002 a new law was enacted that requires that all filings made to the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (“Division”) or the Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) shall also be provided digitally in a manner established by the Division (R.I.G.L. §39-1-18(b)).

In order to support the ability of the public and interested parties to stay informed of the activities of the Commission and the Division, this same new law also requires the Division to maintain a site on the Internet through which the public may access the following information:

- (1) notices of and agendas of hearings;
- (2) all filings that are available in digital format and that are not subject to protective orders;
- (3) all orders, rules and regulations of the Commission or Administrator;
- (4) announcements of, agendas for, and minutes of open meetings;
- (5) a calendar of all forthcoming public meetings and hearings;
- (6) current tariffs of all public utilities;
- (7) a listing of all public utilities and nonregulated power producers, together with consumer contact information for each;
- (8) consumer information on billing dispute resolution, retail access, conservation, and consumer assistance programs;
- (9) demand side management programs available to residential, commercial and industrial customers;
- (10) other information as the Division deems relevant and useful to the public (R.I.G.L. §39-1-18(c)).

These rules and regulations are designed to facilitate the implementation of the aforementioned directives.

2. DEFINITIONS

- a. “Administrator” means the administrator of the Division as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-1-2(1).
- b. “CATV company” means a Community Antenna Television System as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-19-1.

- c. "Commission" means the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-1-2(5).
- d. "Division" means the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-1-2(11).
- e. "Filing" means any application, petition or tariff, filed by a public utility or a CATV company, with either the Division or the Commission, which seeks (1) approval for a change in its rates, tolls or charges; or (2) authority to reduce existing services; or (3) any other document not specifically identified above, which the Commission or the Division deem to be of significant public interest.
- f. "Nonregulated power producer" means the nonregulated power producer as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-1-2(19).
- g. "Public utility" means the public utility as defined in R.I.G.L. §39-1-2(20).

3. DIGITAL FILING REQUIREMENTS

- a. All public utilities and CATV companies making a filing with the Commission or Division must include along with the "hard" original and "hard" copies required under the Commission's and the Division's respective *Rules of Practice and Procedure*, a digital or electronic copy imprinted on an appropriate "floppy", "zip" or "computer" disk or, if approved by the Division or Commission Clerk, any other conventional electronic storage system that may currently be in use or may succeed the conventional electronic storage systems that are currently available.
- b. All digital or electronic copies must be configured in "Word" and/or "PDF" formats or, if approved by the Division or Commission Clerk, other conventional software formats that may currently be in use or may succeed the conventional software formats that are currently available.
- c. Digital or electronic copies shall be submitted contemporaneously with all "hard" originals and "hard" copies, or if approved by the Division or Commission Clerk, within five (5) business days thereafter.

4. INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON OR THROUGH THE DIVISION'S WEBSITE

- a. Notices of all public hearings to be conducted by the Division and the Commission shall be available on the Division's website at least five (5) calendar days prior to the date of the hearing.

- b. All filings that are available in digital or electronic format shall be available for examination on the Division's website while the relevant proceeding is in progress. These filings may be purged from the website at the conclusion of the proceeding and after the issuance of a final report and order on the matter.
- c. All currently effective rules and regulations of the Commission and the Division shall be available on the Division's website. The Rhode Island Secretary of State's office similarly provides access to the Commission's and the Division's rules and regulations on its website.
- d. All major decisions (reports and orders) of the Commission and the Division shall be available for review on the Division's website for a period of at least six (6) months from the date of issuance. Access to all other decisions shall be available through a link to a commercial database retrieval service, which will provide "search engine" and database services designed to facilitate access to all Division and Commission decisions issued between 1971 and the present. A fee will be charged for this service. NOTE: Copies of all orders of the Commission and the Division shall also be available at the offices of the Commission and the Division, 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, Rhode Island, pursuant to the requirements and fee schedule contained in the State's *Access to Public Records Act* (R.I.G.L. §38-2-1, et seq.).
- e. Unless conducted as an "emergency meeting", pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-6(c), open meeting notices and agendas shall be posted on the Division's website at least forty-eight (48) hours before every scheduled open meeting. Notices shall contain: (1) the date the notice was posted; (2) the date of the meeting; (3) the time of the meeting; (4) the location of the meeting; and (5) a statement specifying the nature of the business to be discussed. The minutes of all open meetings will be posted in conformance with R.I.G.L. §42-46-7.
- f. A calendar of all Division and Commission open (public) meetings and hearings, covering a period of seven (7) months, shall be available for review on the Division's website. The calendar will provide a brief description, including a docket number, of each matter pending before the Commission and the Division.
- g. Current public utility tariffs, as described in 39-1-18(c)(6), will also be available for review. Access shall be achieved either by actual inclusion on the Division's website or by a link to a tariff page on the public utility's website.

- h. A listing of all regulated public utilities, by industry group, and all registered nonregulated power producers shall be available for review on the Division's website. Telephone numbers and/or links (where available), to each public utility's and nonregulated power producer's consumer affairs department may also be accessed. Additionally, with respect to nonregulated power producers, the following related Commission rules and regulations will be accessible on the Division's website: (1) *Reliability Responsibility Regulations for Non-regulated Power Producers* and (2) *Consumer Protection Requirements for Non-regulated Power Producers*.
- i. Consumer information on billing dispute resolution procedures will be summarized on the Division's website. For a detailed description of all residential consumer protection rights and related adjudicative procedures a copy of the Commission's *Rules and Regulations Governing the Termination of Residential Electric, Gas and Water Utility Service*, or related successor rules and regulations, will be accessible on the Division's website.
- j. Consumer information regarding offerings of retail access available from nonregulated power producers will be summarized on the Division's website. Additional information may be provided through links to the websites of electric distribution companies and/or registered nonregulated power producers.
- k. Consumer information regarding methods of conserving energy and water and also demand side management programs available to residential, commercial and industrial customers will be available on the Division's website. The Division may include links to other websites that contain related information.
- l. Consumer information regarding financial assistance programs that may be available to eligible ratepayers will be available on the Division's website.
- m. The Division's website may also contain any other information that the Division deems relevant and useful to the public.

Adopted as rules and regulations of the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers on _____, 2003, for effect on September 1, 2003.

Thomas F. Ahern, Administrator