

**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	)	Case No. GR-2006-0387
Service in the Missouri Service Area of the Company.	)	

**ATMOS ENERGY CORPORATION'S RESPONSE TO ORDER DIRECTING FILING**

COMES NOW Atmos Energy Corporation ("Atmos"), and respectfully states as follows:

1. On October 19, 2006, the Commission issued its Order Directing Filing. Among other things, the Commission directed that Atmos file by November 1, 2006 its response to specific questions related to customer service. The specific questions contained in the Order will addressed below:

**A. Please provide detail of the nature of customer complaints received at the Commission since January 1, 2004. Specifically, state whether these complaints have involved a problem with customer service or if the complaint is due to the lack of a local company representative.**

Atmos has reviewed the customer complaints that were made to the Missouri Public Service Commission from January 1, 2004 through October 25, 2006. The number of customer complaints in each year that pertained to service quality were: 2004- 10, 2005- 4, and 2006- 0. There were no complaints concerning the customer not having accessibility to local Company representatives. The details of the complaints are attached in Appendix A (Highly Confidential).

**B. During the Kirksville public hearing, at least one witness testified that she received poor service from the call center, but was satisfied with the service she received when she went to the company office. The Commission directs the parties to address this comment in detail, including an analysis of whether customer service could be improved if a local**

**contact was available by telephone.**

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*, customer number 4547923, called the Company's call center on February 20, 2006, to ask why her budget billing amount went up \$8.00 when her usage dropped that month. She had calculated her budget amount by adding the previous 11 months to her current month and divided by 12. She understood that the budget billing was calculated on a rolling 12 month period and that the amount would fluctuate to some degree each month. The Customer Service Assistant (CSA) that she talked to explained that the amount would fluctuate and \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* said that she understood. \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* also went on to say that the amount should have gone down on this particular bill because the usage had dropped. However, her bill went up \$8.00. The CSA calculated her bill using the same methodology and was unable to explain to \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* satisfaction why the bill had increased.

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* later visited the Atmos Energy local office, located at 916 North Green Street, Kirksville, Missouri (this address is listed in both the White pages and the Yellow pages of the local telephone book). During her visit, she sat down with one of the Operation Assistants (OA) who was able to correctly calculate the budget bill amount by taking the average of the previous 12 months, instead of including the current month. \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*  
\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* was satisfied as a result of this "face-to-face" meeting, having received in person, a clear demonstration of how her bill is calculated.

If the CSA had understood and explained how to calculate the monthly bill amount, then the customer most likely would have been satisfied without the need for local assistance. The Company does instruct call center agents concerning the details of the budget billing program and how to calculate a customer's bill. Furthermore, this particular instance is not representative

of the quality of service that customers are typically provided at the call center. However, in this case, the customer was able to sit down with a local OA face-to-face and work the problem out with a calculator. Being able to see the results helped \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ \*\* understand. This is the reason that Atmos Energy continues to have local offices open to the public. The customer can have face-to-face problem resolution by going to the office and sitting down with an OA to work through their issues.

The Atmos Energy customer service philosophy includes having an open local office located in major communities served by Atmos. These are service centers where service techs, meter readers, construction and other field personnel are headquartered. There are typically one or two Operation Assistants (OA's) that run each office, handling walk-in customer business, and are prepared to assist the customer face-to-face. The OA's are able to perform a variety of functions including connections, transfers, service requests, emergency dispatching for leaks, meter orders etc. The only thing that cannot be done by a customer in an Atmos office is pay a bill. However, the Company has many Pay Centers where customers can conveniently pay their bill locally.

The Company does not believe that providing a local phone number to address customer inquiries would be of any benefit to the customer. If a customer needs to call Atmos for any reason, they can call the call center's toll-free number. The call center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and the Company's call center agents are well trained to assist customers across Atmos' service territories. Atmos encourages Missouri customers who desire to speak to a Company representative in person, to continue to visit a local office.

**C. Address any other issues involving improvement of customer service performance.**

It appears that some customers have difficulty understanding how the budget billing

program works. This is especially true for customers that went on budget billing as a Cold Weather Rule payment plan. As explained in the rebuttal testimony of Patricia J. Childers that was filed on October 31, 2006, Atmos Energy is willing to increase its customer education efforts related to the benefits and requirements of budget billing. This will include bill insert information and additional information on the Company's website. If a call center agent receives a request by a customer to be placed on budget billing, the customer will be informed that payments must be made in a timely basis, and must also be for at least the amount due on the bill in order to retain budget bill status. Finally, once a year, the company will include budget billing information with the bill reminding customers of the requirements of budget billing.

The Company has no other customer service issues to address at this time.

**WHEREFORE,** Atmos Energy Corporation respectfully submits its Response To Order Directing Filing.

Respectfully submitted,

**/s/ James M. Fischer**

---

James M. Fischer, MBN 27543  
email: [jfischer@aol.com](mailto:jfischer@aol.com)  
Larry W. Dority, MBN 25617  
email: [lawdority@sprintmail.com](mailto:lawdority@sprintmail.com)  
Fischer & Dority, P.C.  
101 Madison Street, Suite 400  
Jefferson City, MO 65101  
Telephone: (573) 636-6758  
Facsimile: (573) 636-0383

Douglas C. Walther, MBN 32266  
Associate General Counsel  
Atmos Energy Corporation  
P.O. Box 650205  
Dallas, Texas 75265-0205  
Email: [doug.walther@atmosenergy.com](mailto:doug.walther@atmosenergy.com)  
Telephone: (972) 855-3102  
Attorneys for Atmos Energy Corporation

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I do hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Recommendation has been hand-delivered, emailed or mailed, First Class mail, postage prepaid, this 1st day of November, 2006, to the Office of the Public Counsel: [opcservice@ded.mo.gov](mailto:opcservice@ded.mo.gov), the General Counsel of the Missouri Public Service Commission: [genccounsel@psc.mo.gov](mailto:genccounsel@psc.mo.gov), David Woodsmall: [dwoodsmall@fcplaw.com](mailto:dwoodsmall@fcplaw.com), and Rob Fulton: [RFulton@i1.net](mailto:RFulton@i1.net).

**/s/ James M. Fischer**

---

James M. Fischer

**APPENDIX A**

**(CONTAINS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION)**