

Missouri Public Service Commission
Water and Sewer Dept. Staff Investigation of Service Issues
Prepared by Jerry Scheible, P.E.
Tri-States Utility, Inc. (Water)
QW-2008-0010

Item	First Name	Last Name	City	State	Public Comments	Office	Staff Person	Resolution
P200800695	Randy	Anglen	Hollister	MO	The rate increase by Tri-States Utilities seems very high. I had an experience with them where they refused to provide water to a home that was in their service area (albeit on the outskirts of their service area), stating they had just decided to stop providing water to that street - no other reason was given. After a complaint to the PSC, they had to provide water to the address. They don't seem to be anxious to provide water to the less profitable locations in their area.	PSC	JS	Service within Certificated Area issue was resolved. No further action is required.
P200800280	LaVonne	Dimatteo	Branson	MO	Customers are tired of the frequent outages. Feels MPSC needs to do something for the consumers in this area.	PSC	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible. No further action is required.
P200800814	LaVonne	Dimatteo	Branson	MO	This is ridiculous! 140% raise is too much for the quality of service received. We have lost water 4 different times last year, once for over 4 days & a crew wasn't send out til the next day to even look for the break. Branson only got a 20% rate increase, why 140%? Why not fix the lines that keep breaking and give good service, then ask for an increase? A moderate raise would be OK, but NOT 140%. That's price gouging! Isn't that supposed to be illegal? We wanted Branson water, but told NO.	PSC	JS	Duplicate complaint- see previous resolution.
P200800656	Mickie	Fife	Branson	MO	We don't believe that kind of increase can be justified. Our water quality is poor, plus we know there are alot of people that don't pay their water bills now. If they have more customers, that means more money coming in, it's their job to collect it, not have customers that pay their bills take the "hit". We are definitely against this increase.	PSC	JS	Customer wants an investigation of the water quality. There have been no violations issued by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources since 2003. No further action is required.
P200800857	Ronald	Glorioso	Branson	MO	I own three condos and a single family home in Pointe Royale Golf Village and the quality of water in this community is unacceptable. In one of my condos the water comes out deep black and smells like sulphur when first turned on after a few days of not being used. An investigation and audit of this organization is being requested.	PSC	JS	Message left for customer to contact me to discuss further; no response. Hydrogen Sulphide gas is common to the area but is not a health concern.
P200800706	John	Griggs	Branson	MO	140 PERCENT INCREASE IS CRAZY FIRST INPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR PRODUCT THEN INCREASE IN SNALLER AMOUNTS. THE QUALITY OF WATER HERE IS THE WORST THAT I HAVE SEEN.	PSC	JS	Customer left no phone number or email. There have been no violations issued by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources since 2003.
P200800683	Joyce	Journagan	Branson	MO	(ddw)Water pressure during summer during peak use is reduced to trickle/ customer often suffers line breaks/ customer believes that no rate increase should be given untol Tri state improves its existing service. Customer lives on top of hill.	Both	JS	Met with customer and placed a pressure recorder overnight. Pressure dropped from 50 psi to 28 psi from midnight to 4:00 a.m. then returned to 50 psi. Company concedes the booster pump is shut off during that time frame to extend the life of the pump. A two-pump system is being engineered to allow booster operation 24/7. Company has been asked to consider boosting the pressure 24 hours/day but MDNR requires only 20 psi.

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Item	First Name	Last Name	City	State	Public Comments	Office	Staff Person	Resolution
P200800687	Eddie	Lane	Branson	MO	I would like to comment on the proposed rate increase. 140% seems out of line. This is our only water supply so they sort of have us where they want us. We have had problems for the past year of our water being shut off during the night. This is when the water softner is working. A few times it shut off in the middle of the water softner rinse cycle and we woke up to salt water plus salt water ice cubes. They shut a pump down on a timer to keep pressure low at bottom of hill!	PSC	JS	Met with customer and placed a pressure recorder overnight. Pressure dropped from 55 psi to 30 psi from midnight to 4:00 a.m. then returned to 55 psi. Company concedes the booster pump is shut off during that time frame to extend the life of the pump. A two-pump system is being engineered to allow booster operation 24/7. Company has been asked to consider boosting the pressure 24 hours/day but MDNR requires only 20 psi.
P200800709	Julie	Ralfs	Branson	MO	The water through Tri State Utilities has substances in it that have caused us to replace a hot water heater within 3 years, water filters, it has etched into our commodes, stains our shower glass and dishes. This water has caused additional expense for us. I personally asked if there was some way to put a filter on the water to help and was told they don't have to do that. So we are the ones who not only for the service but the replacement as well. Please don't allow this increase.	PSC	JS	Spoke with customer. Customer wants an investigation of the water quality. There have been no violations issued by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources since 2003. No further action is required.
P200800710	Julie	Ralfs	Branson	MO	The water through Tri State Utilities has substances in it that have caused us to replace a hot water heater within 3 years, water filters, it has etched into our commodes, stains our shower glass and dishes. This water has caused additional expense for us. I personally asked if there was some way to put a filter on the water to help and was told they don't have to do that. So we are the ones who not only for the service but the replacement as well. Please don't allow this increase.	PSC	JS	Same complaint as P200800709.
P200800719	Donald	Raymond	Branson	MO	140% IS NO ACCEPTABLE. THEY PUT IN RFD METERS AND WE WERE TOLD THAT WOULD REDUCE THE COMPANY COST. THE WATER PRESSURE IS NOT REGULATED! WE HAD A WATER LINE BREAK AND THEY SHUT MY WATER OFF ON FRI AND WOULD NOT TURN IT ON UNTIL TUE. MY HUSBAND HAS STAGE 4 CANCER. I AM GOING TO MAKE A COMPLAINT TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.IT TAKES 2 MEN TO READ YOUR METER WHAT AN EXPENSE, CUT THAT AREA TO ONE PERSON. THANK YOU MARY AND DON RAYMOND	PSC	JS	Company concedes the booster pump is shut off during that time frame to extend the life of the pump. A two-pump system is being engineered to allow booster operation 24/7. Company has been asked to consider boosting the pressure 24 hours/day but MDNR requires only 20 psi. The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible. I left a message for the customer to contact me to discuss further, but have not been contacted to date.
P200800659	Nancy	Schwiedergoll	Branson	MO	We do not favor an increase by 140% it is totally incomprehensible for that kind of an increase .The service has been out almost on a once a month basis untill the public service in Jefferson city got involved. Branson`s water and sewer rate is only \$ 4.89 per 2000 gallons with added charge of a \$1.80 per 1000 gallons. with less water problems. Most of the community wanted to become part of Bransons system . Branson only had a 20% increase in Oct. 2007 .Why should Tri State get 140 %	PSC	JS	I reviewed main breaks, the frequency of occurrence and how they are handled with the company. It appears the company is performing adequately.

Missouri Public Service Commission
Water and Sewer Dept. Staff Investigation of Service Issues
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Tri-States Utility, Inc. (Water)
QW-2008-0010

Item	First Name	Last Name	City	State	Public Comments	Office	Staff Person	Resolution
P200800679	George	Shivers	Branson	MO	This is ridiculous. I might agree to a reasonable increase but certainly not 140%. The system is not maintained properly and as a result we were without water a total of 5 days last year. When you are running a business this is critical. They have lines that rupture because proper maintenace and upkeep have not been done through the years. Consumer should not have to pay for poor mgt.	PSC	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
P200800684	Jackie	Smith	Branson	MO	First off, a 140% rate increase in this time of recession is ludicrous. I don't object to a reasonable increase due to added expenses, however, I would like the commission to check into Tri-States past preformance. I have personally experienced problems with their service and I know of other instances where Tri-State has been at fault and they always place the blame elsewhere. They need to be more responsible to their customers. They should live up to being a "public service company"!	PSC	JS	I left a message for the customer to contact me to discuss the specific service issue she has with the utility but have not been contacted to date.
P200800685	Jackie	Smith	Branson	MO	First off, a 140% rate increase in this time of recession is ludicrous. I don't object to a reasonable increase due to added expenses, however, I would like the commission to check into Tri-States past preformance. I have personally experienced problems with their service and I know of other instances where Tri-State has been at fault and they always place the blame elsewhere. They need to be more responsible to their customers. They should live up to being a "public service company"!	PSC	JS	Same complaint as P200800684.
P200800776	Jackie	Smith	Branson	MO	Some type of raise may be justified, but not 149%! Please check into Tri-State's record for handling disputes. It seems to me that they could care less about their customers, the public consumer----I have personal experience in a dispute and it was their way or no way. They are a public service company aren't they? They need to live up to that title.	PSC	JS	Same complaint as P200800684.
P200800322	Doris	Thatcher	Branson	MO	service is back on; customer said that they have problems with company constantly; happened 3 times this month.	PSC	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
P200800696	Carl	Ward	Branson	MO	140% is excessive. The RFD meters were for whose convenience. It would be nice to have water pressure after 11:59 p.m. This increase inprove the quality of the water. Right now water has a odor and when you boil the water you get a thick clear paste that comes to the top. There is a need for inprovement for Tri-States Utility, Inc but at whose cost the customer or the company's. This company been here long time so pipes are old and small when they brake the company patches not inprove.	PSC	JS	Company concedes the booster pump is shut off during that time frame to extend the life of the pump. A two-pump system is being engineered to allow booster operation 24/7. Company has been asked to consider boosting the pressure 24 hours/day but MDNR requires only 20 psi. The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.

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Tri-States Utility, Inc. (Water)
QW-2008-0010

Item	First Name	Last Name	City	State	Public Comments	Office	Staff Person	Resolution
P200800774	Iris	Wilson	Branson	MO	This is an exhorbitant increase and a little after-the-fact. We were not told of any increase when they put in new meters. We had no trouble with old meters but a lot of trouble with new meter. Please do not approve this increase.	PSC	JMR/JS	Letter sent March 13, 2008. Scheible contacted customer regarding "trouble with new meter." They were being billed for their neighbors service, but he problem has been corrected to their satisfaction.
P200800746	Susan	Yeager	Branson	MO	(ddw)Customer opposed/ customer thinks water quality is poor and service from company is terrible/ customer feels obligated to buy water in bottles/ customer feels that 140% is way too much to ask for. Also opposes the new AMR on meters and this has made it hard for people to shut off their own water when absent from premises.	PSC	JS	I spoke to the customer- she has not problem with the quality of the water; just has heard others complain. I explained the meter is the Company's property and customers should not be accessing them.
Letter	Wallace D.	Booker	Branson	MO	See attached.	Both	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
Email	John and Karen	Grabber	Branson	MO	Low pressure, milky water and questions use of 3/4" meter.	PSC	JS	I met with the customer and discussed MNDR's 20 psi pressure requirement; milky water is typically air in the lines which is safe and discussed the meter size and tariff.
Letter	J. R.	Grenier	Branson	MO	See attached.	PSC	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
Fax	Richard & Debra	Ivey	Branson	MO	See attached.	Both	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible. Company feels the customers are using water before the mains have been flushed after a repair, causing some sediment to enter their service lines.
E-mail	Nancy	Lane	Branson	MO	See attached.	PSC	JS	Same address and comments as Eddie Lane above.
Letter	Charles	Lawver	Branson	MO	See attached.	PSC	JS	The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
E-mail	Julie	Rahlf	Branson	MO	See attached.	Both	JS	Same complaint as P200800709 above.

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Tri-States Utility, Inc. (Water)
QW-2008-0010

Item	First Name	Last Name	City	State	Public Comments	Office	Staff Person	Resolution
Letter	Robert L. & Marcia A.	Rissler	Branson	MO	See attached.	PSC	JS	Company concedes the booster pump is shut off during that time frame to extend the life of the pump. A two-pump system is being engineered to allow booster operation 24/7. Company has been asked to consider boosting the pressure 24 hours/day but MDNR requires only 20 psi. The Company concedes that there was an outage that lasted for 3 days in December of 2006 due to two separate main breaks, which is an unusual circumstance, and was handled as expediently as possible.
Letter	Bernie	Sarbaugh	Branson	MO	See attached.	Both	JS	I visited the site and investigated the meter lid covers. The covers do protruded 1" to 2" above the grade of the sidewalk in several installations. I advised the Company to make an effort to grout the rings to smooth out the transition. I left a message for the customer to contact me to further discuss her other specific complaints, but have not been contacted to date.
E-mail	Bernie	Sarbaugh	Branson	MO	See attached.	Both	JS	Same as preceding complaint.
Phone	Peggie	Sides	Branson	MO	New meter pit covers are a trip hazard.	OPC	JS	I visited the site and investigated the meter lid covers. The covers do protruded 1" to 2" above the grade of the sidewalk in several installations. I advised the Company to make an effort to grout the rings to smooth out the transition.

FEB 29, 2008
BRANSON MO.

TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

RE: REQUEST NUMBER QW-2008-0010

WE CONSIDER THE 140% INCREASE IN
WATER RATES REQUESTED BY TRI-STATES
UTILITY, TO BE ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS AND
TOTALLY UNDESERVED. SOME SMALL INCREASE
DUE TO RISING EXPENSES CAN BE EXPECTED.

OUR SERVICE HERE HAS NOT BEEN GOOD.
LAST YEAR WE HAD AT LEAST THREE TIMES
SERVICE WAS OUT. WE SPENT TWO NIGHTS
IN A LOCAL MOTEL BECAUSE OF NO WATER. I
WORK AND HAD TO BE CLEAN ON MY JOB. WE
KEEP WATER IN CONTAINERS TO FLUSH THE
STOOL AND FOR DRINKING BECAUSE SERVICE
HAS BEEN SO UNRELIABLE. IT IN MY
UNDERSTANDING POOR MAINTENANCE HAS
BEEN THE PROBLEM.

SINCERELY,
WILLIAM S. BOOKER
387 DALTON DR.
BRANSON, MO 65616

RECEIVED

MAR 05 2008

UTILITY OPERATIONS
DIVISION

March 14, 2008

Public Service Commission
Water/Sewer Dept.
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Subject: Tri-States Utility, Inc.
Rate increase request
QW-2008-0010

RECEIVED

MAR 17 2008

UTILITY OPERATIONS
DIVISION

Gentlemen:

I am a water customer of Tri-States Utility, Inc. in the Branson, MO, area and have been for approximately four years. I recently received their letter indicating they have submitted a request to the Missouri Public Service Commission to grant them a residential water rate increase of 140%. Admittedly, I can only offer my observations as a consumer, and then only as it affects my water usage and the ability of Tri-States to provide that water for use in my home.

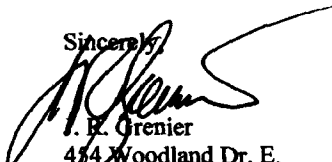
When I purchased the real estate, as part of that process, I turned on water faucets in various parts of the structure and water came out. And until I moved in, that was the extent of my research. Within a short period of time however, I discovered that the water was extremely "hard", and I found it necessary to install a water softener and drinking water filters. Within days the water heater shorted out. I discovered the water heater had been "eaten up on the inside by hard water" and I replaced it. And although the expense of the upgrades were not anticipated in a three year old house, as long as the water is running I am fairly comfortable. I have not actually taken samples from the faucet to the health department for analysis. I guess we all need a level of trust somewhere along the line.

Since I have lived here, water running has become an issue. I wish I had documented the interruptions in service, but I had not realized it would ever be as frequent as it has. It seems to me that in the four years, we have lost water service three or four times each year. It is usually a broken water main and if it happens at night, there is simply no one at the other end of the phone. One time, one break led to another and another, and after being off for as long as it had, it took two more days to build up enough water in the system to get water back to where I live. One afternoon a couple of years ago I had occasion to turn on a faucet, and upon finding the water was off again, I telephoned expecting another water main break but was informed there was a structure fire and that the fire department was consuming all of the system's water (by the way the building burnt to the ground). This made me wonder about the fire hydrants in my neighborhood. I must admit, in all of the losses of service due to broken water mains I have never been asked to boil drinking water for safety purposes by the utility. This seems strange to me.

Tri-States has indicated that one of the reasons they need this extravagant rate increase is to pay for "RFD meters". As I understand it, RFD meters are meters that send usage signals remotely. Shouldn't that be paid for with the money being saved by not needing meter readers. It also seems to me that their increases in the number and type of customers should be increasing their revenues not giving them an excuse to increase our rates. No doubt they do need to increase maintenance, repairs, and replacement of pipes and equipment, but it seems to me that had they been doing that all along they wouldn't need to come to their customers now for an extravagant 140% increase in rates (Maybe Tri-States can make arrangements for me to receive a 140% increase in my Social Security!).

I think that service to customers by Tri-States Utility is marginal at best. I think they began by originally mapping a large service area near Branson when Branson was still trying to chart a course in the tourist industry and while they, Tri-States Utility, only had a few customers. I think that over the years their customer base expanded much faster than they built infrastructure to provide proper service to all of those customers. I think they have gotten way behind and do not know what to do now to catch up. But I also think that for Tri-States Utility to now ask their customers to "bank roll" their mismanagement is not only irresponsible, but also certainly not the responsibility of their customers, and is just plain wrong. It seems to me that Tri-States Utility needs to seek out a lender to borrow the money they need to rebuild their infrastructure and then to perhaps ask their customers for a modest increase to help pay some of the loan.

Sincerely,



J. E. Grenier
454 Woodland Dr. E.
Branson, MO 65616

March 16, 2008

**TO: Public Service Commission
Attn: Water/Sewer Dept.
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65120
800-392-4211 (office)
573-751-1847 (fax)**

**From: Richard & Debra Ivey
174 Shady Drive
Branson, MO 65616**

**RE: Letter Dated 2/27/08
Revenue Increase Request**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are faxing you this notice as our official objection to the 140% rate increase. It is my understanding from your letter that Tri-Lakes Utilities feels justified in asking for this increase due to the services they provide. We have several issues with this request.

- 1. If the services truly have increased by 140%, then we feel the company has mismanaged its funds, as they should be able to better forecast price increases, so that they occur gradually. The government estimated the cost-of-living increase to be 2.03596% for the third calendar of 2007 (<http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/latestCOLA.html>) and that is a far cry from 140%. Neither of our wages increased by 140%, in fact to the contrary.**
- 2. We personally have had several water outages in 2007 due to blasting, poorly maintained water lines, etc. Did we get a credit on our bills for the poor service received? NO! We could not reach anyone on the phone to determine how long we would be without water, so we had to contact the Police Dispatch Center to get an answer... That is not service! Then when the water did return, it was brown and full of who knows what, so we had to waste water to flush lines and filters.**
- 3. Currently our bill is split between Tri-Lakes Utilities and City of Branson. It is our understanding that the City would like to have purchased the company and fully manage it. Perhaps it is time for that to occur.**

**Sincerely,
Concerned Customers**

Russo, Jim

From: Nancy Lane [nlane1948@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, February 29, 2008 10:48 AM
To: Water.Sewer; mopco@ded.mov.gov
Subject: Tri-State Utility, Inc Rate Increase request.

I realize that there has to be rate increases from time to time. This is a fact of life. But 140% is out of line. Part of their reason for such an increase is new meters installed. The new meters were supposed to be installed to make it easier and quicker for them to get readings. I haven't noticed any changes. The man still comes by and looks at all of the meters once a month. There has been no improvement in the service. We live on top of a hill. Every night our pressure drops to a little stream and sometimes to no water at all. It will stay this way until early the next morning. During this time our water softener is trying to cycle. Sometimes it works....sometimes it doesn't. If the water completely stops during its rinse cycle, we wake up with salt water. I then have to put it through another cycle to clean it out. This also gets into the ice maker and it has to be serviced. I have talked to them about this. They said that they are shutting a booster pump down on a timer to keep the pressure from getting too high below the hill. I know that there are big customers at the bottom of the hill so we get shut down. A fix to this is add more regulators in the line but an easier fix is to put the pump on a timer to shut down in the middle of the night. So, we get our water shut down during the night. If we come home late and want to take a shower....forget it. And our bill will be increased by 140%. This too much increase and will really place a hardship in customers. It is the only water supply so they have us.

Climb to the top of the charts! Play the word scramble challenge with star power. [Play now!](#)

3/3/2008

Public Service Commission

Mar. 5, '08

Attn: Water/Sewer Dept.

This is in response to the
notice we received dated
Feb. 27, 2008 regarding
Tri State Utility's request
for a rate increase.

We are shocked at such
a high increase - 140%.

We have lived here since
1991 and have been on their
water supply all that time.
They should have been making
improvements all along,
instead of all at once.
Many times we have been
without water due to a
line breaking.

How do they expect
people to afford such a high

2.

rate increase? Most people are on fixed incomes or Social Security. Our small increase in Social Security sure wouldn't pay this increase. How can a person stretch their money for this rate increase, plus pay for gas, groceries & most everything we need?

140% of anything is too much —

Please be realistic!
Thanks for your help.

RECEIVED

MAR 10 2008

UTILITY OPERATIONS
DIVISION

Sincerely,
Charles Lawver
226 Western Ave.
Branson, Mo.

65616

Russo, Jim

From: julie rahlfscce [juliesjoy@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 02, 2008 4:34 PM
To: Water.Sewer
Subject: Tri State Water Utility

We are submitting this email to object to the possibility of an increase in price for the water in the Branson area through Tri State Utility. We have had to replace a hot water heater with 3 years, various water filters. This water has some kind of substances in it (calcium type) that etch into the commodes, it causes awful stuff on the shower door, dishes and glasses, and the taste, well.... I personally went to the Tri State office and asked if there was some kind of filter that could put on the help eliminate this stuff but was told that didn't have to. So we have the expense of replacement as well as to pay for this awful water. It is expense enough!!

I hope that the commission will look at this situation and investigate we are really caught in a trap there is no place to go, no other water company to purchase from.

Thank you for your consideration.

Julie Rahlfs
417365-1616

Looking for last minute shopping deals? [Find them fast with Yahoo! Search.](#)

3/4/2008

195 Black Oak Drive
Branson, MO 65616
March 5, 2008

Public Service Commission
Attn: Water/Sewer Dept.
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102

RECEIVED

MAR 10 2008

UTILITY OPERATIONS
DIVISION

RE:QW-2008-0010

Dear Commission:

This is in response to your February 27th letter informing us that the Tri-Lakes Utility Company submitted a request for an increase in its annual water operating revenues to the Missouri Public Service Commission.

We understand that the need for an increase in operating revenues was caused by increased cost of power for pumping, increased cost of annual utility assessments, increased number of customers served, increased maintenance repairs, increased material costs, increased cost of adding storage reservoirs, well drilling etc., and increased labor costs.

We would consider paying the 140% rate increase IF the following conditions could be promised:

- 1) Reliable water supply 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- 2) Quality water pressure 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- 3) Quality tasting water.
- 4) Reliable water supply and quality water pressure available to neighborhood fire hydrant.

Since June 2000, we have had numerous issues with items number 1-3. It's fortunate that no one in the neighborhood has needed the use of the fire hydrant.

Thank you for your consideration in these important issues.

Sincerely,

Robert L. & Marcia A. Rissler

Robert L. & Marcia A. Rissler

March 14, 2008

RECEIVED
MAR 19 2008

Public Service Commission
Attn: Water/Sewer Dept
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102

**UTILITY OPERATIONS
DIVISION**

Dear Public Service Commission Representative:

This letter is in response to Tri-States Utility, Inc., (of Branson, Missouri) letter dated February 27, 2008 that concerns a request by their company to increase their customer rates by 140 percent. I strongly object to such an increase that is perceived as totally unjustified to either a commercial or residential customer, and submit the following comments for serious review by the State Commission.

1. Their maintenance is without quality and presents personal hazards all throughout the housing and condominium residential areas (refer to photographs marked 1, 2, and 3 that are enclosed. These are examples of the new water covers they installed and create tripping hazards to people walking on the property. They also look atrocious! The manhole covers are oversized for the manholes.
2. At least five times a year we turn our water on in our homes and the water is red colored and contains dirt and foreign matter even after being treated by a water softener. This can not be sanitary water. My family purchases all drinking and cooking water from commercial water sales at the grocery store.
3. In late 2006 or 2007 there was a water leak near building 43 at Pointe Royale and Tri-States Utility Representatives looked at the water coming out of the ground and stated it was surface water from rain. The management of Pointe Royale had to hire a construction company to come out to create a drain system to direct the water to a normal storm ditch. During the project the construction company and Pointe Royale Maintenance personnel found a supply line belonging to Tri-States Utility who earlier stated they did not have a water line in the area and that is why it was supposed to be surface water. Tri-States fixed their water line and left ... with home owners stuck with a \$6,545.89 bill from the construction company that was hired to repair what did not exist. Tri-States has not repaid that money to the homeowners that they are now trying to raise rates by 140 percent. This appears to be an absolutely monopolist type of response and absolutely terrible maintenance that customers pay for services.
4. The company installed new water meters and manhole covers in the fall and early winter of this year and locked out Pointe Royale maintenance staff and owners from water shut-offs during emergency water breaks. Yep, happened at units 18-7 and 18-4 in January and water broke two lines six feet from the manhole meters on the owner's side of the meters. The water filled three manholes and was

running out onto the ground everywhere. The Tri-States maintenance personnel had to come out around 11:00 pm and turn the water off. Guess whose bills were four times their normal January bill! And that then increased their sewage bills relationally, and Tri-States make no effort to adjust billing of either the water or the sewage cost

5. The Missouri American Water Company who provides services in the northwest part of Missouri installed new electronic water meters approximately three years ago and did not raise their rates to customers and did not expect customers to pay for something that the customer had no say-so in the purchasing decision. So why should Tri-States Utility customers pay for their bad decision and terrible installation of the new equipment? This privately owned company does not appear competitive in any way or form, and probably would not be with their poor customer service and relations.
6. In May of 2006 Tri-States Utility Company installed a new meter servicing building 9 (photo 4) that had (and still has) meters in each of the eight units. The new meter now reads water usage as a single meter and bills the Condominium Property Owners Association for private owner's usage within the building. The remaining home owners have to pay the bills and attempt to collect from the existing meters within the property owner's units. That sure simplifies billing for Tri-States Utility, Inc., and creates instant cost to all other owners. Then the company charged the other homeowners half of the installation for the meter and installation (I believe the cost was over \$1500).
7. Last, some maintenance personnel themselves have thrown grills that were left on a meter manhole onto the ground spilling grill parts, gas bottles, charcoal ashes, and the grill damaging the property. They could easily have just moved it onto the ground and not been so vindictive. Most people would move something off the manhole cover if they realized the problem or had been notified of the problem.

I hope this letter is considered when determining whether or not the company should get to increase their rates. You might also consider how much money they get during December through March each year when water is shut off at many, many, many meters in the condominium areas serviced by the company and paid minimum monthly usage with NO water consumed, sounds like pure profit and pocket money. **Most COLA raises each year are well under 5 percent...why should Tri-States Utility Inc., receive years and years of property owner's annual COLAs???** Thanks for taking the time to read these comments and I hope you made it to the end of my whining!

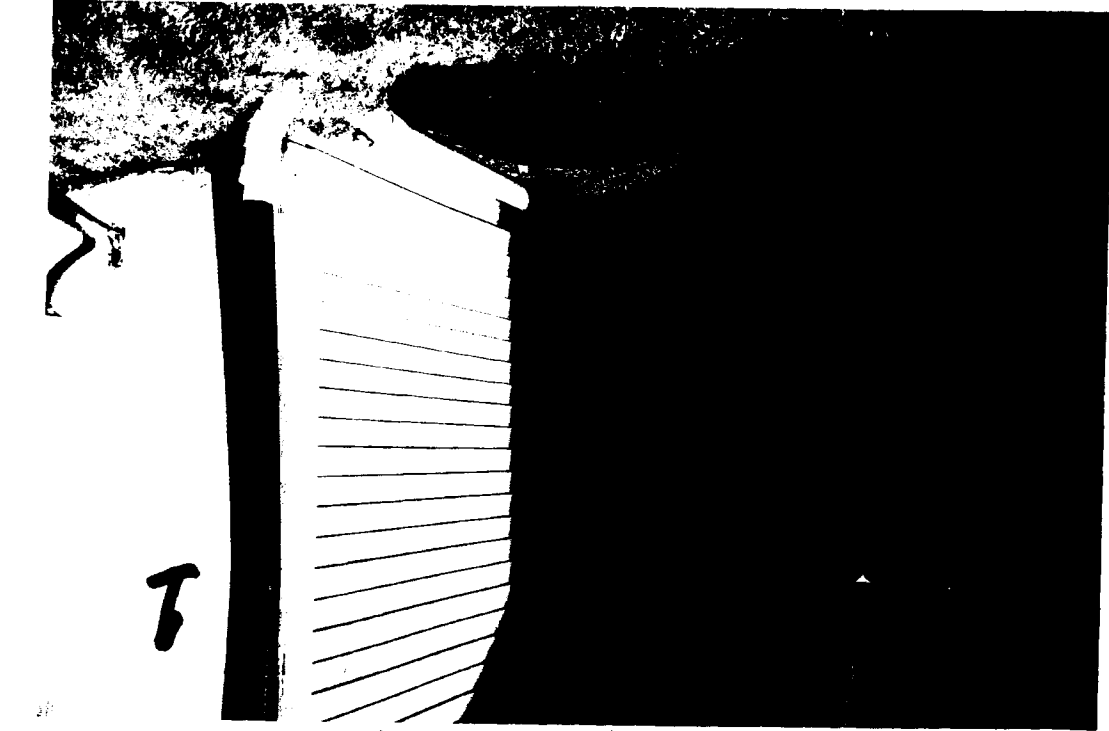
Sincerely,

Bernie Sarbaugh

Bernie Sarbaugh
Tri States Utility, Inc. Customer

P.S. Request Number QW-2008-0010

ORIGINAL Photos to
OPC



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