

CHAPTER 25. SUBSTANTIVE RULES APPLICABLE TO ELECTRIC SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Subchapter R. CUSTOMER PROTECTION RULES FOR RETAIL ELECTRIC SERVICE.

§25.485. Customer Access and Complaint Handling.

- (a) **Applicability.** This section contains a customer's entitlement to reasonable access to a retail electric provider's (REP) or aggregator's representatives and identifies a customer's ability make a complaint against a REP or aggregator. REPs and aggregators are subject to processes of this section to ensure that retail electric customers have the opportunity for impartial and prompt resolution of disputes with REPs or aggregators.
- (b) **Customer access.**
- (1) A retail electric provider (REP) or aggregator must ensure that customers have reasonable access to its service representatives to make inquiries and complaints, discuss charges on customer's bills, terminate competitive service, and transact any other pertinent business.
 - (2) Telephone access must be toll-free and must afford customers a prompt answer during normal business hours.
 - (3) A REP must provide a 24-hour automated telephone message instructing the caller how to report any service interruptions or electrical emergencies.
 - (4) A REP or aggregator must employ 24-hour capability for accepting a customer's rescission of the terms of service by telephone, under rights of cancellation in §25.474(j) of this title (relating to Selection of Retail Electric Provider).
- (c) **Complaint handling.** A residential or small commercial customer has the right to make a formal or informal complaint to the commission, and a terms of service agreement cannot impair this right. A REP or aggregator must not require a residential or small commercial customer as part of the terms of service to engage in alternative dispute resolution, including requiring complaints to be submitted to arbitration or mediation by third parties. A customer other than a residential or small commercial customer may agree as part of the terms of service to engage in alternative dispute resolution, including requiring complaints to be submitted to arbitration or mediation by third parties. However, nothing in this subsection is intended to prevent a customer other than a residential or small commercial customer from filing an informal or formal complaint with the commission if dissatisfied with the results of the alternative dispute resolution.
- (d) **Complaints to REPs or aggregators.** A customer or applicant for service may submit a complaint in person, or by letter, facsimile transmission, e-mail, or by telephone to a REP or aggregator. The REP or aggregator must promptly investigate and advise the complainant of the results within 21 days. A customer who is dissatisfied with the REP's or aggregator's review must be informed of the right to file a complaint with the REP's or aggregator's supervisory review process, if available, and, if not available, with the commission and the Office of Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division. Any supervisory review conducted by the REP or aggregator must result in a decision communicated to the complainant within ten business days of the request. If the REP or aggregator does not respond to the customer's complaint in writing, the REP or aggregator must orally inform the customer of the ability to obtain the REP's or aggregator's response in writing upon request.
- (e) **Complaints to the commission.**
- (1) **Informal complaints.** If a complainant is dissatisfied with the results of a REP's or aggregator's complaint investigation or supervisory review, the REP or aggregator must advise the complainant of the commission's informal complaint resolution process and the following contact information for the commission: Public Utility Commission of Texas, Customer Protection Division, P.O. Box 13326, Austin, Texas 78711-3326; (512) 936-7120 or in Texas (toll-free) 1-888-782-8477, fax (512) 936-7003, e-mail address: customer@puc.texas.gov, Internet website address: www.puc.texas.gov, and Relay Texas (toll-free) 1-800-735-2989.

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- (A) **Requirements applicable to informal complaints.**
- (i) A complaint must include sufficient information to identify the complainant and the company for which the complaint is made and describe the issue specifically. The following information must be included in the complaint:
 - (I) The account holder's name, billing and service addresses, and telephone number;
 - (II) The name of the REP or aggregator;
 - (III) The customer account number or electric service identifier (ESI-ID);
 - (IV) An explanation of the facts relevant to the complaint;
 - (V) The complainant's requested resolution; and
 - (VI) Any documentation that supports the complaint, including copies of bills or terms of service documents.
 - (ii) All REPs and aggregators must provide the commission an email address to receive notification of customer complaints from the commission.
 - (iii) The REP or aggregator must investigate all informal complaints and advise the commission in writing of the results of the investigation within 15 days after the complaint is forwarded to the REP or aggregator. For complaints filed with the commission before September 1, 2023, the deadline is 21 days after the complaint is forwarded.
 - (iv) The commission must review the complaint information and the REP or aggregator's response and notify the complainant of the results of the commission's investigation.
- (B) **Prohibited activities during pendency of informal complaint.** While an informal complaint process is pending:
- (i) The REP or aggregator must not initiate collection activities, including disconnection of service or report the customer's delinquency to a credit reporting agency with respect to the disputed portion of the bill.
 - (ii) A customer must pay any undisputed portion of the bill and the REP may pursue disconnection of service for nonpayment of the undisputed portion after appropriate notice.
- (C) **Informal complaint record retention.** The REP or aggregator must keep a record for two years after closure by the commission of all informal complaints forwarded to it by the commission. This record must show the name and address of the complainant, the date, nature and adjustment or disposition of the complaint. Protests regarding commission-approved rates or rates and charges that are not regulated by the commission, but which are disclosed to the customer in the terms of service disclosures, need not be recorded.
- (2) **Formal complaints.** If the complainant is not satisfied with the results of the informal complaint process, the complainant may file a formal complaint with the commission within two years of the date on which the commission closes the informal complaint. This process may include the formal docketing of the complaint as provided in §22.242 of this title (related to Complaints).