

SECTION 6

PUBLIC ADVISOR'S OFFICE

The **Public Advisor's Office** provides information and assistance to people who want to participate in Commission proceedings. In addition, Outreach Officers in Los Angeles and San Diego provide local access by these and surrounding communities to information about CPUC services and programs.

FIVE TO TEN YEAR OUTLOOK

The Commission's continuing efforts to bring increasing competition to the industries it regulates will increase, at least in the short to medium term, the main activities of the Public Advisor's Office.

Competitive environments increase the need for consumer education and information about the consumer protection role of the CPUC. CPUC consumer education and outreach will be even more critical in the next five years than it is today. The CPUC Outreach Officers are uniquely trained and situated to help meet these needs.

Finally, the advances in the Internet and other technological tools may have the greatest long-term impact on the work of the Public Advisor's Office. We are working with relevant CPUC staff to make the Commission a positive model for electronic notice and access, not only to parties in our cases, but to the larger public as well. The agency has already begun using the World Wide Web in innovative ways that have increased public access. This trend will dramatically increase for the foreseeable future.

CHANGES IN PRIORITIES

The only modification to our business plan for 1999-2000 is that we will continue working with the ALJ Division and the Management Services Division to build the capacity and capabilities of the CPUC Website, as required by SB 779 and by President Bilas' responsive government initiatives.

1999 - 2000 PUBLIC ADVISOR'S OFFICE OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Encourage and Provide Support for Public Participation in Commission Proceedings

Strategy 1 Information: The Public Advisor's Office is a primary resource for consumers who need information about getting involved in Commission activities. (Ongoing)

Strategy 2 Provide Assistance to Intervenors to understand and comply with the Intervenor Funding Program (contained in Sections 1801-1812 of the Public Utilities Code). Provide assistance to Commissioners and staff in administering this program. (Ongoing)

Strategy 3 Public Participation: Continue to identify and advise the Commission about barriers to effective public participation in CPUC proceedings, and suggest possible solutions. (Ongoing)

Strategy 4 Electronic Notice and Access (ENAT): Continue to participate in the work of the Commission's ENAT Group as a way to promote public access to the CPUC, and ensure compliance with SB 779. (Ongoing)

Strategy 5 Public Meetings: Plan and help implement Commissioner Office Hours, Town Hall Meetings, and Public Participation Hearings as needed and appropriate. (Ongoing)

Strategy 6 Participate in the various consumer education programs, and other ongoing CPUC communications with stakeholders. (Ongoing)

Objective B: The CPUC Outreach Program Initiates and Provides a Local Point of Contact and Consumer Education

Strategy 1 Public Outreach CPUC Outreach Officers:

- go to communities throughout the state to initiate contact with citizens groups and organizations, local and state government representatives, and local media to explain CPUC services. Outreach officers also make information materials about the

CPUC available to libraries and civic organizations to be shared with the public in the community.

- make presentations to interested groups about the CPUC and its rules and programs for utility consumers.
- answer questions from the media and public about the CPUC, its services, and activities.
- act as liaison with local government officials to assist them in responding to their constituents' inquiries about CPUC-related matters.
- provide assistance and information about how to resolve complaints consumers may have with CPUC-regulated telephone, natural gas, electric, water and transportation companies.
- make Operation Lifesaver presentations to promote safety around railroad tracks.
- assist the public in participating in CPUC proceedings, such as utility hearings, Town Hall meetings, and Commissioner Office Hours. (Ongoing)

Strategy 2 Reaching Across California: The Public Advisor and staff will work with the Executive Director and Division Directors to expand the Outreach Program into areas of California not currently served by a nearby Outreach Officer. First priority will be given to providing an Outreach Officer for the Central Valley. (Ongoing)

Strategy 3 Public Education: The Public Advisor and staff will participate in the various consumer education programs (such as the end of the rate freeze effort for SDG&E customers) with other CPUC divisions. (Ongoing)

Objective C: Review Utility Bill Inserts for Accuracy and Clarity With assistance from Communications, industry division staff and ALJs, review utility bill inserts to make sure Commission requirements for notice of rate, service or policy changes to the public are met, and that inserts are accurate and easily understandable.
(Ongoing)

Objective D: Conduct an Annual Random Survey of PAO clients to measure client satisfaction with the services provided by the Public Advisor’s Office, as well as to receive consumer comments about the CPUC generally.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- ◇ Answer 100 percent of phone calls/messages within 24 hours of receipt.
- ◇ Respond to 100 percent of letters within five business days of receipt.
- ◇ Outreach staff will make at least four outreach site visits per month.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Staffing is adequate to carry out all planned strategies to meet objectives.

Objective	Authorized	Filled	Vacancies
A – Encourage and Provide Support for Public Participation in Commission Proceedings	3.5	4.5	
B – Outreach Program Initiates and Provides a Local Point of Contact and Consumer Education	3	2	1 (On Leave)
C – Review Utility Bill Inserts for Accuracy and Clarity	1.5	1.5	
D – Coordinate with Executive Office			

on Annual Survey of CPUC Services			
Totals	8	9*	1
			7-30-99

- This person is paid out of the temporary help “blanket” funds.