

Public Outreach and Education in Michigan

Energy Regulatory Partnership Program

Abuja, Nigeria

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Orjiakor N. Isiogu, Chairman, MPSC

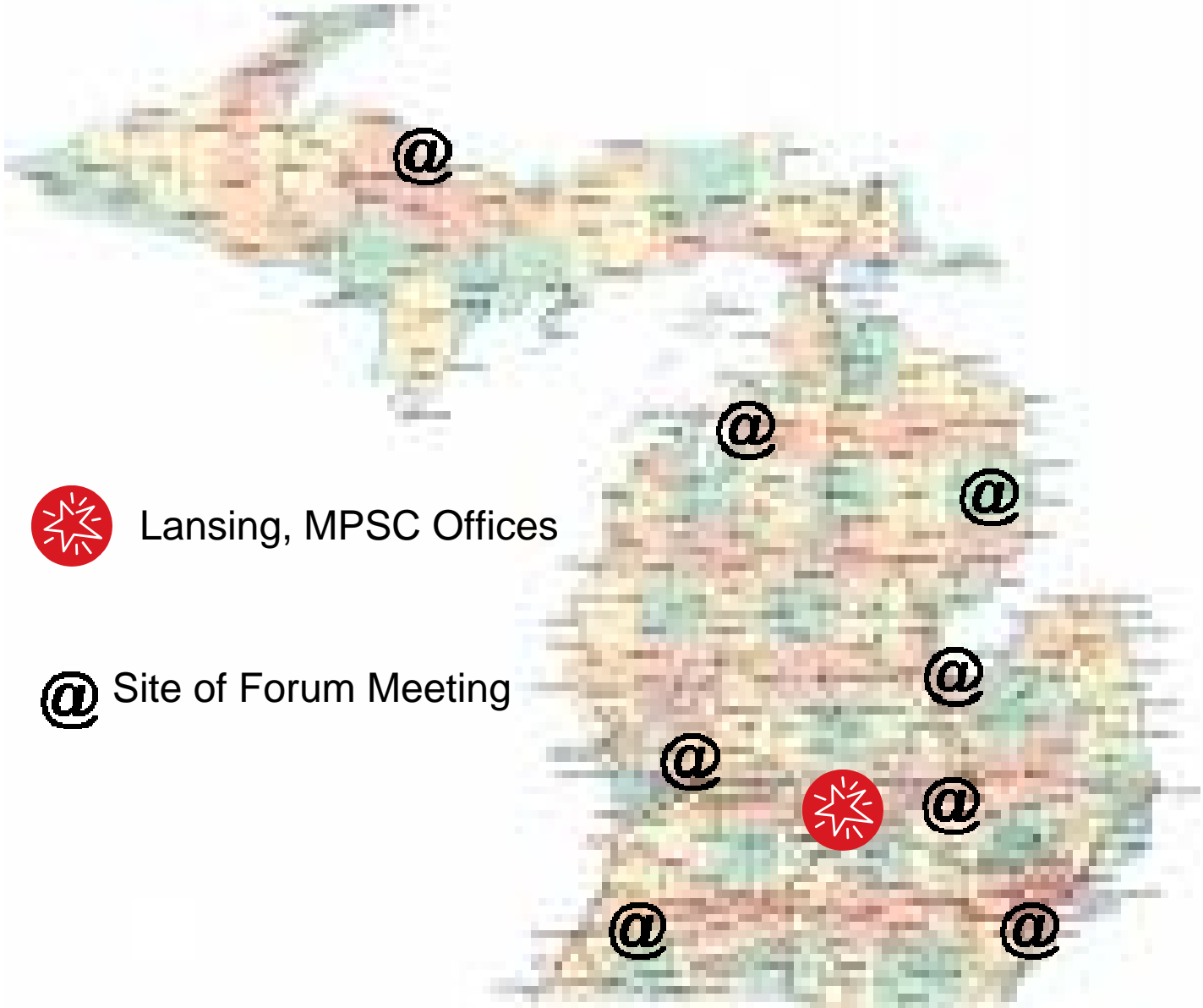
Approaches for Public Outreach

- Annual Consumer Forums
- Public Meetings
- Press Releases
- Collaborative Sessions
- Stakeholder Workshops
- Websites
- Educational Programs
- Consumer Alerts
- Complaint Resolution Hotline

Annual Consumer Forums

- Held before the start of the heating season.
- Attended by a Commissioner, Technical Staff, Utility Representatives & the Public.
- Usually held in large public places that are geographically distributed.
- Held after normal working hours so attendees do not have to miss work.

Example of sites for meetings in a typical year.



Public Meetings

- Some public meetings are required by law.
 - Before building a transmission line, the MPSC and the transmission utility must conduct public hearings in the affected area.
 - Administrative rules cannot be adopted without first conducting at least one public hearing.
 - All MPSC meetings must be open to the public to attend and the public must be given an opportunity to address the MPSC.

Press Releases

- Used to:
 - Publicize Commission orders.
 - Commemorate anniversaries of regulatory activities.
 - Call attention to consumer forums, etc.
 - Announce the submission of reports to the Legislature and the Governor.
 - Solicit public input on matters pending before the MPSC.
 - Promote energy efficiency.

Examples of Recent Press Releases

- Protect MI Child Registry Marks Fourth Anniversary, Continues to Protect Thousands of Michigan Children
- MPSC Directs Glacial Energy of Michigan, Inc. to File its Renewable Energy Plan
- MPSC Chairman: Michigan Entering New Era of Energy Efficiency to Save Ratepayers Money

Collaborative Sessions

- Typically parties to a contested case are ordered by the Commission to meet for a period of time to discuss and resolve issues raised in the case that cannot easily be resolved in the context of a contested case.
- Example – While in charge of the MPSC's Telecommunications Division, Chairman Isiogu was ordered to mediate between various landline telephone service providers to determine how “hot cuts” would be handled.

Another Currently Ongoing Example

- The MPSC began its energy optimization collaborative June 29, 2009 by having Chairman Isiogu, top-level utility executives and representatives of various energy-related groups explain the plans they have to help customers become more energy efficient.
- The collaborative is ongoing and will examine the energy efficiency measures employed by utilities and the energy savings that result. The participants will also make recommendations to improve the EO plans of all utilities.
- All electric and natural gas utilities subject to the MPSC's jurisdiction under Public Act 295 are required to take part in the collaborative. In addition, energy efficiency experts, equipment installers, and other interested stakeholders are expected to participate.

Stakeholder Workshops

[U-15800 - Temporary Order]

- To facilitate implementation of Act 295, the MPSC ordered its Staff to hold two technical conferences. The conferences were attended by all electric providers and other interested persons.
- The technical conferences were to continue “as long as necessary to address all matters that are pertinent to the implementation of Act 295.”
- Although participation in the technical conferences was not mandatory, it was strongly advised.

MPSC

Website Information

- The Commission has developed consumer publications on a variety of energy and telecommunication issues. These publications provide information that may help customers better understand the issues relating to their concern. The information can be mailed to consumers upon request and is also available at the Commission's [Consumer Publications](#) Webpage.
- The Commission has developed a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) that provides answers to common inquiries regarding the Commission's regulatory responsibilities.

FAQs

[Frequently asked questions]

- **Electric Publication Topics:**

[Surviving electrical power outages](#)

[Reducing energy use,](#)

[Service interruption credits,](#)

[Appliance service plans](#)

[Tips for terminating or changing utility service.](#)

Other Website Information for Electric Customers

- [Utility Help for Military Families](#)
- [Earned Income Credit for Low Income Families](#)
- [2008/2009 Home Heating Help](#)
- [File a Complaint or Inquiry](#)
- [Comment on an MPSC Case](#)
- [Deposits](#)
- [Disconnection for Nonpayment](#)
- [Payment Settlement Agreements](#)
- [Explanation of Charges on Bill](#)
- [Commercial or Residential Billing Rules](#)
- [Electric Price Information](#)

Education Efforts in Michigan

- Some Specific Statutory Examples
 - CHOICE Legislation
 - To inform customers of the opportunity to choose an alternative electric energy supplier the MPSC authorized utilities to impose an \$0.18 per meter per month charge on customers' bills.
 - Within 18 months the MPSC disbanded the education program and ordered the monies refunded
 - Energy Optimization Plan Legislation
 - Act 295 of 2008 requires that up to 3% of the cost of implementing the energy optimization plan can go for education.

Consumer Alerts

- Consumer alerts and brochures provide information on important utility topics such as: reducing energy use, bill payment assistance programs, selecting a long distance telephone company, and reducing telemarketing sales calls. New publications are created as consumer needs are identified or new services become available.

Consumer Alerts

- The Commission staff prepares “Consumer Alerts”
- These may be about any energy or utility-related topic, such as projections of future electric and gas prices, availability of propane and gasoline, Winter Protection Plans, etc.
- Sent out to assistance agencies, news outlets, and posted to the Commission website.

An example of a Consumer Alert

- **ELECTRIC OUTAGE SERVICE CREDITS**
- Customers may be eligible for a credit on their electric bill if they experience lengthy or frequent service outages.
- For residential customers the credit is \$25.
- For commercial and other classes of service, the credit is based on a customer's minimum bill.
- To request an electric outage service credit, customers should contact their electric utility.

Complaint Resolution Hotline

- Responding to public contacts regarding utility-related matters is a Commission priority.
- Commission staff is available to provide information to utility customers and respond to complaints regarding billing and service issues.
- The Commission recommends that customers with a utility service dispute first try to resolve their disagreement directly with their utility before contacting the Commission.

Hotline Procedures

- The MPSC's Customer Intake Center is available to assist with inquiries or complaints Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m., excluding State holidays, by calling 1-800-292-9555 (from within Michigan) or 517-241-6180 (from outside of Michigan).
- The Staff encourages customers first to contact their utility with their question before calling the MPSC.
- A Call Intake Assistant will take information on any inquiry or complaint and answer those questions he/she can or direct the customer to the appropriate person for other issues.

On-line MPSC Staff Assistance

- If a customer needs the assistance of MPSC staff, the customer can submit an on-line inquiry by selecting the appropriate category below and completing an on-line form. The message will be responded to as quickly as possible.
- [Submit Telephone Company Inquiry](#)
- [Submit Natural Gas Utility Inquiry](#)
- [Submit Electric Utility Inquiry](#)

Questions?

The End

