

FY 2021



Annual Report

MESSAGE FROM THE **CHAIR**

To Whom it May Concern,

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's mission is to assure all residential and business consumers access to adequate, safe and reliable utility services at fair prices, while facilitating an environment that provides competitive choices. The PUCO impacts every Ohioan every day by regulating essential utility services and monitoring commercial transportation safety.

The PUCO is funded through utility assessments, registrations and fees, and does not obtain any revenue support from Ohio's general revenue fund (GRF).

As directed by R.C. 4935.01 this report highlights emerging trends in the specific to Ohio's long-term energy needs.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions about this report or the PUCO.

Sincerely,
Jenifer French

PUCO

COMMISSIONERS



Chair Jenifer French

Term ends: April 10, 2024



Commissioner M. Beth Trombold

Term ends: April 10, 2023



Commissioner Lawrence K. Friedeman

Term ends: April 10, 2025



Commissioner Daniel R. Conway

Term ends: April 10, 2022



Commissioner Dennis P. Deters

Term ends: April 10, 2026

CASES FILED IN FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2021

In a balanced and transparent manner, the PUCO decides matters ranging from rate cases to service complaints. Regulated utilities, consumers and interested parties regularly participate in the proceedings. During FY 2021, **1315** cases were filed. Each category of utility, along with the number of formal cases opened in fiscal year 2021 in each category, is represented below.

Industry Code	Industry	Number
AU	Two or more industries	9
CT	Competitive telephone	1
EL	Electric	701
GA	Gas	163
GE	Gas and electric	10
HC	Heating and cooling	1
HT	Heating	3
PL	Pipeline	8
RC	Radio Common Carriers	3
RR	Railroad	37
ST	Sewage Treatment	5
TP	Telephone	244
TR	Transportation	122
WS	Water and sewer	4
WW	Waterworks	4
Total cases filed		1315*

** No cases were filed in the following industry codes for FY2021: BR (Bridge); BS (Bus); BT (Bus & Truck); CC (Cooling Company); DE (Depot); Non-regulated Industries; UN (Industry not regulated by the PUCO); WT (Water Transportation). Approximately 83 cases were voided, resulting in 1,232 total cases filed (compared to 1,387 from FY2020).*

All FY21 PUCO cases and related documents are available online on the [Docketing Information System \(DIS\)](#). DIS allows users to subscribe and receive notifications about specific cases as well as view daily reports and search previous cases.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION, FY 2021

Revenues FY 2021	
Assessment to utilities (*see footnote A)	\$52,337,111
Federal gas pipeline safety	\$1,091,203
Federal motor carrier safety	\$11,422,054
Federal railroad	-
Gas pipeline assessment	\$285,369
Harzardout materials and civil forfeitures	\$4,439,682
Fines and penalties - Attorney General collected	\$318,642
Miscellaneous revenues (*see footnote B)	\$669,036
Motor carrier registration	\$5,616,230
Power siting	\$2,605,345
State grade crossing protection	\$1,200,000
Telecommunication relay service	\$1,917,673
Underground facilities protection	\$3,600
Total revenues received by the PUCO	\$81,905,945
Revenue contributed to the General Revenue Fund	\$3,344,871

*A - \$13,962,083 FY 2020 assessment revenues deferred to FY 2021 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic relief efforts.

*B - \$207,852 recovered with Federal Cares Act for COVID-19 activities.

Expenditures FY 2021	
Personnel service - payroll	\$34,753,810
Purchased personal services	\$2,851,253
Supplies and maintenance	\$6,337,274
Equipment	\$1,638,797
Subsidies and shared revenue	\$1,471,674
Transfers	\$5,365,153
Total expenditures by the PUCO	\$52,417,961

PUCO

OUTREACH

ONLINE OUTREACH

Online outreach is one of the key ways that the PUCO connects with consumers across Ohio. On Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, the PUCO regularly posts updates on cases, key consumer information and educational materials.



In FY21, the PUCO used its social media to provide critical information on coronavirus actions. With nearly **6,500** followers across all social platforms, consumers were able to watch virtual commission meetings, attend public hearings and contact the agency all from the safety of their own home.

In addition to social media, the PUCO website is one of the first places that consumers turn to when they need assistance. www.PUCO.ohio.gov received **232,431** visitors and more than **1.7 million** page views.

The PUCO also maintains the Ohio Power Siting Board website, which received **28,654** visitors, and the Energy Choice Ohio website, which received **353,202** visitors.

The PUCO also serves over **63,000** individual consumers and stakeholders through email lists with an average engagement rate of **52%**. These lists publish consumer updates, job opportunities and keep businesses informed on required filings.

PUCO CALL CENTER SAVES OHIOANS \$1 MILLION

Throughout FY 2021, the PUCO Call Center received **59,399** calls, emails, letters, faxes and walk-in inquiries from consumers. Many of these consumers have a question a representative can quickly handle. In other instances, issues require a closer examination. At that point, a PUCO investigator is assigned to look into the matter. In FY 2021, the PUCO Call Center saved Ohio consumers a total of **\$988,535**.



VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

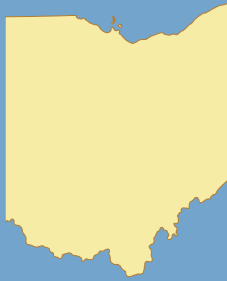
Over the course of FY21, PUCO meetings, forums and public hearings were held virtually due to the COVID-19 emergency. PUCO held **27** virtual Commission Meetings that were streamed live to YouTube, with a total of over **4,500** views.

The Ohio Power Siting Board also conducted 10 virtual Board meetings with over **2,800** views and 24 virtual public hearings with over **4,800** views.

ACROSS THE STATE

As the state agency that regulates public services, the PUCO can, and often, does provide Ohioans with helpful information on a variety of utility issues.

Although COVID-19 limited in-person outreach events in FY21, staff was able to attend and host several virtual events.



Here are some of the ways that the PUCO reached out to consumers in FY21:

- **32** meetings with consumer and stakeholder groups
- **45** presentations and speeches
- **11** rules workshops
- **62** Ohio Power Siting Board public information meetings

Consumers can always request a speaker or presentation from the PUCO online or through our Consumer Call Center.



PUCO INTRODUCES THE NEWS BUREAU

At the beginning of 2021, the PUCO introduced the News Bureau. The News Bureau is a series of online articles, interviews, and graphics focused on explaining timely utility or transportation issues. Over six months, 9 News Bureau pieces were published with a total of **1,500** views.

The most popular News Bureau article ("[Could the Texas outages happen in Ohio?](#)") focused on the effects of a potential winter weather event that could affect Ohio's electric grid. Additional topics covered by the News Bureau have included natural gas auctions and costs, comprehensive electricity planning, the



rate case process, hazardous materials grants and more.

The News Bureau can be found at PUCO.ohio.gov.

KEY CASES

2021

FIRSTENERGY INVESTIGATIONS

In FY21, the PUCO opened four investigations in response to the criminal investigation brought by the U.S. Department of Justice surrounding the passage of Amended Substitute House Bill 6 during the 133rd General Assembly.

Case 20-1502-EL-UNC

This proceeding reviews whether the political and charitable spending by Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, Ohio Edison and Toledo Edison in support of Am. Sub. HB 6 was included, directly or indirectly, in any rates or charges paid by customers.

Case 17-974-EL-UNC

This audit reviews FirstEnergy Corp.'s compliance with Ohio's corporate separation laws and rules, including the time period leading up to the passage of HB 6 and the subsequent referendum.

Case 17-2474-EL-RDR

This case initiates an audit of FirstEnergy's Distribution Modernization Rider.

Case 20-1629-EL-RDR

This proceeding expands the scope of an ongoing third-party audit of FirstEnergy's Delivery Capital Recovery Rider to include certain transactions listed in a recent SEC filing that may or may not have been included in charges to customers.

COMPLIANCE ORDERS

In FY21, the PUCO issued 7 compliance orders to regulated utilities. Many of the orders resulted in customer refunds or forfeitures by the utility.

SFE Energy & Statewide Energy

Retail energy suppliers SFE Energy and Statewise Energy paid a \$174,000 civil forfeiture to the state of Ohio for violations of PUCO rules and regulations. Additionally, the companies credited customers who were enrolled during November 2019 through June 2020. A PUCO investigation accused the companies of misleading and deceptive enrollment practices.

Major Energy Services LLC

Major Energy Services LLC and Major Energy Electric Services LLC paid a \$115,000 civil forfeiture to the state of Ohio for violations of PUCO rules and regulations. They also credited customers approximately \$200,000.

Columbia Gas of Ohio

Columbia Gas of Ohio paid a \$250,000 civil forfeiture to the state of Ohio for violations of natural gas pipeline safety regulations. Additionally, Columbia was ordered to conduct internal reviews of safety practices and provide reports to the Commission. A PUCO investigation alleged Columbia failed to follow its own safety procedures resulting in over-pressurization and a loss of service.

Foraker Gas

Foraker Gas was ordered by the Commission to conduct leak surveys and install various safety measures throughout their system, or otherwise face a \$50,000 civil forfeiture.

EMERGING TRENDS

2021

Per Ohio law, the PUCO provides the following information identifying emerging trends related to energy supply, demand and costs of energy to consumers, and specifying statewide and regional energy needs.

Ohio is part of a regional electric market served by PJM Interconnection — the regional transmission operator. The region includes 13 states and the District of Columbia wherein PJM is responsible for maintaining the reliability of the grid, developing regional transmission expansion plans, and administering wholesale energy capacity, and ancillary services markets.

Each year, PJM procures enough electric supply resources (capacity) to ensure reliability three years ahead. The reliability target includes an excess reserve margin to address unforeseen widespread outages. PJM's current projections indicate a 21.5% reserve margin beginning June 1, 2021 and a 19.9 percent reserve margin beginning June 1, 2022.

For purposes of meeting our statutory load forecasting requirement for fiscal year 2021, the PUCO expects Ohio's peak load, or maximum electric demand, to increase minimally by a total of 4.1% over the 20-year horizon (2019-2039). This is equivalent to a 0.21% electric demand increase per year. Ohio consumed 145.5 million MWh of electricity in 2019 and is forecasted to consume 151.8 million MWh in 2039.



MONITORING SAFETY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ohio is home to more than 72,000 miles of regulated gas pipelines. and 88,000 miles of electric overhead distribution. The PUCO employs field inspectors who perform compliance inspections of gas pipelines and electric distribution facilities to ensure they are following design, construction, operation and maintenance safety regulations.

Each year, PUCO field inspectors work to ensure the safety of gas pipelines and electric infrastructure all over the state. During FY21, staff conducted **263** audits of natural gas pipelines and worked **1013** total days inspecting electric distribution facilities.

The PUCO also annually inspects water and wastewater systems with most inspections occurring in the second half of a calendar year. In FY 2021, inspectors visited **45** water facilities and **16** wastewater facilities for a total of **61** inspections.

Additionally, the PUCO conducted **36** field inspections of telecommunications infrastructure.

WINTER RECONNECT ORDER

The Winter Reconnect Order (WRO) allows customers who have had their home heating service disconnected for nonpayment or who have been threatened with disconnection the opportunity to pay a maximum of \$175, plus a reconnection fee, to restore or maintain their utility service. Customers who use the WRO are required to make payment arrangements with their natural gas or electric company on any outstanding balance. During the 2020–2021 heating season, **181,211** consumers utilized the Winter Reconnect Order. Of the customers that used the WRO, **58,019** were PIPP Plus customers.

UPDATE TO 10-DIGIT DIALING

On July 16, 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules to establish 988 as the new nationwide 3-digit phone number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis counseling. The rules require phone service providers to direct all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

To ensure that those calls to 988 reach the existing lifeline, certain parts of Ohio will need to transition to 10-digit dialing. Anyone in the 440 and 513 area codes will be affected by this change.

The PUCO has been working throughout FY21 to prepare for this change with a transition team made up of service providers and the North American Numbering Plan Administrator. As the process continues, the PUCO will issue press releases and work with local media to inform affected Ohioans.

COVID-19 CONTINUED RESPONSE

As the COVID-19 state of emergency continued through part of FY21, the PUCO maintained and adjusted previous safety-related actions:

- Required regulated utilities to outline a proposed restart plan for disconnections.
- Continued the extension of the Winter Reconnect Order, allowing for a one-time fee to reestablish service or to prevent a disconnection.
- Required door-to-door marketers to follow all safety restrictions as recommended by the state
- Continued to issue hours-of-service waivers to moto carriers hauling fuel or pandemic relief supplies.
- Held legal evidentiary and adjudicatory hearings virtually.

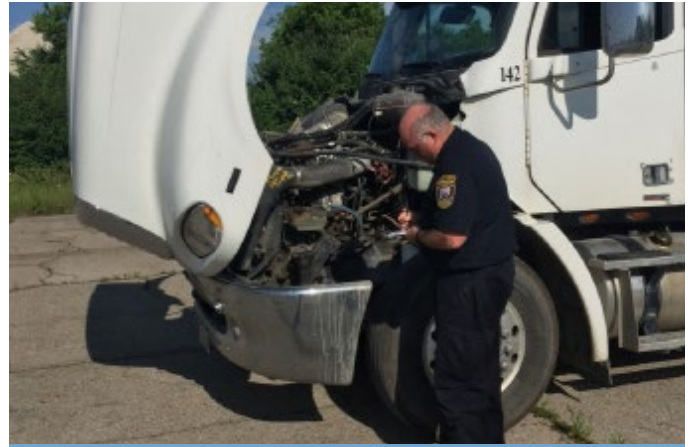
PUCO AWARDS HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TRAINING GRANTS

Throughout fiscal year 2021, the PUCO awarded nine hazardous materials training grants totaling **\$800,000**. The funds will be used to train more than **5,000** public safety and emergency services professionals in Ohio. The PUCO awards hazardous materials planning and training grants to local government subdivisions, educational institutions and state agencies. Funds for these grants comes from fines paid by hazardous material carriers and shippers. Individual grants are based upon applications to the PUCO and are awarded on a reimbursement basis. The grant funds are used for emergency response planning and proper techniques for the management of hazardous material releases.



RAIL CROSSING SAFETY UPGRADES AND INSPECTIONS

The PUCO ordered a total of **46** rail crossing safety upgrades during FY 2021, including the installation of lights and gates, supplemental assistance upgrades and circuitry upgrades. These upgrades are funded through federal, state and local monies. The rail division also conducted **793** federal rail safety inspections and 4,647 grade crossings in the state were inspected for state compliance. The number of train-motor vehicle crashes in Ohio in 2020 was 67.



PUCO KEEPS OHIO HIGHWAYS SAFE

The PUCO serves as the lead agency for the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program and in this capacity partners with the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) to ensure that commercial motor vehicles are safely traveling throughout Ohio. PUCO and OSHP inspectors conducted more than **72,494** driver/vehicle inspections during FY21. Each inspection follows a thorough process to ensure that the driver and vehicle meet necessary state and federal regulations. Vehicles, drivers and companies that fail to meet these regulations may be declared out-of-service and cannot continue operating until they comply. FY21 inspections resulted in **9,351** vehicles and **4,701** drivers being placed out-of-service due to severe violations.

Additionally, the PUCO conducted **433** motor carrier and shipper compliance reviews to ensure proper state and federal safety and hazardous materials regulations were followed. PUCO staff conducted **1,151** new entrant safety audits and worked with more than **523** motor carriers during FY21 to help them understand and comply with applicable safety and hazardous materials regulations.



180 East Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

www.PUCO.ohio.gov

Jenifer French, Chair
Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.