

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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In re: Petition for increase in rates by Gulf
Power Company.

DOCKET NO. 110138-EI

DATED: October 21, 2011

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Direct Testimony of

Rhonda L. Hicks has been served by U.S. Mail this 21st day of October, 2011, to the following:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Klancke', written over a horizontal line.

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DOCKET NO. 110138-EI Petition for increase in rates by Gulf
Power Company.

WITNESS: Direct Testimony of **Rhonda L. Hicks**, Appearing on
Behalf of the Staff of the Florida Public Service Commission.

DATE FILED: October 21, 2011

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1 DIRECT TESTIMONY OF RHONDA L. HICKS

2 **Q. Please state your name and address.**

3 A. My name is Rhonda L. Hicks. My address is 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard;
4 Tallahassee, Florida; 32399-0850.

5 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

6 A. I am employed by the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC or Commission) as
7 Chief of the Bureau of Consumer Assistance in the Division of Service, Safety, and
8 Consumer Assistance.

9 **Q. Please give a brief description of your educational background and professional
10 experience.**

11 A. I graduated from Florida A&M University in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree
12 in Accounting. I have worked for the FPSC for 23 years. I have varied experience in
13 the electric, gas, telephone, and water and wastewater industries. My work experience
14 includes rate cases, cost recovery clauses, depreciation studies, tax, audit, consumer
15 outreach and consumer complaints. I currently work in the Bureau of Consumer
16 Assistance within the Division of Safety, Reliability, and Consumer Assistance where I
17 manage consumer complaints and inquiries.

18 **Q. What is the function of the Bureau of Consumer Assistance?**

19 A. The bureau's function is to resolve disputes between regulated companies and their
20 customers as quickly, effectively, and inexpensively as possible.

21 **Q. Do all consumers, who have disputes with their regulated company, contact the
22 Bureau of Consumer Assistance?**

23 A. No. Consumers may initially file their complaint with the regulated company and
24 reach resolution without the bureau's intervention. In fact, consumers are encouraged
25 to allow the regulated company the opportunity to resolve the dispute prior to any

1 Commission involvement.

2 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

3 A. The purpose of my testimony is to advise the Commission of the number of consumer
4 complaints logged against Gulf Power Company under Rule 25-22.032, Florida
5 Administrative Code, Consumer Complaints, from January 1, 2009, through
6 September 30, 2011. My testimony will also provide information on the type of
7 complaints logged and those complaints that appear to be rule violations.

8 **Q. What do your records indicate concerning the number of complaints logged**
9 **against Gulf Power Company?**

10 A. From January 1, 2009, through September 30, 2011, the FPSC logged 1,520
11 complaints against Gulf Power Company. During 2009 and 2010, the FPSC logged
12 593 and 602 complaints against Gulf Power Company, respectively. In 2011, from
13 January 1, 2011, through September 30, 2011, the FPSC logged 325 complaints
14 against Gulf Power Company. Of the 1,520 complaints, 1,394 were transferred
15 directly to the company for resolution and required no further action from the
16 Commission.

17 **Q. What have been the most common types of complaints received by the**
18 **Commission?**

19 A. During the specified time period, the majority of complaints logged against Gulf
20 Power Company involved billing.

21 **Q. Do you have any exhibits attached to your testimony?**

22 A. Yes. I am sponsoring Exhibit RLH-1.

23 **Q. Would you explain Exhibit RLH-1?**

24 A. Yes. Exhibit RLH-1 is a summary listing of complaints logged against Gulf Power
25 Company under Rule 25-22.032, Florida Administrative Code. The complaints,

1 received January 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011, were captured in the
2 Commission's Consumer Activity Tracking System (CATS). The summary groups the
3 complaints by Close Type and within each Close Type, the complaints are segregated
4 by Pre-Close Type. The first grouping is Pre-Close types that are still pending. The
5 remaining groupings are categorized by Close Type codes such as EB-49, GI-02, GI-
6 05, GI-25, etc.

7 **Q. What is a Pre-Close Type?**

8 A. A Pre-Close Type is an internal categorization code that is applied to each complaint
9 upon receipt. A complaint is assigned a Pre-Close Type based solely on the initial
10 information provided by the consumer.

11 **Q. What is a Close Type?**

12 A. A Close Type is also an internal categorization code. It is assigned to each complaint
13 once staff completes its investigation and a proposed resolution is provided to the
14 consumer. In some instances, the Pre-Close Type will differ from the Close Type
15 because staff's investigation reveals facts that were not available upon receipt of the
16 complaint.

17 **Q. A great majority of complaints were resolved as Close Type GI-02, Courtesy**
18 **Call/Warm Transfer. Can you explain this Close Type?**

19 A. Yes. Gulf Power Company participates in the Commission's Transfer-Connect
20 (Warm Transfer) System. This system allows the Commission to directly transfer a
21 customer to the company's customer service personnel. Once the call is transferred to
22 Gulf Power Company, it provides the customer with a proposed resolution. Customers
23 who are not satisfied with the company's proposed resolution have the option of
24 recontacting the Commission. While the Commission is able to assign a Pre-Close
25 Type to each of the complaints in this category, a specific Close Type is not assigned

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because the proposed resolution is provided by Gulf Power Company. Consequently, the assigned Close Type allows staff to monitor the number of complaints resolved via the Commission's Transfer-Connect System.

Q. How many of the complaints summarized on your exhibit has staff determined may be a violation of Commission rules?

A. Of the 1,520 complaints, staff determined that one may be violation of Commission rules.

Q. What was the nature of the possible rule violation?

A. The possible rule violation was failure to respond to the Commission in a timely manner.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

A. Yes, it does.

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
 COMPLAINTS BY CLOSE TYPE FOR SINGLE COMPANY
 RECEIVED BETWEEN 01/01/2009 AND 09/30/2011
 FOR GULF POWER COMPANY



TYPE:

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DELAY IN CONNECTION	1
Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS	1
Total Cases For Type	2

TYPE: EB-49 FAILURE TO RESPOND TIMELY TO

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS	1
Total Cases For Type EB-49	1

TYPE: GI-02 COURTESY CALL/WARM TRANSFER

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DELAY IN CONNECTION	14
Total Cases For PreClose Type: DEPOSIT	34
Total Cases For PreClose Type: FCC-OTHER (SVC)	1
Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS	137
Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER DISCONNECTS	30
Total Cases For PreClose Type: OUTAGES	23
Total Cases For PreClose Type: PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT	970
Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE	172
Total Cases For PreClose Type: REPAIR	5
Total Cases For PreClose Type: SAFETY ISSUE	8
Total Cases For Type GI-02	1394

TYPE: GI-03 PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE	1
Total Cases For Type GI-03	1

TYPE: GI-05 HIGH BILL

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS	1
Total Cases For Type GI-05	1

TYPE: GI-06 CURRENT DIVERSION

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For Type GI-06 1

TYPE: GI-08 RULES & TARIFFS

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DEPOSIT 2

Total Cases For Type GI-08 2

TYPE: GI-11 REPAIR SERVICE

Total Cases For PreClose Type: REPAIR 1

Total Cases For Type GI-11 1

TYPE: GI-19 MOMENTARY ELECTRIC OUTAGES(LESS

Total Cases For PreClose Type: OUTAGES 1

Total Cases For Type GI-19 1

TYPE: GI-25 IMPROPER BILLING (ADDED 7/03)

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 16

Total Cases For Type GI-25 16

TYPE: GI-28 IMPROPER DISCONNECT (ADDED 7/03)

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For Type GI-28 1

TYPE: GI-30 QUALITY OF SERVICE (ADDED 7/03)

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For Type GI-30 1

TYPE: GI-31 ESTIMATED METER READINGS (ADDED 7/03)

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 2

Total Cases For Type GI-31 2

TYPE: GI-32 PROCESS REVIEW CASE

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DELAY IN CONNECTION 1

Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS 1

Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE 1

Total Cases For Type GI-32 3

Total Cases For PreClose Type: DELAY IN CONNECTION	1
Total Cases For PreClose Type: DEPOSIT	7
Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER BILLS	55
Total Cases For PreClose Type: IMPROPER DISCONNECTS	4
Total Cases For PreClose Type: OUTAGES	7
Total Cases For PreClose Type: QUALITY OF SERVICE	13
Total Cases For PreClose Type: REPAIR	5
Total Cases For PreClose Type: SAFETY ISSUE	1
Total Cases For Type GI-72	93

Total Complaints Late Responding: 1

Total Complaints Infraction: 1

Grand Total: 1520

****Category**
***I = INFRACTION**
***C = NON-INFRACTION**