



Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor

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Electric utility tree trimming rule: OUCC encourages consumer input

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) is encouraging consumers to weigh in on the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission's (IURC's) proposed rule for electric utility tree trimming and vegetation management.

Consumers may comment either by:

- Speaking at the **IURC public hearing on Thursday, May 24, 2012**. The hearing will be held at 6:00 p.m. in Room 222 at the PNC Center (101 W. Washington Street in Indianapolis), or
- Submitting **written comments** on the proposed rule no later than Thursday, June 14, 2012.

Following a 19-month investigation, the IURC issued a November 2010 order establishing a number of safeguards for consumers and property owners regarding electric utility vegetation management. These include required compliance with nationally recognized standards, advance notice before tree trimming projects, and annual reporting requirements for utilities. The order also established a rulemaking proceeding to address customer education, notification, tree replacement and dispute resolution.

The proposed rule would require investor-owned utilities to:

- Provide 2 notices to affected customers at least 2 weeks before a tree trimming project, including 1 written notice and 1 notice either by telephone or a visit to the property. (Exceptions would apply for emergencies and storm events, vacant buildings, and circumstances in which the utility has a court order, written easement, government permit or contractual agreement expressly giving it the right to manage vegetation.)
- Offer specific information on the customer notices including a telephone number for a utility representative who can answer customer inquiries on tree trimming and vegetation management. The written notice would also have to include a telephone number and Website address for the utility's contractor, if it uses one.
- Provide customer notices at least 60 days before upgrading a transmission or distribution line to a higher voltage level.
- Temporarily postpone tree trimming on a property if the owner objects within 5 days of receiving notice.
- Develop customer education plans on tree trimming and safety.
- Ensure that their employees and contractors carry identification and present it for inspection upon the customer's request, either when trimming trees or providing advance notification.

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The proposed rule, which would add new language to the Indiana Administrative Code, is available for review on the OUCC's Website at www.in.gov/oucc/2555.htm.

The IURC's 2010 order and pending rulemaking apply only to the state's **5 investor-owned electric utilities** (Duke Energy, Indiana Michigan Power, Indianapolis Power & Light, Northern Indiana Public Service Co., and Vectren). They do not apply to municipal electric utilities or rural electric membership cooperatives (REMCs).

Consumers who would like to submit written comments may send them to the OUCC online at www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm, or by mail, email, or fax:

- **Mail:** Consumer Services Staff
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 South
Indianapolis, IN 46204
- **email:** uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov
- **Fax:** (317) 232-5923

Written comments should include the consumer's **name, mailing address**, and a reference to "**IURC Rulemaking No. 10-04.**"

The OUCC must receive all comments no later than Noon, Indianapolis time, on Thursday, June 14, 2012.

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(IURC Rulemaking No. 10-04)

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.

To learn more, visit www.IN.gov/OUCC or follow us at www.twitter.com/IndianaOUCC.