

W.U.T.C.
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA. 90504-7250

Subject: Docket #UE-990473
Electric Rule Revision

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in regards to Avista Utilities business practices. Rather than just griping I do have suggestions. Avista has become very heavy handed in their treatment of customers. I realize that they have a right as any other business to make a profit and collect on services rendered and would not ever consider that they shouldn't. However I feel from my own experience recently that they take extreme action way before it is warranted. Before I tell you my recent experience I would like to give you my suggestions.

#1. Electricity should be deemed a necessity unless a safe, efficient, and affordable power alternative is available.

#2. If there are children under the age of 12, an elderly person, or someone with a debilitating disease power should not ever be shut off and affordable payments should be worked out with the household. Noting the word AFFORDABLE. Another way to state this is within their means.

#3. Because there are no other affordable power sources that Avista Utilities compete with directly I think it would be fair for each households power bill to be figured by income rather than use of power considering that the people treated the most callously by Avista Utilities are in the lower income brackets. Better yet would be a fixed payment like the cable and telephone bill that is affordable for everyone. I was told recently by someone that Avista doesn't create the energy they so diligently monitor and charge for all they do is provide the conduit that brings it to us and the service to keep it running. The dams provide the power and they were built by the Core of Engineers. So really all we should pay for is the maintenance and service anyway.

#4. When a person calls to make arrangements about their bill because they are temporarily having difficulty financially Avista Utilities should treat those people with common human dignity which is everyones inalienable right. They should not be able to threaten to shut off the power when someone does not pay right in their time frame since many people are paid on certain days and have little or no control which day they can pay their bills. I say this because they don't just threaten they follow through swiftly and diligently. Every other business I have worked for or dealt with as long as effort is made to stay in contact they happily work with anyone

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having trouble. Also they consider the individual circumstance rather than lumping everyone under the same hard rule.

#5. Customer representatives should be available in every local office for people to talk to face to face instead of hiding behind phone stations and pay stations. That is the coldest most heartless business practice I have ever seen.

I apologize for the length of my suggestion list and I thank you for your time and patience. The reason for my strong opinion on this matter will follow on the next page as I will be sending it to other individuals who may be of help in this matter.

Loretta (Lori) Knoll

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loretta L Knoll". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Avista Business Practices

My name is Loretta Knoll but I prefer to be called Lori since I was called that since I was born. I have an overwhelming desire to see changes made in the way Avista Utilities does business because of the way I was treated by them last January. January 17, 2000 to be exact. I can remember the date well because it was three days before our monthly payday. I received the threat from Avista that if by the seventeenth I had not paid my account in full they would shut my power off but it did not concern me because I had talked to someone at Avista about skipping payment in December and making it up in January on the twentieth and they had okayed it. To my complete surprise when I came home that day I had a shut off notice put in my sliding glass door. The first thing I thought was someone opened my door to put that envelope there and that upset me and then when I opened the envelope and read the notice that they shut off my power I was shocked. I immediately called the number on the notice and when someone got on the line I said, I need to talk to your boss. I was transferred right away. I said to Lynn that someone had better get right back to my house and turn my power on or I was calling the sheriff because whoever put the notice in my door had to open it in order to put the notice in it. I also explained how I had made arrangements to get caught up on the twentieth. She asked who I had talked to and of course I didn't know and since she had no way of checking the records because I didn't know it made no difference to her. She told me that their justification for shutting off my power was because I had not, according to their records, made a payment in the last six months. I of course said that is not true, I made a payment in November for sure and I had made two payments in September. Six months prior would have been July or August. Which would mean that we hadn't paid our power bill since we lived here and we just moved in at this address in August. We had the power connected at this address because we built this house ourselves. At one point we were paying two power bills, one for here and one for the rental we lived in before we moved here. Anyway come to find out that the reason that they didn't count the September payment is because I hadn't changed the account number at the credit union as we had been making payments from our account there.

I admittedly became overwhelmed with emotion on the phone and explained to her that we had used our own money to build a garage for a man that did not pay us back the materials that we paid for so it wiped out two of our paychecks that is a long story in itself so we will not go there at this time. She told me that while she sympathized with me in that matter she

is just doing her job. I begged and pleaded for her to not charge me all the extra charges, hook-up fee and deposit as it would only set us back that much more and she informed me that she could not make exceptions for anyone. So as I needed my power on I agreed to her terms. Even though I knew that I had made payments and arrangements because quite frankly I was an emotional wreck that week to begin with and my only thought at that point was the fact that very soon my kids would be cold and my freezer would be thawing. My bill jumped that day from a manageable \$196.43 to \$426.16. If the \$79 I paid that day to be hooked back up again would have just been applied to my regular bill my balance would have been a very manageable \$117.43. This new payment plan they were so gracious to put me on has made it very difficult to sometimes impossible to pay my other bills.

I think that Avista has become very heavy handed in their collections. I find it ironic that microsoft is being put through the ringers for being a monopoly and companies like Avista are getting away with what they are doing with no regard for the human condition. I think it completely shameful. Thank You for hearing me out on this matter.