DOE/RB/10256--T1

INNOVATIVE RATES PROGRAM

DOE/RG/10256--T1

DE83 017922

CITY UTILITIES OF SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

FINAL REPORT

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1.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

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1.1 FEDERAL OBJECTIVES

Title II of the Energy Conservation and Production Act (ECPA) as amended by the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) provided financial assistance to state utility regulatory commissions, nonregulated electric utilities, and the Tennessee Valley Authority through the Innovative Rates Program. The financial assistance was to be used to plan or carry out electric utility regulatory rate reform initiatives relating to innovative rate structures that encourage conservation of energy, electric utility efficiency and reduced costs, and equitable rates to consumers. The financial assistance was available through cooperative agreements with the U. S. Department of Energy.

Nine tasks and a possibility for other tasks were specified and eligible for funding. One of the tasks eligible for funding was "Rate Information to Consumers" which was also one of the electric regulatory standards to be considered under PURPA. Activities considered appropriate under this task included developing, testing, and implementing innovative regulatory approaches to rate-related communications in order to improve consumer acceptance and use of rate reforms in effect in the service area.

1.2 LOCAL OBJECTIVES

City Utilities made significant accomplishments in the area of presenting conservation information to consumers. Under a cooperative agreement with the Department of Energy, City Utilities developed and implemented a comprehensive energy conservation program. The program included many activities directed

toward making consumers aware of the need for energy conservation and following up with assistance and information on how to conserve energy. This program met with community approval.

City Utilities planned to develop a similar program with regard to rate information. Much of the experience gained in the energy conservation program could be used to develop effective and innovative methods for presenting rate information. City Utilities objectives included:

- 1) developing innovative and effective approaches to presenting rate information to consumers;
- 2) determining what general rate information the majority of consumers would find useful and developing effective methods for presenting that information;
- 3) preparing a handbook on innovative and effective methods of presenting rate information to consumers; and
- 4) implementing an effective rate information program at City Utilities.

Energy costs are soaring and consumers want and need to become more aware of what the prices are and why. As the electric rate structures become more complex and provide a variety of pricing signals, the consumer needs to be provided with much more rate information than has been necessary in the past. Traditional methods of relaying rate information may not be adequate in the future. Under the project, City Utilities planned to explore several innovative techniques.

2.0 ORIGINAL ACTIVITIES PLANNED

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2.1 ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ORIGINAL SCOPE OF WORK

The original scope of work included ten activities to be performed by City Utilities. The first activity was the management of this project. The second activity included collecting the data necessary to determine what rate information should be provided.

Methods of presenting rate information to consumers was divided into three categories: information which is provided to all consumers (Activities 3, 4, and 5), information which is available to any consumer (Activities 6, 7, and 8), and rate information which is provided during a routine customer contact (Activity 9). These categories represent different levels of detail of rate information. The last activity was documentation of the findings of the project.

2.1.1 ACTIVITY #1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

City Utilities proposed to establish a Project Team to manage and administer the Cooperative Agreement for the Innovative Rates Program. Additionally, a Task Force, responsible for developing and implementing the task, was to be selected.

A comprehensive Program Plan for the implementation of the Cooperative Agreement was to be developed by the Task Force and approved by the Project Team. Project directive sheets would be issued for every major activity to be accomplished. Each project directive would document a description of the activity, the area responsible for performing the activity, the accounting procedures, the estimated cost of the activity, and the schedule

for completion of the activity. The Task Force was also to develop a detailed milestone chart for scheduling and a mechanism for reporting the progress of activities and any problem areas encountered.

In addition to the Program Plan, a similar "Management Plan" was to be developed for the Office of Utility Systems at the Department of Energy. This activity also included the preparation of quarterly progress reports and other reports requested by the Office of Utility Systems in order to assess progress.

Manpower and other resource requirements were to be reviewed. In addition, a training program was to be developed for existing and new personnel under this activity.

2.1.2. ACTIVITY #2: DATA COLLECTION

In order to determine what information would be useful to the customer regarding rates, it was necessary to determine what current knowledge and attitudes exist among customers. Several methods were proposed to accomplish this goal. An independent research firm was proposed to complete this activity.

City Utilities also proposed to purchase programmable displays and program them to survey customer opinions and levels of information about rates, using two existing areas of customer contact, the mobile information center, a renovated passenger bus from the Transportation Department, and the utility lobby display area. The questions would correlate with information gathered during the initial survey. Changes in customer interest and knowledge would be assessed to evaluate the program.

The Task Force, with guidance from Management, would

determine the rate information to be disseminated to the public, dependent upon survey results and the current rates situation. Some examples of information suggested were: time-of-day rates, analysis of the cost of service, a breakdown of fuel cost adjustment factors, seasonal rates, and rates for special groups.

2.1.3 ACTIVITY #3: UTILITY BILL EVALUATION

The utility bill, because it is distributed to every customer and contains the impact of the utilities' rates, has great potential for conveying rate information. The rate information included on current utility bills was to be evaluated.

Sample bill formats were to be prepared and tested.

2.1.4 ACTIVITY #4: BILLING ENCLOSURE/MAILING EVALUATION

Evaluation of a bill enclosure was proposed including an evaluation of the different approaches utilities use to explain rate information to customers. In addition, a rate sheet for each class of customer was to be prepared as possible enclosure with all utility bills.

A sample mailer to be used to reach all customers was to be prepared for use at the appropriate time. This brochure would explain the reason for a rate increase (any of several reasons could be included) and how the rate increase would affect different rate classes.

2.1.5 ACTIVITY #5: MEDIA PROGRAM EVALUATION

The media program would cover two areas: special presentations or advertising and news coverage. Sample news releases and specific program topics were to be prepared.

2.1.6 ACTIVITY #6: DISPLAY EVALUATION

Displays for placement on the mobile information center in

the utility lobby area and in bank or other public building lobbies were to be designed and in some cases acquired or built. City Utilities had found displays, particularly interactive display, to be effective in presenting information.

One display to be prepared was to include at least one meter which provides customers with information regarding the dollar amount of their bills at various points in time, one meter which registers usage at various periods of time (time-of-use meter), and one meter which measures demand.

Brochures to compliment the information presented in the displays were to be published.

2.1.7 ACTIVITY #7: RATE STUDY SESSIONS EVALUATION

Rate study sessions had been and were to be conducted in conjunction with the PURPA standards and utility rate increases proposed to become effective October 1, 1980. City Utilities has held similar sessions since 1977.

Rate study sessions for particular groups, for example industry business managers, church board members etc., were proposed to be held during which their rates could be analyzed and information could be provided on how to take advantage of the rates to reduce utility bills.

2.1.8 ACTIVITY #8: SPEAKERS BUREAU EVALUATION

An informal speakers bureau has been available at City Utilities for several years. This activity was to evaluate the use of a speaker's bureau which includes rate related topics.

A brief brochure including various programs available was to be designed and information and graphics developed under previous activities were to be utilized.

2.1.9 ACTIVITY #9: INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMER CONTACT

Contacts are made with many customers on an individual basis through customer service personnel and the home energy auditors. These opportunities should be maximized to relate accurate rate information to customers and to respond to customer inquiries. From direct contact with the customer, these persons are also able to gauge the nature and degree of customer attitudes and beliefs about rates.

A set of sample questions received by customer contact personnel was to be compiled and distributed along with the appropriate responses to the questions. Training sessions for customer contact personnel were to include rate information appropriate to the group.

2.1.10 ACTIVITY #10: DOCUMENTATION

At the project's end, City Utilities proposed to prepare a handbook designed for use by other utilities or state utility regulatory commissions. The handbook would summarize the approaches and methods of providing rate information to consumers evaluated by City Utilities under this project.

2.2 ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDER THE MODIFIED SCOPE OF WORK

In an addendum to the Scope of Work, the Department of Energy requested that an extensive study of bill stuffing techniques be conducted. The evaluation was to include pretesting and post testing of a bill stuffer.

City Utilities proposed a comprehensive review of bill stuffers with activities which would include: 1) a formal review of techniques currently employed and bill stuffers prepared by other utilities; 2) the development of a professionally designed bill

stuffer modified, if necessary, following a pretest of not less than 50 subjects; 3) preparation of a report regarding the rationale for selection of content and design elements; and 4) an evaluation and comparative analysis of the bill stuffer performed by a professional organization using test and control groups of not less than 300 participants in each group.

This proposal later was modified as follows: In place of the previous four steps, the utility was to employ a professional consultant to compare the effectiveness of bill enclosures and direct mailings. The consultant was to select a sample of utility customers, half of whom would receive a brochure inserted in their regular monthly bill. The other half of the sample would receive identical information by direct mail. The consultant was also to design and conduct a survey to determine which distribution method had the greater effect. City Utilities was responsible for designing and producing the test brochure and for monitoring the project. In addition to the bill stuffer/direct mail comparison, the activity also was to determine readership and retention levels for the brochure along with comprehensive demographic information.

3.0 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PROJECT

3.0 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PROJECT

3.1 Accomplishments Under the Original Scope of Work

The emphasis of this project was to evaluate innovative methods of presenting rate information to consumers. Following are the activities which were accomplished.

3.1.1 ACTIVITY #1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Under this task, City Utilities directed and monitored the Cooperative Agreement and prepared requisite reports. Progress was measured according to a program plan and a management plan which were developed during the first year of the program. The management plan and six progress reports were submitted to the Department of Energy.

The project was managed by a project team representing the customer service and rates sections of the utility. City Utilities' project accounting system was utilized to monitor and report cost information.

Manpower and other resource requirements were reviewed. To complete the requirements for the program, a temporary employee was added. The temporary employee had a background in communications.

3.1.2 ACTIVITY #2: DATA COLLECTION

City Utilities contracted with the Southwest Missouri Research Institute (SMRI) to conduct a random telephone survey to identify various consumer and utility rate information requirements. The survey consisted of 12 questions and was answered by a sample of 250 customers.

To supplement the survey, City Utilities purchased a mini-computer display from Interpoint, Incorporated. The display includes an opinion sampler programmed with twenty statements.

Customers respond to each question with strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or no opinion. Participants are also able to compare their responses with those of the other customers who gave opinions.

The opinion sampler has been displayed in several locations throughout the project.

3.1.3 RATE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO ALL CONSUMERS ACTIVITY #3: UTILITY BILL EVALUATION

A special task force, including the members of the project team, was formed to: 1) identify the utility's requirement for rate and billing information, 2) evaluate various formats for the utility bill (i.e., multiple pages vs. one longer page), 3) evaluate insertion equipment, and 4) evaluate remittance processing procedures and equipment.

As a result of these evaluations made during the first year of the project, City Utilities redesigned its customer bill. The new bill was developed after the task force compiled a comprehensive report on the utility bill and after a sample bill was reviewed through a customer survey. Several items of rate information were added to the bill. The utility began mailing the revised bill in August, 1981.

Customer reaction to the new bill format has been very favorable. After the first mailing of the new bill, the Utility received 197 telephone comments and several letters, the great majority of them complimentary.

3.1.4 ACTIVITY #4: BILL ENCLOSURE/MAILING EVALUATION

During the first year of the project, City Utilities developed a brochure containing residential utility rates which

explained how to calculate a utility bill. Customer reaction in a small test brochure was very favorable.

A second brochure, expanded to include commercial and industrial rates as well as residential rates, was distributed to customers in December, 1981. This brochure included an explanation of charges such as the customer charge, energy charge and demand charge.

A third, revised brochure giving electric rates only was produced in March, 1982. An explanation for the rate change was included in the brochure.

3.1.5 ACTIVITY #5: MEDIA PROGRAM EVALUATION

Under the direction of its public Information Officer, City Utilities began filming a series of public service television programs in October, 1981. Several of these 15-minute spots, which are broadcast on a local telecable station, deal with rates.

City Utilities also implemented an information advertising campaign using radio, newspapers, and television. The first of these advertisements compared the amount a City Utilities customer pays for electricity with the amounts paid by customers of other utilities in the state. Other advertisements explained why rates are being increased for a four-year period in order to purchase two combustion turbines necessary for the Utility to meet its electric demand.

The Public Information Officer institutes press conferences with members of the media and regularly prepares news releases for them.

Having a specified individual as a liason with the media is a new concept for the Utility, as is its entire informational media program.

3.1.6 ACTIVITY #6: DISPLAY EVALUATION

During the first year of the program, displays were designed and completed which include: 1) a guide to electric appliance costs, 2) steps to follow when calculating a residential electric bill, and 3) instructions for reading gas and electric meters.

A fourth display was completed later which utilizes meters to help provide rate information, particularly about time-of-day rates. The display includes three types of meters--a kilowatt-hour meter, a demand meter, and a time-of-use meter. Two additional meters which show dollar usage have been purchased, and will be incorporated into the displays at a later time.

A minicomputer (Interrospoder) purchased by the utility is being used for both displays and surveys.

The exhibits have been used at various mall shows and community fairs. They also have been installed in the "Energy Bus", a mobile information center, which has visited schools and local shopping centers.

3.1.7 ACTIVITY #7: RATE STUDY SESSIONS EVALUATION

In conjunction with PURPA, several reports were prepared over the course of the project. A series of rate study sessions were held during the project, attended primarily by a committee of members of the Board of Public Utilities. Progress in the sessions has been slower than anticipated due to the unfamiliarity of Board members with cost of service.

A rate seminar was held for local churches which emphasized

their special requirements. City Utilities' optional time-of-use rate was a major topic of the seminar.

3.1.8 ACTIVITY #8: SPEAKER'S BUREAU EVALUATION

A speakers bureau covering different aspects of the utility was developed during the first year of the program, and a sample brochure was developed to publicize it.

Over the course of the project, several rate-related presentations have been given. Representative of these was a speech regarding rates given before a group of nonresidential customers at a Missouri Department of Natural Resources Energy Management Seminar, and a talk given to members of the Springfield Ministerial Alliance. In both cases, a questionnaire was distributed after the talk to allow participants to respond to the presentation and to request additional information.

3.1.9 ACTIVITY #9: INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMER CONTACTS

A survey of employees who have regular contact with customers was conducted during the first year of the project in order to learn their opinions and attitudes about providing rate information to consumers. From this survey, a list of commonly asked questions and their answers was compiled. The list is used in training employees to effectively respond to customer inquiries, and was partially reprinted in a customer handbook distributed to all City Utilities' customers.

Special attention was given to rate information during training sessions held for meter readers and customer information telephone clerks. Charts and diagrams have been developed to assist employees in visualizing the effects of rate changes.

3.2 DOCUMENTATION

As a final activity, a handbook summarizing the results of the project was prepared for use by other utilities and utility regulators. The handbook concerned how to effectively communicate rate information to consumers and included sections on different communication and distribution methods. A copy of this handbook is provided in Section 6.0, Exhibits.

3.3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER THE MODIFIED SCOPE OF WORK

Accomplishments under the modified scope of work were limited. A request for proposal was submitted to three consulting firms designated by the DOE Technical Project Officer. Proposals were returned by two of the firms. These proposals were evaluated, and Midwest Research Institute of Kansas City, Missouri was selected.

A contract was never offered, however, because at that time the Board of Public Utilities directed that the survey should be postponed and completed at a later date as a portion of a comprehensive attitudinal survey of City Utilities' customers. The Board indicated that this survey should be conducted by a large, nationally-known consulting firm, which they felt would hold greater credence for City Utilities' customers. An expanded request for proposal was sent out and replies were evaluated.

At this point, public criticism of the expenditures necessary for such a project once again caused postponement of the survey. At the time of this report, the survey is still tabled.

A test brochure was written and designed as part of this activity but in light of the above events, it was never published.

4.0 TIMETABLE/MILESTONE CHART

MILESTONE SCHEDULE AND STATUS REPORT

1. Task Title/Identification INNOVATIVE RATES PROGRAM - RATE INFORMATION TO CONSUMERS													2. Reporting Period 10-1-81 through 3-31-82					3. Cooperative Agreement No. DE-FC01-79RG-10256									
4. Recipient (name, address) City Utilities of Springfield, Missouri Jewell P. O. Box 551 Springfield, MO 65801													5. Task Start Date October 1, 1979					6. Task Completion Date March 31, 1982									
7. Responsibility Code	8. Activity/Subactivity	9. Fiscal Years and Months												10. Percent Complete													
		YEAR 1												YEAR 2												a) Planned b) Actual	
		FY 1980 (Oct 1979-Sep 1980)												FY 1981 (Oct 1980-Sep 1981)													
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		
	#1 Program Management																										
S	a) Develop Program Plan		██	██																							
S	b) Issue Project Directives			██																							
S	c) Recruit and Train Personnel		██	██	██																						
S	d) Prepare Management Plan	██	██	██	Δ																						
S	e) Prepare Progress Reports				Δ			Δ			Δ			Δ			Δ			Δ			Δ				
S	f) Prepare Final Reports																					██	██	Δ			
	#2 Data Collection																										
C	a) Conduct Initial Survey			██	██	Δ						Δ															
S	b) Research/Purchase Minicomputer		██	██	██																						
S	c) Conduct Surveys			██	██			Δ						██	██	██	██	██	██	██		██	██				
S	d) Identify Rate Information																										
S	#3 Utility Bill Evaluation					██	██	██	██		Δ																
11. Remarks																											
12. Signature of Project Manager and Date													13. Signature of Government Technical Representative and Date														

MILESTONE SCHEDULE AND STATUS REPORT

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7. Region- ability Code	8. Activity/Subactivity	9. Fiscal Years and Months YEAR 3 FY 1982 (Oct 1981-Mar 1982)												YEAR FY 19 (Oct 19-Sep 19)												10. Percent Complete	
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	a) Planned	b) Actual
	#1 Program Management																										
S	a) Develop Program Plan																									100	100
S	b) Issue Project Directives																									100	100
S	c) Recruit and Train Personnel																									100	100
S	d) Prepare Management Plan																									100	100
S	e) Prepare Progress Reports	▲																								100	100
S	f) Prepare Final Reports	// 107 // ▲																								100	100
	#2 Data Collection																										
C	a) Conduct Initial Survey																									100	100
S	b) Research/Purchase Minicomputer																									100	100
S	c) Conduct Surveys																									100	100
S	d) Identify Rate Information																									100	100
S	#3 Utility Bill Evaluation																									100	100
11. Remarks 1 = first revision																											
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		YEAR 1 FY 1980 (Oct 1979-Sep 1980)												YEAR 2 FY 1981 (Oct 1980-Sep 1981)													
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	a) Planned	b) Actual
	#4 Bill Enclosure/Mailing Phase One																										
S	a) Evaluation																										
S	b) Select Consultant																										
J	c) Design Enclosure																										
C	d) Pretest Enclosure																										
C	e) Test Enclosure																										
C	f) Conduct Analysis																										
S	#5 Media Evaluation																										
S	#6 Display Evaluation																										
S	#7 Rate Study Sessions																										
S	#8 Speakers Bureau																										
S	#9 Customer Contact																										
	#10 Documentation																										
S	a) Outline for Handbook																										
11. Remarks 1 = first revision; 2 = second revision																											
12. Signature of Project Manager and Date													13. Signature of Government Technical Representative and Date														

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7. Responsibility Code	8. Activity/Subactivity	9. Fiscal Years and Months YEAR 3 FY 19 82 (Oct 1981--Mar. 1982)												YEAR FY 19 (Oct 19 -Sep 19)												10. Percent Complete	
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	a) Planned	b) Actual
	#4 Bill Enclosure/Mailing																										
S	a) Evaluation																										100
S	b) Select Consultant																									100	100
J	c) Design Enclosure																										50
C	d) Pretest Enclosure																										0
C	e) Test Enclosure																										0
C	f) Conduct Analysis																										0
S	#5 Media Evaluation																									100	100
S	#6 Display Evaluation																									100	100
S	#7 Rate Study Sessions																									100	100
S	#8 Speakers Bureau																									100	100
S	#9 Customer Contact																									100	100
	#10 Documentation																										
S	a) Outline for Handbook																									100	100
11. Remarks 1 = first revision; 3 = third revision																											
12. Signature of Project Manager and Date														13. Signature of Government Technical Representative and Date													

MILESTONE SCHEDULE AND STATUS REPORT

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MILESTONE SCHEDULE AND STATUS REPORT

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		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	a) Planned	b) Actual
S	b) Draft Handbook																									100	100
S	c) Typeset Handbook																									100	100

5.0 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

5.1 FINANCIAL REPORT BY ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY #1: Project Management	\$ 4,598.19
ACTIVITY #2: Data Collection	11,317.92
ACTIVITY #3: Utility Bill Evaluation	1,998.27
ACTIVITY #4: Bill Enclosure/Mailing Evaluation	4,111.00
ACTIVITY #5: Media Program Evaluation	86.16
ACTIVITY #6: Display Evaluation	758.41
ACTIVITY #7: Rate Study Sessions Evaluation	556.29
ACTIVITY #8: Speaker's Bureau Evaluation	559.25
ACTIVITY #9: Individual Customer Contact	177.23
ACTIVITY #10: Documentation	<u>2,661.86</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$26,824.58</u>

5.2 FINANCIAL REPORT BY COST CATEGORY

Personnel	\$16,507.84
Fringe Benefits	6,157.47
Travel	0.00
Equipment	0.00
Supplies	137.09
Contractual	<u>4,022.18</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$26,824.58</u>

6.0 EXHIBITS

**CITY UTILITIES OF
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI**
301 E. CENTRAL • JEWELL P.O. BOX 531
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI 65801 • TELEPHONE 477/ 624-6281

Communicating Rates

Prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Utility Systems

City Utilities of Springfield, Missouri

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Communicating Rates:

A guide to innovative methods of providing rate information to consumers

Prepared for
the U.S. Department of Energy
Economic Regulatory Administration
Office of Utility Systems
Washington, D.C. 20585

By
City Utilities
of Springfield, Missouri

March 1982

Under Contract No. DE-FCO1-79RG-10256

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Introduction

For many years, utility customers were not overly concerned with rates. Energy was a fairly inexpensive commodity for most people, and therefore didn't warrant much attention. In recent years, however, the rapidly escalating costs of natural gas and fuel to produce electricity have made utility rates a high priority for many consumers.

One result of this increased awareness of utility services has been greater demand for utility information in general, and rate information in particular. To meet this demand, utilities and utility regulators are being forced to produce more and more detailed information. And as utilities enter deeper into unfamiliar public relations territory, many are finding it difficult to get their messages across.

This guidebook is designed with utility communicators in mind. It outlines different methods to reach customers with information, and some innovative ways to use those methods. It is also, in part, a case study of the communications efforts of City Utilities of Springfield, Missouri, a municipally-owned utility which provides electric, gas, water and transportation services to a community of 150,000 people.

In no way is the list of activities discussed here meant to be conclusive. Which methods of communication are effective depend heavily upon the particular utility, its clientele and its specific situation.

Use this guidebook as a starting point, and for ideas. Then consider your own needs and use your imagination to meet them.

Getting rate information to customers is one thing. Having them heed or understand it is another. Rate information is difficult to communicate for several inherent reasons.

First, utility rates in general carry a negative connotation. Most people consider a utility as a necessary evil at best, an attitude which does not go far to produce receptiveness. This attitude stems partially from the fact that much of the information distributed by a utility is negative - it relates rate increases. As a result, many people avoid the topic of rates altogether, since they perceive it as unpleasant. The belief also exists that, since customers seem to have minimal control over their rates, there is little reason to learn more about them. This belief is supported by the frequency with which rates increase. Because costs are rising so quickly, consumers are met with substantial, seemingly uncontrollable bills. It's little wonder they feel powerless.

All of these difficulties are compounded by the purpose of most rate-related messages. Rate information tends to be passive; it is designed to inform, not persuade. It calls for no action on the part of the consumer. Compare this to an active utility communi-

Why is communicating rate information so difficult?

cation -- how to conserve energy, for example -- which gives the customer something to *do*. A message which motivates people to act is stronger and more likely to succeed than one which simply lists a set of facts.

In addition, rate information tends to be complex and often employs technical language. This makes the information difficult for many people to understand, and keeps consumer interest low.

Finally, some utilities are restricted by budget limitations as to how they present rate information. While they may wish to transmit information as effectively as possible, they may just not have the money to do so.

Why communicate rate information?

If communicating rate information presents such a problem, then why attempt it at all? There are several good reasons. Perhaps the most important is that communication benefits the customers it reaches and, as a result, the utility benefits as well.

In general, an informed public is preferable to an un-informed one. Misinformation in the utility industry is prevalent and often damaging. If nothing else, educated consumers are less likely to act on incorrect assumptions.

Education is important in order for consumers to understand the purpose behind rate structures. Rates are designed to carry a message. A utility does not simply determine its revenue needs and divide that amount equally among its customers for payment. Instead it bases its recovery costs on how much energy each customer uses, when and where the customer uses it, and what it is used for. The utility then employs pricing signals -- rates -- to reflect the cost for that energy. In this manner, customers can keep track of their energy usages and related costs, and perhaps will recognize that how much they pay for electricity is contingent on how much they use, as well as when, where and how they use it. Of course, for pricing signals to be effective, the customer must understand what they mean. Comprehension becomes even more important as such innovative structures as time-of-day, marginal cost and load management rates come into use.

Since energy costs today are consuming an increasing percentage of personal income, using rates to weigh the cost of energy consumption against the benefits of that consumption becomes more important to the consumer. If the consumer does not perceive the benefits as worth the cost, he or she may reduce usage. In this fashion, the customer can be made to feel like a partner in the control of energy costs rather than a captive participant.

If customers feel more in control of energy costs, and can better control energy expenditures, then the utility may accrue

several benefits. Among these could be a decreased lag period on customer payments, fewer uncollectable accounts, a lower incidence of service disconnection and improved customer relations.

More importantly, the utility can realize system wide, short term benefits if the need for additional generating capacity can be deferred.

While there is no guarantee that any of these benefits will occur, an informed public increases the probability that they will occur.

The innovative approach

Since rate information is so difficult to convey effectively, if you want to transmit a rate-related message to customers it is extremely important to make your message as interesting as possible, and to present it innovatively.

An innovative approach can be applied to almost anything, ranging from a simple bill stuffer to a comprehensive, multi-media campaign.

What constitutes an innovative approach? There is no set formula. It could be a whole new method of communication, or it could be an old method used in a new way. It may be un-

sally used, or it may be unique to you. The common denominator is that an innovative approach is outside the norm - it has a fresh twist to attract attention.

Effective communication does not just happen. It is a carefully planned and executed effort, designed to elicit a specific response. Therefore, before you begin the communications process, you should prepare very carefully.

Before you begin

Following are some planning steps suggested by a group of communications and advertising experts in New York and Washington, D.C., excerpted from the "Appendix, Information to Consumers Standard," published in July 1980, for the U. S. Department of Energy under contract ET-78-C-01-3371:

- Determine an overall strategy. Because rates are such a complicated subject to present to consumers, in order to attract customer interest and to insure that a clear explanation is presented, you should develop an overall communications strategy. Design the strategy to utilize different types of media and to present the messages over an extended period of time.

- **Complete five steps.** In order to effectively communicate a message, you need to:
 - define the objective;
 - determine the budget;
 - define the problem (i.e., talk to people to identify their views and interests in the issue);
 - determine the strategy (e.g., inform customers of rates or generate awareness of the escalating costs of energy); and
 - develop the execution plans (i.e., one or a combination of various channels including bill stuffers, TV, radio, newspapers, local magazines).
- **Market research.** Conduct market research to identify how residents perceive the problem and what types of information they are interested in receiving. Market surveys also can be used to identify the social characteristics of the customers so that the messages and media can be selected to reach the maximum number of people.
- **Use focus groups.** You can contact small groups of customers and assess their responses to specific informational approaches. Focus groups can be utilized to "fine tune" materials before they are used for an entire market segment.

The medium you use for communicating depends on what message you want to convey, where you are and who your audience is. It also depends on the personnel, budget and facilities you have available. There are, however, a few ideas that apply no matter what method you choose.

Communicating effectively — the basics

When you transmit information to a customer, you do it either directly, person-to-person; or indirectly, through a distributed message of some kind.

Customer contact is either direct or indirect

Direct communication involves any contact that allows for immediate response. It can be one-to-one, in a small group or over a telephone.

Indirect communication involves any situation where there is no opportunity for immediate feedback. It includes printed materials, advertising, television and radio, to name a few.

As a general rule, direct contact is more effective than indirect contact. When you are speaking directly with a person, you can answer questions, clarify points and steer the conversation toward topics the customer is interested in. Direct contact also is expensive and time consuming. It can reach only a limited

number of people. And while the chances are better than for indirect contact, there is no guarantee that the communication will produce the desired effect.

Indirect methods of customer contact have the advantage of being accessible to more people at a lower cost. There is no opportunity, however, for customers to ask questions. The message presented can cover only a specific subject, and as a result, may not be as topical to the customer as a personally-directed message might be. And, of course, there is no guarantee that the customer will even receive the message at all.

**You can't
reach everyone**

No matter what style or medium you use, you are not going to reach all your customers. Some people simply will not receive the message. They may throw away a bill stuffer unread, or not tune in the radio station that is playing your advertisement. Others *will* receive your message, but fail to understand it.

Therefore, it is important to consider the benefits of available communication methods and the costs involved with each. It may be that the public media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) are the most effective for your purposes, if you find that direct mail or bill inserts generally are disregarded. Or you may find that bill inserts, although more expensive, reach more

customers per dollar spent.

One factor to consider is how likely it is that your message actually *will* reach consumers. If you send a bill stuffer or a direct mailing, you can be fairly certain that the message will at least reach the consumer's home. On the other hand, if you deliver your message through the mass media, you have no such assurance. Past this point, however, the advantage of bill inserts or mailings is less certain. A bill stuffer that is not read is no more effective than a media announcement that is not heard.

There is no guarantee that any one form of communication will get your message across. Depending upon the importance of the message, you may want to use a combination of methods to elicit the greatest impact. Some information might benefit, for example, from a bill insert reinforced by radio and newspaper advertising.

**You may need
to use
more than one
method**

By employing more than one medium you may accomplish several things. You may reach a segment of your audience with one medium whom you missed with another. You may get your audience to pay more attention to your message by increasing the frequency with which they are exposed to it. You may, by expanding your delivery system, cause customers to perceive the

message as more important, and as a result, to pay more attention to it. You may, by repeating the message often enough, give someone who did not comprehend it at first the time to fully grasp its meaning.

Communicating

So far, we have talked about why communicating rate information is so important, and so difficult to do effectively. Then we looked at some basic principles and at the foundations of a good communications program.

The rest of this guidebook is devoted to specific ways you can reach consumers with rate information. It discusses different message distribution methods, and outlines a few of City Utilities' more successful programs.

Printed materials

Printed materials are frequently used to provide consumers with rate information. There are a variety of formats available for printed information, including brochures, booklets, flyers and calendars, to name a few. There also are numerous ways to distribute printed materials. But no matter what format or

distribution method you choose, if your message is not well presented it will not be read.

Too many utility publications consist of technical words typed on a page -- a design most consumers look at only en route to the garbage can. But your messages don't have to end up in the incinerator. By implementing a few basic concepts you can improve your publications and increase your readership potential.

Keep it simple. Most people do not care to read, or do not understand, technical language. If you expect to reach a majority of your customers, you must present the message in everyday terms.

Keep it short. As a general rule, information is better received when it is brief. Say what you need to say as succinctly as possible.

Vary the type. You can improve the readability of a publication by varying the size of the type you use, and by using titles and subheads to break up the text. You also can add variety with boldface and italic type, and by changing the typeface altogether. This does not mean that you should change your style with every paragraph. Use discretion. Variations in type should

Improving your publications

add to the aesthetic appeal of your publication, not distract from it.

Use photographs, charts and illustrations. Not only can applicable illustrations clarify your message, they add a great deal to the visual impact of a publication.

Don't clutter the pages. It is not necessary for every inch of a publication to be covered with words or pictures. Messages are much easier, and more appealing, to read if they are accented by space, and do not appear crammed together.

Use color when possible. Although printing with color is often expensive, it can add immeasurably to the visual interest of a publication. You can use colored ink in any number of hues, screens and tints for backgrounds, illustrations or type. You can use color in addition to, or in place of, black. Even if you only use black ink, you can vary the density of the black to alter the tone of the publication.

Distributing your messages

The ways to present and distribute printed information are many and varied. Which method you choose depends on the nature of the message, cost and timing. Following are a few examples:

The traditional approach to distributing information to consumers is to insert the message inside the billing envelope. "Bill stuffers" are an excellent method of ensuring that rate information (at least theoretically) makes its way into every customer's home or business.

Bill enclosures

Bill inserts have been popular for several reasons. They are potentially cost effective, if readership levels are acceptable. As long as the insert does not push the mailing into a more expensive weight class, you can deliver the bill and the insert for the postage of the bill alone. In addition, most people open their utility bill, and therefore have a chance of noticing the enclosure.

An important consideration in using bill enclosures is timing. If your message is delivered with each bill, it will take the entire billing cycle to reach all your customers. This is a problem if the material you want to distribute is good only for a certain period of time. Another consideration is the frequency of bill enclosures. If you use them too often, they quickly lose their effectiveness.

Also popular for distributing letters, brochures or postcards is direct mail.

Direct mail

Direct mail is especially appropriate when the message you wish to transmit is dated. For example, if you want to notify customers of a public rate hearing, your message won't do much good if it arrives after the hearing has taken place. By mailing the notice directly to each customer you have better control over when the message is received.

A message delivered by direct mail may have a better chance of being read than does a message stuffed in with a bill. The bill itself may catch the customer's interest while the bill stuffer is ignored. With direct mail, there is no other message to distract the customer. Something mailed separately also may seem to have special significance.

Another advantage of direct mail is that it is well suited for sending messages to only a select sample of customers. You might, for example, want to notify only the participants in a rate experiment instead of every customer.

The major disadvantage of direct mail is cost. Especially as postage increases, sending messages by direct mail is becoming increasingly expensive.

All utility customers receive a bill, so the bill itself can serve as an efficient vehicle for transmitting rate information. Before it adopted its current bill, City Utilities tested several billing formats on customers, and found that most preferred to have rate information included on the bill. How much and what type of information a utility can transmit on a bill depends heavily on the billing system capabilities and equipment.

The message also is contingent upon the billing format. For example, it's much easier to add information to a single- or multi-page envelope bill than to a postcard bill.

Because most bills contain so little space for messages, the information to be included must be brief. Several items which lend themselves to this type of treatment are where to obtain rate schedules, simple calculations, usage and dollars from previous billing periods, fuel adjustment data and other short messages.

The type of information a utility can produce is not limited to postcards and brochures, of course. The forms information can take are virtually unlimited. Following are three examples used by City Utilities:

The utility bill

Other information outlets

In December 1981, City Utilities distributed a packet of information to all its consumers. The packet included an energy conservation calendar, a customer handbook and a comprehensive rates booklet.

Energy conservation calendar. The calendar, published yearly, has proved to be both popular and successful as an outlet for utility information because it is kept, and referred to, throughout the year. A message, which can include rate information, is printed on each page. Overall, response to the calendar has been quite positive, and the utility has plans to continue publishing it.

Customer handbook. In the handbook are sections regarding many aspects of CU operations and services. One section deals with rates, and includes material on rate structures, reading meters and electric demand. The handbook was designed with the thought that the customer would keep it on hand for future reference.

Rates booklet. This booklet, also intended to be kept for reference, contains residential and nonresidential rate schedules for electric, gas, water, transit and sewer services. It is updated as rate schedules change.

Large type editions. The handbook and the rates booklet also were printed in large type editions, sent to local retirement homes, the public libraries and the library for the blind.

Besides distributing information in traditional ways such as through bill enclosures or direct mailings, you can make use of nontraditional distribution methods. These are limited only by your imagination. City Utilities has used several innovative methods to make its printed materials available to the public. Following are a few of those methods:

Additional distribution methods

The packet containing the calendar was delivered door-to-door along with a weekly newspaper shopper called "Pennypower." Since "Pennypower's" regular distribution area is roughly the same as CU's service area, it proved less expensive to contract with the shopper's staff for delivery than to use utility personnel. The packets were inserted in bags and hung on customer's doorknobs. The utility did arrange to distribute packets to those customers who are not on "Pennypower's" route.

Other CU publications have been placed in doctors' and dentists' offices, and in barber and beauty shops. One copy of each publication is available for patrons to read while in the establishment, but not for them to take home. Take-home copies are placed in information racks in the utility lobby, as well as in banks and libraries.

Another often-overlooked outlet for information is on corporation bulletin boards. Often the materials posted on such bulletin boards receive significant readership.

Displays

A good display is more than an exhibit. It is a drawing card for customers. If customers can be convinced to look at a display, they may well ask questions or look at other displays. Often, half the battle is getting customers to want information. A well-designed display may provide just the attraction you need.

City Utilities has had very positive response to its displays, both interactive and visual. Perhaps the most successful has been a minicomputer equipped with a 15-question opinion sampler about rates and an appliance electric usage quiz.

The opinion sampler serves a dual purpose - it allows customers to voice their reactions to various rate-related statements, and it allows CU to gauge customer response to those issues.

Hands-on displays

The most popular displays are those that consumers can put their hands on and operate. Ordinarily, if they can "play" with the displays, consumers will stay longer and ask more questions.

The minicomputer is not the only interactive display that City Utilities has found to be effective. Another is an "Energy Pie," showing the energy usage of several large household appliances. The customer can find out which appliance uses a certain percentage of total kilowatt-hours by removing wooden "pie pieces." Utility personnel are available to help the customer figure the dollar cost for running the appliances. Also successful is a lighted model utility bill. With this display, a customer can find where information is located on the customer bill by pushing buttons, which cause different items to light up.

Although not as popular as the hands-on displays, visual displays still attract customer attention. Two of CU's exhibits directly dealing with rates are a model bill and a meter reading display.

The bill - an enlarged version of the monthly CU bill - is often used in retirement homes and for senior citizen groups, as well as for other community groups and individual customers. While they examine the model bill, customers can be shown how to figure their own bills using rate sheets, and how to interpret the information printed on the bill.

Along the same lines is a metering display, which can

Visual displays

include regular residential, demand and time-of-use meters, depending on the audience. City Utilities also has a meter that translates kilowatt-hour usage into dollars and cents, and a display showing the usage effects of load management. As customers look at the metering displays, they are taught to read their usage, demand, etc., and to figure their utility bills from those readings. The metering displays are especially beneficial as visual aids for explaining unfamiliar concepts like demand and time-of-use rates. Consumers grasp those ideas much more quickly when they can see what and how the meters record.

All of these displays, along with others, have been available during shopping mall shows and energy fairs, at schools and churches, in banks and libraries, in the City Utilities customer lobby, and in what is probably CU's most successful community relations effort, the Energy Bus.

The Energy Bus

The Energy Bus is a renovated public transportation bus used as a mobile display unit.

All of the displays mentioned previously have been carried in the bus, along with displays directed toward children, and different conservation-related exhibits. The displays are changed periodically to keep them fresh and interesting, and are geared

toward the anticipated audience. The displays on the bus often involve games, quizzes and puzzles which customers can actively participate in.

Springfield schools are regular stops for the Energy Bus, and nearly every child in the Springfield school system has toured it. Overall, nearly 70,000 people have visited the Energy Bus since it was developed in 1978.

Another successful program implemented by City Utilities is a speakers bureau. Through this service CU personnel will speak to organizations, schools, churches, etc., on utility-related topics of the group's choosing. Often these talks deal with rates. Speakers generally use charts, slides and other visual aids to make their presentations more interesting and easier to understand. Response to this program has been quite favorable, especially with church and school groups.

Speakers bureau

It is possible that the mass media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) are the least expensive outlets for information in terms of customers reached per dollar spent. While there is no

The media

guarantee that customers will receive your message through the media, our society is so media-oriented that the chances are fairly good.

You can use the media in three main ways: advertising, released information and media-generated coverage.

Advertising

Utility advertising generally falls into the "institutional" category. This means that the messages used are primarily informational in nature and are intended to create goodwill for the utility by familiarizing the public with utility policies and operations. This does not mean that your messages must be boring; on the contrary, the livelier and more creative they are, the better your response will be.

When you place advertising in the media, matching the medium with the message is almost as important as how you present the message. If you need to transmit primarily numerical data, for example, a newspaper may be the best outlet. Less complex information may be more adaptable to radio or television. Try to choose the media or medium which will reach the most customers at the lowest cost per customer, as long as it fits the message. (Note: This does not necessarily mean that you should use the cheapest medium available. Look instead for a lower dollar cost per customer reached.)

In addition, don't feel that newspapers, radio and television are the only mass media open to you. There are other, less traditional media available. For example, a well-placed billboard can be very effective in some instances.

A word of caution. Utilities should be particularly careful about the type and placement of advertising they employ, since customers may perceive the ads as causing higher rates, or as a waste of money. The hostility created by the ads could outweigh their positive impact. Although not generally the case with rate information, some advertising is not recoverable from rate-payers. Therefore, in some instances it may be better to use paid advertising sparingly or not at all.

The alternative to paid advertising, on radio in particular, is the public service announcement. Stations are required to run a certain number of free, public interest messages, and often will include utility information in this category. While you have no control over when the spots are run, at least they are put on the air.

Public service announcements

Released information

Another way to get your message into the media is to send out a news release or stage a press conference. If the utility plays an active role in presenting information to the media, it has a better chance of maintaining some control over what messages are printed or broadcast. And, if a positive relationship can be developed, it is likely that coverage of even an unfavorable topic will remain reasonably objective.

The Public Information Office

At City Utilities, most of the information released to the media, whether advertising or news, is generated by or passes through the Public Information Office. Through the Public Information Office, City Utilities is able to monitor its information flow.

Besides acting as a liaison between the utility and the media, the Public Information Office also conducts special activities. Among these is a Media Guide to City Utilities, a handbook designed to give media personnel an overview of the utility, its facilities and operations. Another activity is a weekly, 15-minute television talk show produced at a local telecable station. The program, titled "CU Scan," features two utility staff members each week discussing their specific duties or areas of interest. "CU Scan" benefits the utility in two ways. First, it provides an outlet for utility information; and second, it gives the employees inter-

viewed some low pressure, on-the-air media experience.

For another kind of media experience, the Public Information Office conducts in-house media workshops in which department managers are given hypothetical situations and then questioned by other staff members posing as the press.

A utility can significantly improve its relationship with the media by taking an active role in its own coverage. Here are some basic ideas to help you deal successfully with the press.

NOTES: Dealing with the media

Writing a news release. When you write a news release, be brief and to the point. If you editorialize, you can feel certain that your comments will be edited out. Remember, a news release is supposed to deliver news, not advertising. This is not to say that you shouldn't include direct quotes in your releases - good quotes can add spice to an article. Just make sure that the quotes you select add something to your message.

Staging a press conference. The press conference works best when used sparingly. Unlike a news release, which can be handled by media personnel at any time, a press conference requires that reporters be on hand at a specific time and place. For that reason, before you call a press conference, make sure you

truly have something newsworthy to say. If you are making a complex statement, often the case when rates are involved, back up your announcement with written information. This will increase the probability that your statement will be quoted correctly.

The rules of the game. To deal effectively with the media, there are two basic rules you should follow. Break them and you lose your credibility. Lose your credibility and watch the quality and objectivity of your news coverage deteriorate.

1. *Tell the truth.* This does not mean that you have to describe in detail everything you know. You certainly can and should be selective about what you tell the press. But don't deliberately slant the truth. Once you've been caught in a lie, it's almost impossible to make your position look good.
2. *If you don't know, find out.* If a reporter asks you a question and you don't know the answer, say so. Never guess; you may guess wrong. Instead, tell the reporter you'll find out, then do so. Never promise an answer and fail to follow it up. Even if you can't give an answer for some reason, tell the reporter that you cannot, and explain why as adequately as you can.

Remember that the media can serve as powerful allies, and as even more powerful foes. If you deal with them fairly, and

make a special effort to educate them to your side of an issue, they are much more likely to deal fairly with you. If you build an ongoing, working relationship with the press, you will benefit, and so will your customers.

Contacts are often made with customers on an individual basis by customer service personnel and other utility employees. It is important to maximize these opportunities in order to relate accurate rate information to consumers and to respond to customer inquiries. From direct contact the utility can gauge the nature and degree of customer attitudes and beliefs about rates. As a result, in-house rate training is imperative.

Training should not be limited solely to customer relations personnel. All utility employees who come in contact with customers should be familiar with rates. This group includes meter readers, service personnel, auditors, tellers, bill collectors, etc. While most employees need not be inundated with rate information, they should at least be able to refer customers to the person or department designated to answer questions. No matter who answers the questions, the utility should make a concentrated effort to ensure that information is *uniformly* presented.

It's a good idea to have some type of clearinghouse for rate

Customer contact

and other customer information. If questions can be directed toward a specified person or group, customers will not be faced with the frustration of being transferred all over the utility for answers.

As a result of the responses received from these and other questions in the survey, the Rates Section, together with the Customer Service Department, compiled a list of frequently asked questions and their answers. These were distributed to utility personnel along with additional rate information. A partial list of the questions and answers later was published in a handbook sent to all CU customers. In addition to prepared question-and-answer sheets, internal utility publications can be very helpful in acquainting employees with rate concepts, as well as providing a uniform outlet for rate information.

To help consolidate its own customer information, each of CU's customer information clerks was requested to complete a questionnaire outlining his or her experience with customer inquiries dealing with rates. The questionnaire was designed to determine what questions were asked most frequently, what questions were most difficult to answer, what materials would be most helpful for illustrating answers to rate questions and how prepared the clerks felt themselves to be in rate-related areas.

Businesspeople have a special interest in utility rates, especially as utility costs continue to increase overhead expense. In general, the information they need is more complex than that required by residential customers. To deliver this information, City Utilities has implemented rate study sessions.

Getting rate information to the business community

Rate study sessions are similar to CU's speakers bureau with an important difference. While speakers bureau presentations are formal in nature, rate study sessions are informal, and proceed at the participants' speed. Sessions usually deal with more complex topics, such as cost of service, and the information is discussed with more detail. Groups who have attended rate study sessions in the past have traditionally been connected with the business community, including subcommittees of the Chamber of Commerce and members of CU's Board of Public Utilities.

Rate study sessions

An extension of the rate study session is the energy rate task force. These groups are appointed by the Board of Public Utilities to study a specific, predetermined issue. Members are chosen from among those who have attended the general rate

Energy rate task forces

study sessions. After extensive research on some function of rate design or reform, the task force makes a report to the Board and is disbanded.

Citizen's advisory council

The citizen's advisory council is an expanded version of the energy task force. It is composed of representatives of special interest groups and the general community who are appointed by the Board of Public Utilities. In contrast to a task force, however, the citizen's advisory council is free to choose its own topics for study. These topics often include rates. Since the council may discuss any topic pertinent to the utility and the community, it is an ongoing entity.

Getting rate information to Senior Citizens

An often overlooked group with an active interest in utility rates is the elderly. The elderly have special needs and problems, and since they comprise a growing segment of the population, meeting those needs is becoming increasingly important.

Senior citizens are often on fixed incomes, and are becoming more and more concerned as utilities consume an ever larger

share of those incomes. This is complicated by the fact that many older persons do not understand the policies and actions that are making rates rise so quickly. They also may be troubled by physical problems which make it difficult for them to read their bills or other information sent to them by the utility.

To meet these and other needs, utilities must take care to present their information clearly and accurately. Large type editions of publications can be effective for large audiences. However, in most cases the best approach for reaching senior citizens effectively is direct contact. By meeting with the elderly one-to-one or in a small group, utility personnel can explain rate concepts with more detail, and can use visual aids to clarify their explanations.

City Utilities has found its lighted and model utility bills helpful in discussing rate issues with elderly customers. These displays are used in conjunction with speakers bureau presentations, which have been quite successful for retirement homes, senior citizen church groups and other organizations.

Children are also an important audience for utility information. While they are not utility customers per se, they are consumers of energy, and someday they will be ratepayers. The more

Communicating rate information to children