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This is a quarterly publication of the Regulatory Commission of Alaska's (RCA) Consumer Protection and Information Section. To subscribe, please email cp.mail@alaska.gov.

IN THIS ISSUE

RCA Employees Recognized for their State Service

COVID-19 Temporary Relief for Residential Utility Customers

Net Metering & Solar Panels

Spring Forward to Safety: Dial 8-1-1

RCA Congratulates Robert M. Pickett for Another Term

Governor Michael J. Dunleavy re-appointed Chairman Bob Pickett for another six-year term as a commissioner with the RCA. Chairman Pickett was first appointed in January 2008 by Governor Sara Palin; and in 2014, Governor Sean Parnell appointed Pickett to a second term. The RCA thanks Governor Dunleavy for re-appointing Chairman Pickett. The RCA is keenly focused on serving the public interest, and Pickett's extensive experience in utility and regulatory issues will serve the commission well.



State Service Awards

At the January 22nd public meeting, Chairman Bob Pickett gave special recognition and honor to the following RCA employees for their dedication and service in the State of Alaska.

5-Year Pin

Jeff Davis, Chief Administrative Law Judge

15-Year Pin

Valerie Flether-Mitchell, Administrative Officer II

Julie Vogler, Chief Utility Financial Analyst

20-Year Pin

Brenda Cox, Utility Financial Analyst

COVID-19 Temporary Relief for Residential Utility Customers

Since the passage of Senate Bill 241, the RCA has taken some actions to ensure that keeping utility services on does not become an added hardship for those who have lost their jobs or are otherwise suffering financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Mike Dunleavy signed [Senate Bill 241](#), which, among other things, prevents public utilities from disconnecting utility services when a residential customer cannot pay their utility bills, due to a financial hardship, by the due date. Under this law:

- All public utilities, including those providing electric, natural gas, refuse (garbage collection), sanitary sewer, drinking water, district heat, steam heat, and telecommunications services, are covered by the moratorium.
- A residential customer is eligible for relief under the moratorium only if they: (a) sign a sworn statement, under penalty of perjury, that financial hardship related to the COVID-19 public health disaster emergency prevents them from fully paying their utility bill; and (b) negotiate a deferred payment arrangement with their utility.
- The moratorium does not relieve the customer of the obligation to pay the utility debt.

The RCA has created a [COVID-19 webpage](#) dedicated to COVID-19 Public Utility-Related Information. The webpage includes:

- A [Sworn Statement of COVID-19 Related Financial Hardship and Request to Negotiate a Residential Service Deferred Payment Agreement Form](#) that utility companies may use or create a similar process of their own.
- Consumer resources such as the Alaska 2-1-1 and the Division of Public Assistance.
- Links to public utility websites where consumers can find a summary of actions taken by public utilities in response to COVID-19.

Net Metering & Solar Panels

Net metering allows utility customers who generate their own electricity from a qualified renewable generation such as solar panels to offset their monthly usage and sell excess power back to their utility provider. Many states have passed net metering laws. In October 2009, the RCA opened a rulemaking docket to consider net metering regulations. After inviting public comments and convening technical conferences to discuss draft net metering rules, the RCA adopted the regulations requiring certain electric utilities to provide net metering service. The regulations became effective June 16, 2010, and affected utilities began filing net metering tariff provisions at the end of Fiscal Year 2010.



As solstice approaches, you might be thinking about installing solar panels.

Solar Photovoltaic Systems. In Alaska, most residential solar systems are photovoltaic (PV) systems. Solar PV systems generate electricity using two main hardware components: 1) **panels** that convert sunlight to electricity and 2) **inverters** that convert direct current to alternating current for use in your home.

Do Your Research. Like buying a car, the most important thing to know is that knowledge is power. Here are five key items Alaskans should consider before installing a PV system.

1. **Assess your building.** Does your building receive a good amount of sunlight or are there trees and shading from other buildings? Does the roof need to be replaced soon? If so, it might be wise to have the roofing done before installing a rooftop solar PV system.
2. **Ask homeowners who have installed solar PV systems how well they are working.** What are the pros and cons? How long did it take to install? Did the installer do a good job? How much maintenance is involved?
3. **Communicate with your power company ahead of time.** Find out the power company's system requirements, know how electric bills are calculated, and at what rate will the power company compensate you for excess electricity generated from your solar PV system. Make sure you understand the power company's rules and regulations and its current effective tariff. Tariffs filed by regulated utilities can be downloaded from the [RCA website](#).
4. **Get several estimates from various solar PV companies.** Ask a lot of questions; understand the component costs, warranty, and maintenance. Do **not** sign a contract until everything is clearly and concisely spelled out.
5. **Know Your Finances.** Make sure you understand your finances and any tax incentives (or tax implications) when shopping for solar systems. If you find that solar panels are not viable for your home, consider other energy efficiency and conservation options (see [Energy Savers Tips for Alaska](#)).

Spring Forward to Safety: Dial 8-1-1

As Alaskans are sheltering at home, many have bought augers, cultivators, shovels, and gloves to start some gardening or tree planting. If you are like them who might be inclined to start an outdoor project this spring, please remember to call 8-1-1 first. Why? First, it's a state law. Second, it could prevent property damage and loss of life!

Every year, an underground utility line is damaged once every six minutes across the nation because someone decided to dig without first calling 8-1-1. Every hit poses a risk to the contractors and homeowners who are doing the digging; to utility workers and emergency responders who are mobilized when lines are struck; and to bystanders who live, work, or travel near the locations of the incidents.

Visit 811ak.com to learn more.



Don't gamble with your safety as well as everyone around you. Call 8-1-1, two days before you dig, to get a FREE locate. Knowing where the underground lines are located will help prevent damage to utilities, service disruptions, potential fines, and repair costs... more importantly, it will prevent unintended consequences such as injury or fatality.

Website:
www.rca.alaska.gov

 Contact:
(907) 276-6222
(800) 390-2782
TTY: 7-1-1

 Email:
cp.mail@alaska.gov