

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act Regarding Certain Activities of Electric and Gas Utilities

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §2523 is enacted to read:

§ 2523. Notice to disconnect vulnerable systems and equipment

A consumer-owned transmission and distribution utility, a large, investor-owned transmission and distribution utility or a small, investor-owned transmission and distribution utility, as defined in section 3201, subsections 6, 12 and 16, respectively, shall make reasonable efforts to advise customers of those utilities to disconnect systems, equipment and devices that use electricity that may be vulnerable to damage during testing, repair or replacement of utility equipment before that utility performs that testing, repair or replacement of utility equipment.

Sec. 2. Public Utilities Commission to study statutes and rules governing electric utilities and report. The Public Utilities Commission shall study the statutes and rules governing the rights and responsibilities of electric utilities and consumers when electric utilities are testing, repairing or replacing utility equipment and report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters no later than November 5, 2008. The Public Utilities Commission shall include in its report recommendations regarding how to improve these statutes and rules. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters may report out legislation regarding the report in this section to the First Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.

Sec. 3. Public Utilities Commission to amend rules regarding public awareness of electric utility work. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules governing electric utilities to require electric utilities to undertake a program to increase public awareness of the rights and responsibilities of electric utilities and consumers when electric utilities are testing, repairing or replacing utility equipment.

Sec. 4. Public Utilities Commission to amend rules governing gas utilities. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules governing gas utilities to require a gas utility to provide notice to all owners and tenants of property within 500 feet of an excavation performed by a gas utility or an agent of that utility at least 2 business days before the excavation. The notice must contain the type and location of the excavation activity and must be made in writing or by telephone.

Sec. 5. Public Utilities Commission to study statutes and rules governing gas utilities and report. The Public Utilities Commission shall study the statutes and rules governing the protection of public safety as it relates to gas utilities and report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters no later than November 5, 2008. The Public Utilities Commission shall include in its report recommendations regarding how to improve these statutes and rules. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters may report out legislation regarding the report in this section to the First Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.

Sec. 6. Public Utilities Commission to amend rules regarding public awareness of gas utility work. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules governing gas utilities to require gas utilities to undertake a program to increase public awareness of the responsibilities of gas utilities with respect to excavation activity.

SUMMARY

This bill requires an electric utility to make reasonable efforts to advise customers of that utility to disconnect systems, equipment and devices that use electricity that may be vulnerable to damage during testing, repair or replacement of utility equipment before that utility performs that testing, repair or replacement of utility equipment.

It directs the Public Utilities Commission to study the statutes and rules governing the rights and responsibilities of electric utilities and consumers when electric utilities are testing, repairing or replacing utility equipment and report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters no later than November 5, 2008.

It directs the Public Utilities Commission to amend its rules governing gas utilities to require a gas utility to provide notice to all owners and tenants of property within 500 feet of an excavation performed by a gas utility or an agent of that utility at least 2 business days before the excavation.

It directs the Public Utilities Commission to amend its rules governing electric utilities to require electric utilities to undertake a program to increase public awareness of the rights and responsibilities of electric utilities and consumers when electric utilities are testing, repairing or replacing utility equipment.

It directs the Public Utilities Commission to study the statutes and rules governing the protection of public safety as it relates to gas utilities and report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utilities matters no later than November 5, 2008.

It directs the Public Utilities Commission to amend its rules governing gas utilities to require gas utilities to undertake a program to increase public awareness of the responsibilities of gas utilities with respect to excavation activity.