



# Railroad Commission of Texas

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## Report on Customer Service

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## Report on Customer Service

### Introduction

The Railroad Commission of Texas was established in 1891 under a constitutional and legislative mandate to prevent discrimination in railroad charges while establishing reasonable tariffs. In 1917, pipelines were declared common carriers and the Commission was given jurisdiction over them. By 1932 the Commission assumed jurisdiction over oil and natural gas exploration and production. The Railroad Commission marked its 129th anniversary in April 2020 making it the oldest regulatory agency in the state and one of the oldest of its kind in the nation. Three commissioners elected statewide by Texas voters serve six-year staggered terms. One commissioner is elected every two years.

The Railroad Commission has three regulatory divisions. The Oil and Gas Division oversees the Texas oil and gas industry, specifically exploration and production activity. The Oversight and Safety Division has jurisdiction over natural gas utilities, pipeline safety and alternative energy safety oversight of the liquefied petroleum gas (propane), liquefied natural gas (LNG), and compressed natural gas (CNG) industries. The Surface Mining and Reclamation Division oversees the surface mining of coal and uranium in Texas, as well as the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation program.

As articulated in its mission statement, the Railroad Commission serves the people of Texas through stewardship of natural resources and the environment, concern for personal and community safety and support for enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texas. An integral part of the Railroad Commission’s commitment is its focus on providing the best possible service to the citizens of Texas.

Consistent with that mission and commitment, the Railroad Commission of Texas submits this Report on Customer Service.

### Inventory of External Customers

Table 1: Identification of Customers by Strategy

| Customer Groups by Strategy   | Customer Sub-groups   | Brief Description of Services Provided   |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| <b>1.1.1 Energy Resource Development</b><br>Protect correlative rights and prevent waste while maximizing opportunities for the development of lignite, oil and gas resources through well site permitting, production allowables, production rule reviews, and exception processing. | Oil and Gas Producers | Permitting—based on spacing and density rules. Review on monthly basis production allowables on oil and gas wells. |

| Customer Groups by Strategy   | Customer Sub-groups  | Brief Description of Services Provided   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>2.1.1 Pipeline Safety</b> Ensure the safe operation of pipelines through permitting, field inspections, accident investigations and emergency response.</p>   | <p>Pipeline Operators</p>                                  | <p>Conduct pipeline safety inspections and identify violations; take necessary enforcement actions; conduct accident investigations; administer pipeline permits issued and renewed.</p> |
| <p><b>2.1.2 Pipeline Damage Prevention</b> Support education and partnership initiatives to increase the overall awareness and effectiveness of damage prevention.</p>  | <p>General Public and Landowners</p>                       | <p>Educate public about Texas “one-call” centers and increase awareness of third party damage incidents.</p>   |
| <p><b>2.2.1 Regulate Alternative Energy Sources</b> Regulate Alternative Energy Sources: Protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public by ensuring the safe storage and transportation of LP- gas, Compressed Natural Gas, and Liquefied Natural Gas as alternative energy sources through safety education, accident investigation, inspection and enforcement of safety regulations.</p> | <p>LPG/CNG/LNG Operators</p>                               | <p>Perform safety inspections and identify violations; administer qualifying examinations, licenses, certifications and registrations.</p>   |
| <p><b>3.1.1 Oil and Gas Monitoring and Inspections</b> Assure that Oil and Gas permitted activities comply with applicable state and federal regulations through field inspections, witnessing tests, monitoring reports, processing applications and enforcement actions.</p>  | <p>Oil and Gas Producers, Waste Management, Landowners</p> | <p>Inspections<br/><br/>Inspections and Enforcement Respond to inquiries</p>   |
| <p><b>3.1.2 Surface Mining Monitoring and Inspections</b> Assure that Surface Mining permitted activities comply with applicable state and federal regulations through field inspections, witnessing tests, monitoring reports, processing applications and enforcement actions.</p>  | <p>Surface Mining Operators, Landowners</p>                | <p>Inspections, Permitting &amp; Enforcement Respond to inquiries</p>  |

| Customer Groups by Strategy   | Customer Sub-groups                                    | Brief Description of Services Provided   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>3.2.1 Oil and Gas Well Plugging and Remediation</b> Protect public health and the environment by identifying, assessing, and prioritizing sites that require the use of state managed funds for well plugging and remediation.</p>  | <p>General Public, Landowners</p>                      | <p>Orphaned wells managed/plugged, and abandoned pollution sites investigated, assessed, or cleaned up with the use of state funds.</p>  |
| <p><b>3.2.2 Surface Mining Reclamation</b> Protect public health and the environment by identifying, assessing and prioritizing mine lands that require the use of state funds for reclamation and provide assistance for operator- initiated corrective actions.</p>                         | <p>General Public, Landowners</p>                      | <p>Abandoned surface mine sites on which reclamation has been initiated.</p>   |
| <p><b>3.3.1 Gas Utility Compliance</b> Oversee natural gas utility rate structures that promote safe, efficient, and reliable supply at a reasonable cost and audit regulated gas utilities to ensure compliance with rate structure and submission of Gas Utility Taxes.</p>                 | <p>Gas Utilities Consumers</p>                         | <p>Provide economic regulation over intrastate natural gas utilities. Operate and maintain the state's natural gas electronic tariff system. Audit utilities to ensure properly authorized rates are being computed and billed to residential or commercial users.</p> |
| <p><b>4.1.1 Public Information and Services</b> Collect, maintain, and preserve oil and gas data submitted to the Commission; provide efficient public access to this information; provide regulated industries the ability to conduct their business with the Commission electronically.</p> | <p>Oil and Gas Operators, General Public/Consumers</p> | <p>Electronic filing, Production information Website access to information</p>   |

**Information Gathering Methods**

The Railroad Commission of Texas is committed to delivering the highest level of customer service. How the agency responds to those who conduct business with the Railroad Commission reflects not only on the agency, but on the state as well. Employees at the Railroad Commission strive daily to provide the level of service Texans expect and deserve, and the agency has several mechanisms in place to achieve this goal.

To capture feedback from the agency’s external customers, the Railroad Commission features a link on its website homepage to an online Customer Service Survey. When responding to inquiries received from constituents via the Public Assistance email account, information and a link to the survey are included to encourage feedback. The survey may be submitted anonymously, or the constituent may

include contact information for follow up action by the Railroad Commission. Staff monitors responses on a continuing basis to ensure quick resolution of any issues reported via the survey.

In March 2020, the Commission sent a link to the Customer Service Survey to agency listservs to encourage feedback for development of this report. The survey was closed after a period of one week, and 79 surveys were submitted to the Commission during that time. Results of those surveys are included in this report.

Additionally, the Railroad Commission regularly receives public input in several other ways, to increase information gathering, and to ensure staff resources are utilized to their greatest effect in delivering the high level of service RRC customers demand, including:

#### [Toll Free Number](#)

The Railroad Commission maintains a toll-free number (1-877-288-5740) that anyone may use to obtain information about agency programs and services. A recording directs callers to the appropriate Railroad Commission contact for their needs. There is also an option to speak directly to a public assistance Railroad Commission employee who serves as the agency ombudsman.

The Commission has another toll-free number dedicated to reporting of emergency situations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A dedicated emergency reporting number is easier and more expedient for the public when they report emergency situations. Constituents have the option to call 1-844-773-0305 toll free, or 512-463-6788.

#### [Railroad Commission Website](#)

The Railroad Commission regulates an industry that is constantly evolving and is one of the most technologically advanced in the world. Over the past year, RRC initiated several new online filings and research tools, allowing RRC to better serve Texans and the industries we regulate. Examples include:

- numerous online report filings,
- Pipeline Online Permitting System (POPS),
- RRC Online Inspection Lookup (RRC OIL),
- new GIS Map Viewer features,
- interactive Data Maps,
- data sets available for download at no cost,
- digital imaging to place 1.7 million historic oil and gas records online, and
- digital imaging to place historic hearing files online.

These improvements are in addition to previously existing resources:

- data, statistics, forms and maps,
- regulatory information,
- educational opportunities,
- publications and news releases,
- information on environmental services and safety,
- information on executive orders, rules and proposals for decisions,
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Public Map Viewer,

- online filing, reporting and query systems,
- automated fee collection, and
- information on the Public Assistance email account, [Publicassist@rrc.state.tx.us](mailto:Publicassist@rrc.state.tx.us).

The Railroad Commission has long recognized the value of its information and continually works to improve access to its data repositories and services through the website to better inform and serve the public.

### Information Services

The Information Services section, through its Central Records and Public Sales units, provides public access to Railroad Commission oil and gas data collected over the past 90 years as well as information on all aspects of the Railroad Commission's regulatory functions. The section also fulfills requests for subscriptions, publications, and data in electronic format. The public may call or visit Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Requests for information may be emailed to [ims@rrc.state.tx.us](mailto:ims@rrc.state.tx.us).

### Customer Service Principles

The Railroad Commission developed Customer Service Principles to help employees provide a high level of customer service in their day-to-day work activities. Customer Service Principles are detailed for telephone and email customer service from the public, information technology issues, legislative inquiries, and media inquiries. Phone calls and emails are to be responded to no later than the close of the next business day, ensuring the prompt resolution of any issues that may arise. Staff are trained on the Customer Service Principles and the information is available on the staff intranet website.

### Public Assistance Email Account

The Contact Us section of the Railroad Commission's website includes an email account for the public to contact the Commission with questions and concerns. Each email is logged and assigned to appropriate staff for processing. As outlined in the Commission's Customer Service Principles, Public Assistance emails must receive a response from staff no later than the following business day. A spreadsheet is used to track each inquiry and the eventual resolution.

### Executive Assistance Email Account

In addition to inquiries received on the Public Assistance email account, many constituents reach out directly to the three elected Commissioners that lead the Railroad Commission. As with the Public Assistance email account, all such emails, letters and phone calls are logged and processed to ensure quality customer service.

In Calendar Year 2019, the RRC responded to a combined total of 2,104 Public and Executive Assistance inquiries, an average of 40 responses per week.

### Area Specific Contacts

The Contact Us area of the Commission's website includes contact information for topic-specific comments and complaints including:

- Gas Services,
- Government Relations,

- ITS Help Desk,
- Human Resources,
- Oil and Gas Division, and
- Pipeline Safety.

Furthermore, the Commission interacts with the public and stakeholders daily in District and Regional offices throughout Texas.

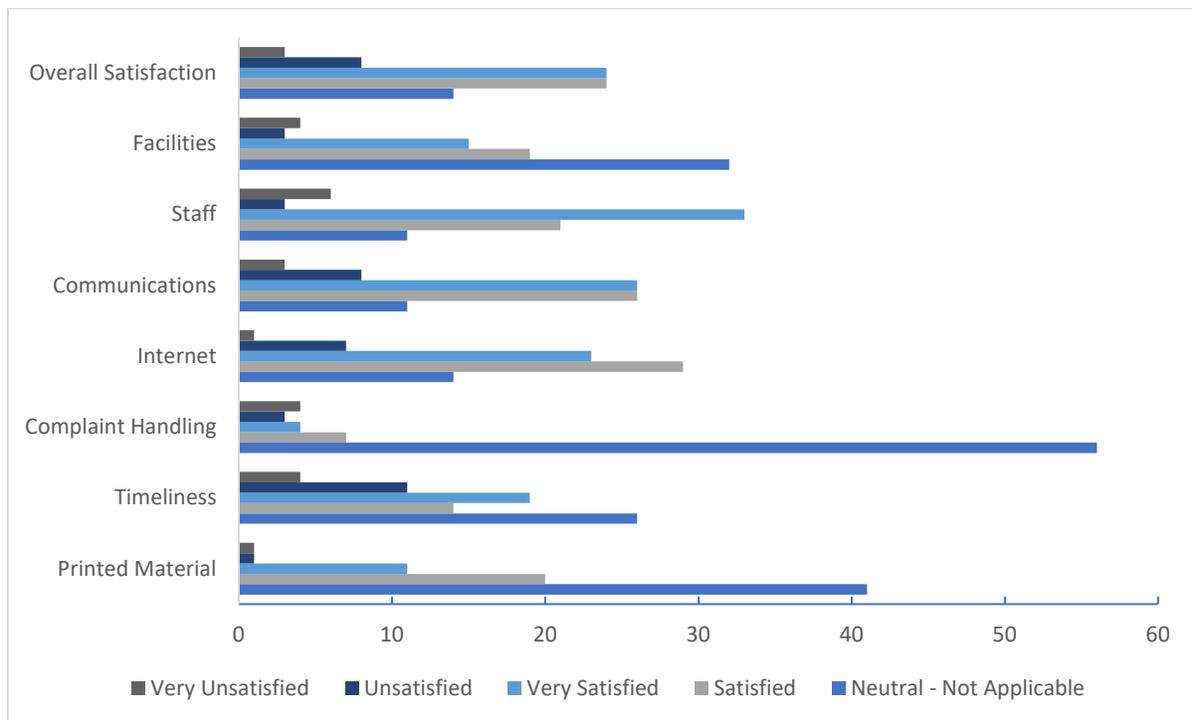
## Data

This section of the report contains the following:

1. Link to the Compact with Texans: <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/site-policies/>
2. Graph representing results of the 2020 Customer Service Survey (Figure 1)

Customer Service Surveys reporting a complaint are resolved by forwarding the Customer Service Survey to the appropriate division director for follow up and appropriate resolution.

**Figure 1: 2020 Customer Service Summary of Responses**



## Analysis

The link to the Customer Service Survey on the Railroad Commission’s home page is accessible to the public year-round making it possible to capture feedback and quickly respond to comment or complaints.

The Commission continues to investigate methods of engagement to increase participation in the Customer Service Survey as it provides valuable feedback that results in improvements at the Commission.

Considerations for improved outreach include, but are not limited to, web links to the survey on email signature lines, seminars and conferences, and information given during examinations/certifications by the agency. The Commission's monthly e-newsletter also provides an opportunity to solicit participation. Ultimately, the goal is to include a larger population of customers in the survey process.

The findings of the 2020 Customer Survey Report show approximately half of respondents say they are "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the Commission's overall customer service. The highest scores were received in the categories of "Staff" and "Communications" followed closely by "Overall Satisfaction." Results also indicate improvement is needed in the area of "Timeliness."

Looking ahead, the Commission will examine steps to increase both constituent participation and the percentage of "Very Satisfied" responses to the survey.

The industries regulated by the Railroad Commission continue to evolve placing greater demands on Commission staff resources. Improvements to the website have resulted in increased access to data, streamlined online filing processes and faster processing of reports. Even so, improvements can be made in staff response times by ensuring proper employee training and providing staff with the tools needed to be fully responsive to stakeholders.

## Performance Measures

### Outcome Measure

- *Number of Customers Served:* Quantifying the number of customers served by the Railroad Commission is difficult. The following is a description of the regulated industry and the public served by the Commission.

#### *Oil and Gas Exploration and Production*

The Texas oil and natural gas industry consists of a wide spectrum of businesses, ranging from sole proprietorships to fully integrated multinational corporations. Activities range from well drillers, to well pluggers, to waste haulers. All aspects of the oil and natural gas production cycle from beginning to end are part of the regulatory responsibility of the Railroad Commission. As of March 2020, Texas producers operated approximately 170,960 active producing oil wells and over 86,600 active producing gas wells. In 2019, Texas wells produced approximately 3.9 million barrels per day of oil and 26.7 billion cubic feet of gas.

#### *Pipeline Transportation*

To gather, transport and deliver Texas' oil and natural gas resources, an extensive network of pipeline is required. The Railroad Commission has responsibility to ensure these systems are designed, constructed, operated and maintained safely, and rates for natural gas service are just and reasonable. There are more than 469,000 miles of pipeline in Texas including more than 417,000 miles of intrastate pipeline under the Commission's pipeline safety jurisdiction. The remaining 52,000 miles of pipeline fall

under the pipeline safety jurisdiction of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). Pipelines in Texas are categorized as natural gas distribution lines, hazardous liquid and natural gas gathering and transmission lines, interstate lines and exempt lines. The Railroad Commission has direct safety responsibility over the first three categories. These regulatory responsibilities are extended to operators of intrastate gathering, transmission, distribution, and master metered systems.

#### *Natural Gas Utilities*

There are approximately 10,000 active tariffs on file with the Railroad Commission that reflect rates charged for natural gas utility transmission and distribution services. There are 223 investor-owned and 86 municipally owned natural gas utilities in Texas serving over five million customers. The Gas Services Division also administers an index-based price ceiling affecting approximately 74 propane distribution retail systems.

#### *Alternative Energy Companies*

This industry includes LP-gas (commonly called propane), compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Each year the Railroad Commission certifies about 16,000 individuals working in the industry, administers about 6,500 examinations, issues approximately 7,300 dealer licenses, investigates accidents and safety-related complaints, and conducts approximately 19,000 safety inspections.

The retail propane business is the largest sector within this industry. It consists primarily of small independent companies that provide fuel for space heating, cooking, and water-heating appliances in rural residences and commercial buildings; for portable applications such as outdoor grills, torches and agricultural equipment; and as engine fuel for both off-road vehicles such as forklifts and on-road vehicles such as school buses and light trucks.

#### *Coal and Uranium Mining*

Currently there are 28 coal-mining permits administered by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Division. These mining permits, held by 10 companies, cover approximately 320,000 acres in 20 counties. Of the 28 coal-mining permits administered, 15 mining operations no longer produce coal and are undergoing final land reclamation.

#### **Efficiency Measure**

- *Cost per Customer surveyed:* Staff determined the most cost-effective approach to surveying customers would be electronically through the Railroad Commission website.

#### **Explanatory Measures**

- *Number of Customers identified:* As described under Output Measure, Number of Customers served, it is difficult to quantify an exact number as the Railroad Commission has regulatory authority over many industries which in turn serve many Texans.
- *Number of Customer groups identified:* Ten primary customer groups were identified. Please refer to Section 2, "Inventory of External Customers" for details.

## Conclusion

In serving the people of Texas, the Railroad Commission of Texas remains committed to providing quality customer service. The results of the 2020 Customer Service Survey indicate that the employees of the Railroad Commission are succeeding in that effort. It also provides useful insight into the areas where improvements can be made, and the Commission will continue to improve and strive for excellence in service delivery.