



State of New
Jersey

DIVISION OF RATE COUNSEL
140 EAST FRONT STREET, 4TH FL
P.O. BOX 003
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

STEFANIE A. BRAND
Director

Press Release

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Contact:

Robyn Roberts (PIO - Rate Counsel):
609-633-8729; rroberts@rpa.state.nj.us

Rate Counsel Receives Award for Consumer Assistance Handbook that Helps Customers Understand Utility Issues and Their Rights as Consumers

(Trenton, NJ) — The New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, which advocates for consumers in utility rate cases, announced that its latest Consumer Assistance Handbook has won an award from the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) as one of the best official New Jersey publications that the state’s documents librarians feel is especially “useful or informative.”

The handbook, which received several nominations, helps ratepayers understand their rights as utility customers and answers a variety of utility-related questions and concerns. Published in 2013, the handbook features information on telephone, electric, gas, cable and water services. Available online and in hard-copy, the handbook is designed to assist consumers with their questions as well as provide helpful information and tips on saving money on their utility bills.

DANJ promotes the use of and access to government publications in libraries in the NJ area. The organization has been giving its award since 1992 with the aim of promoting government information. To win the award, a publication needs to meet all or most of the following criteria:

- The document contributes to the expansion of knowledge, gives evidence of innovation in presentation, or demonstrates a creative approach in its treatment.
- The document has relevance for New Jerseyans.
- The document contributes to enhancing the quality of life for New Jerseyans.
- The document contributes to an understanding of federal, state, or local government processes or functions.
- The title reflects actual contents, the document achieves its intended purpose, and the format is appropriate to the contents.
- The document is written in a lucid style comprehensible to non-specialists.

- The document provides for reference use.
- The document is printed on recycled and/or permanent paper or is electronically published in a preservation format.

Some of the most useful sections in the handbook include information on how to read an electric meter and gas meter; how to find and fix water leaks, information on financial assistance programs for all utilities; an explanation of charges, taxes and fees on your utility bills; how to choose the best telephone provider, and what to ask when shopping for an electricity provider. In addition, consumers will find money-saving heating and cooling tips and a consumer bill of rights that applies to all utilities.

“We’re very honored to have received this award and for our publication to be recognized as a useful tool for consumers,” said Rate Counsel Director Stefanie Brand. “Our goal was to arm consumers with information that allows them to make the best decisions about their water, electric, gas, cable and telephone service,” said Brand. “We also wanted consumers to learn what resources are available to them and how they can save money.”

The book also includes information on Rate Counsel’s role in utility cases before the Board of Public Utilities and Federal agencies and how Rate Counsel assists customers. The handbook also explains how to file a complaint against a utility company and provides contact information for regulated utilities statewide.

To see a list of DANJ’s documents that have received an award, go to their web site:
<http://danj.org/awards.html#bestdoc>

For more information on the Consumer Assistance Handbook, go to Rate Counsel’s website at <http://www.nj.gov/rpa> or call 609-984-1460.

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About the Division of Rate Counsel

The Division of Rate Counsel represents and protects the interests of all utility customers — residential, small business, commercial and industrial — whenever utilities in New Jersey seek changes in their rates for delivery of natural gas, electric, water, wastewater, telephone or cable TV services. Rate Counsel also advocates for consumers in certain insurance matters. The mission of the Division is to make sure that all classes of utility consumers receive safe, adequate and essential services at affordable rates that are just and nondiscriminatory. Additional information on this and other utility matters can be found at the Division’s website at <http://www.state.nj.us/rpa/>.

