

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE**

July 8, 2002

TO: Roy Hemmingway, Commission Chair
Joan Smith, Commissioner
Lee Beyer, Commissioner

FROM: Clark Jackson & Marilyn Rasmussen
Consumer Services

RE: April 2002 Consumer Services Report (REVISED)

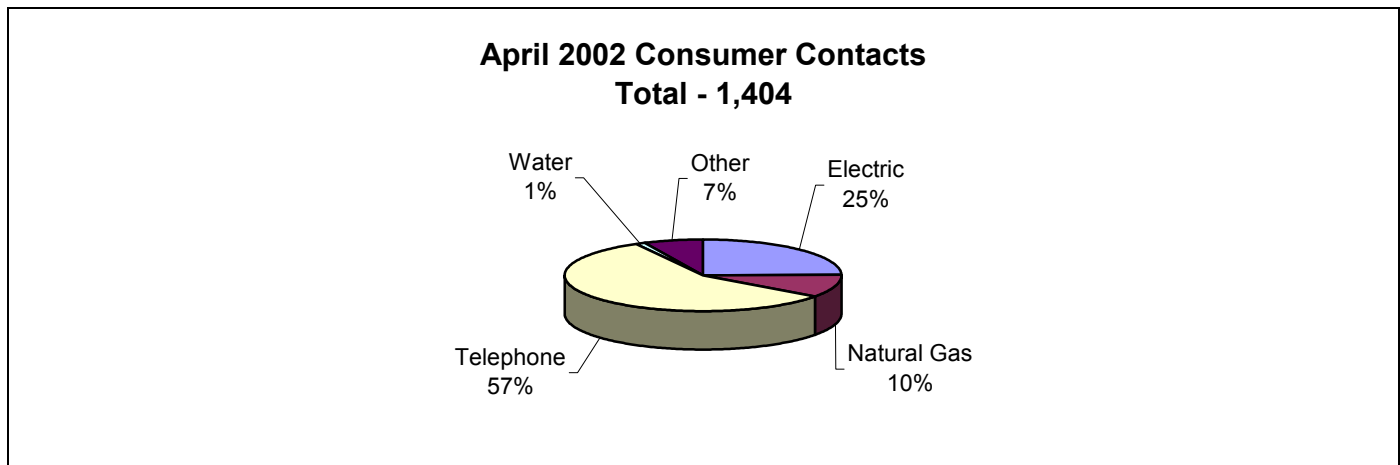
The total consumer contacts* by telephone and email for April were 3,219. That is an increase of 861 over 2001, or 36.5%. That resulted in recorded inquiries for April totaling 1404 compared to 728 in 2001 for a increase of 670 or 93% over 2001. We opened 837 investigations of complaints in April compared to 335 in 2001 or an increase of 150%.

The majority of our inquiries in April were concerning customer service, billing problems (including disconnection), sales promotions, service problems, rate protests and comments on the proposed, and now withdrawn, Northwest Natural purchase of Portland General Electric.

Telecommunications represented 75% of our inquiries in April. Electric energy inquiries were 14%, natural gas was 6%, water was 2% and other represented 3%.

The energy utilities complaints represented 167, or 20%, of our total complaints for April. There were 69 complaints for billing, or 41%, of the energy utilities total complaints of the energy utilities complaints; rate protests totaled 18, or 11%; disconnection of service was 25, or 15%; customer service was 39, or 23%; service was 7, or 4%; and other was 6%.

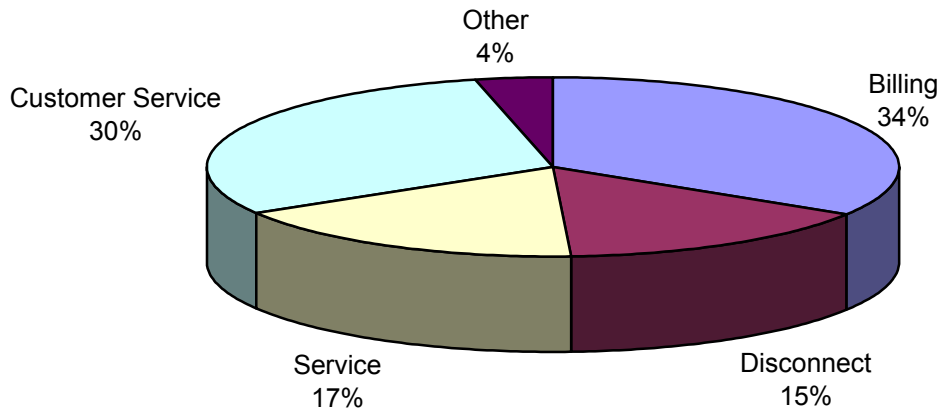
Qwest complaints in April were 70% of our total complaints and 93% of the telecommunications utilities consumer complaints. We received 585 Qwest complaints in April 2002 compared to 147 in April 2001 for an 298% increase over 2001. Customer service represented 32% of the Qwest April complaints; service was 27%; billing problems were 24% and disconnection was 12%.



*Refer to "Definitions" page beginning on page 13.

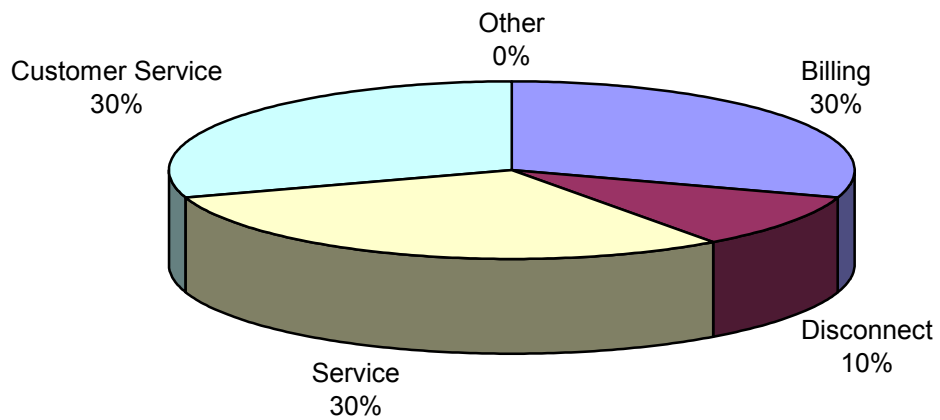
Qwest Complaints Recorded in April 2002

Total - 585

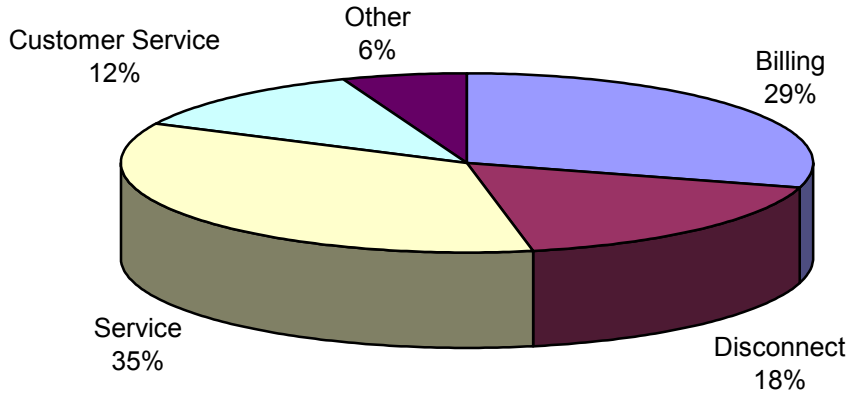


Sprint/United Complaints Recorded in April 2002

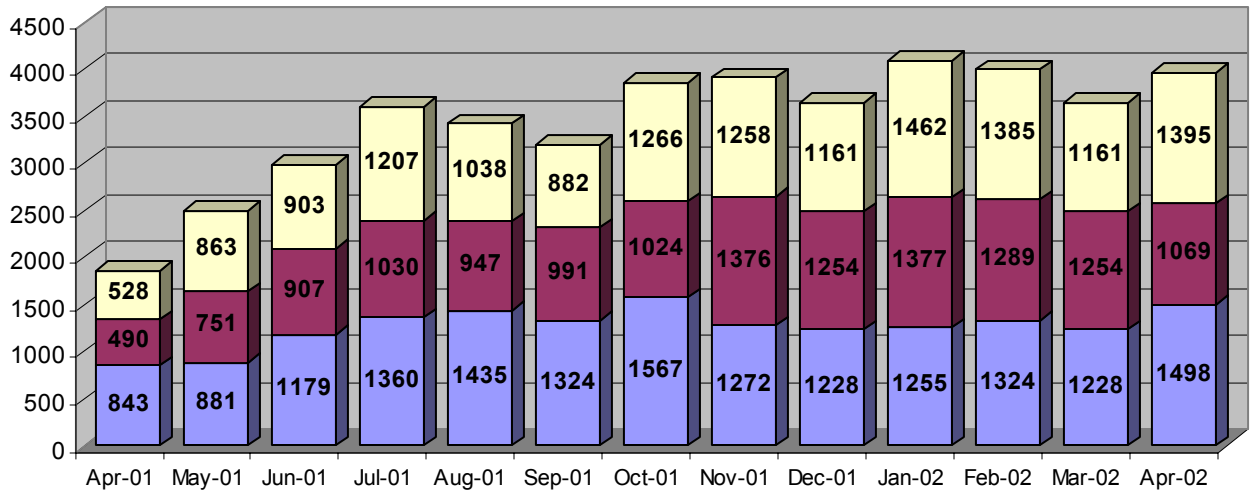
Total - 10



Verizon Complaints Recorded in April 2002
Total - 17

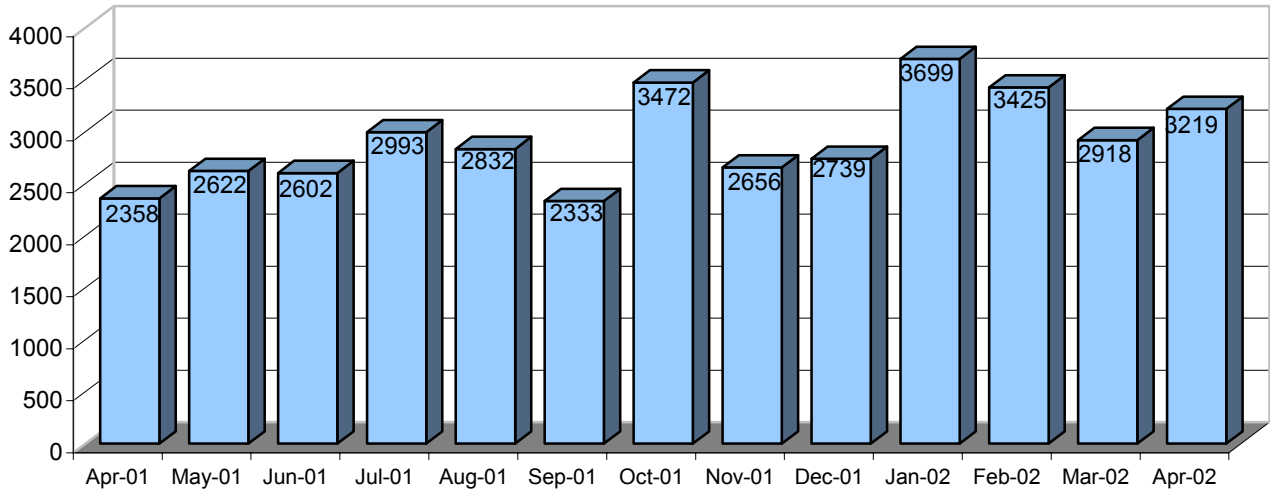


Investigations

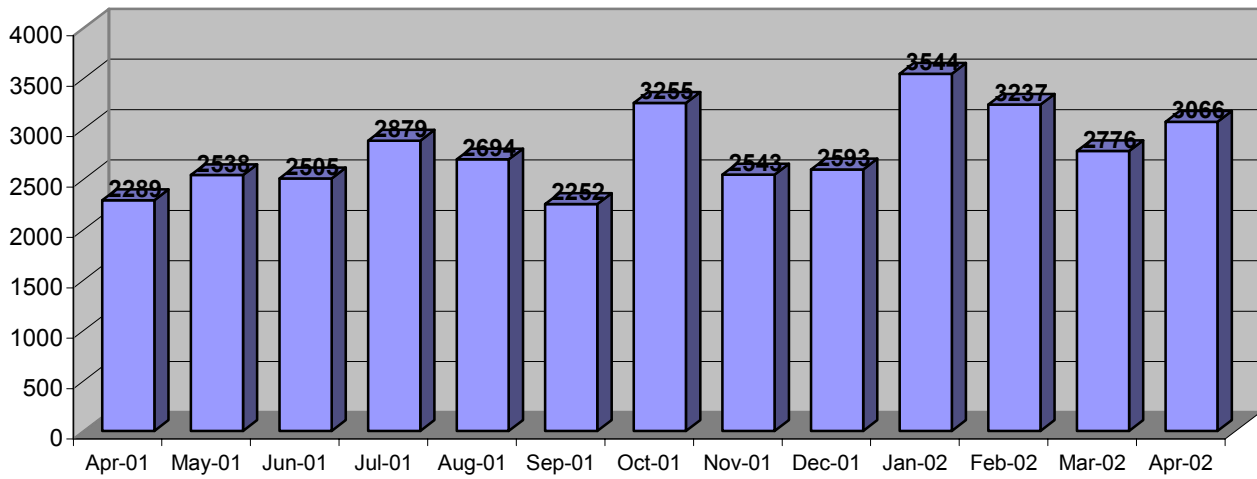


■ Investigations Currently Open
 ■ Investigations Closed per Month
 ■ Investigations Opened per Month

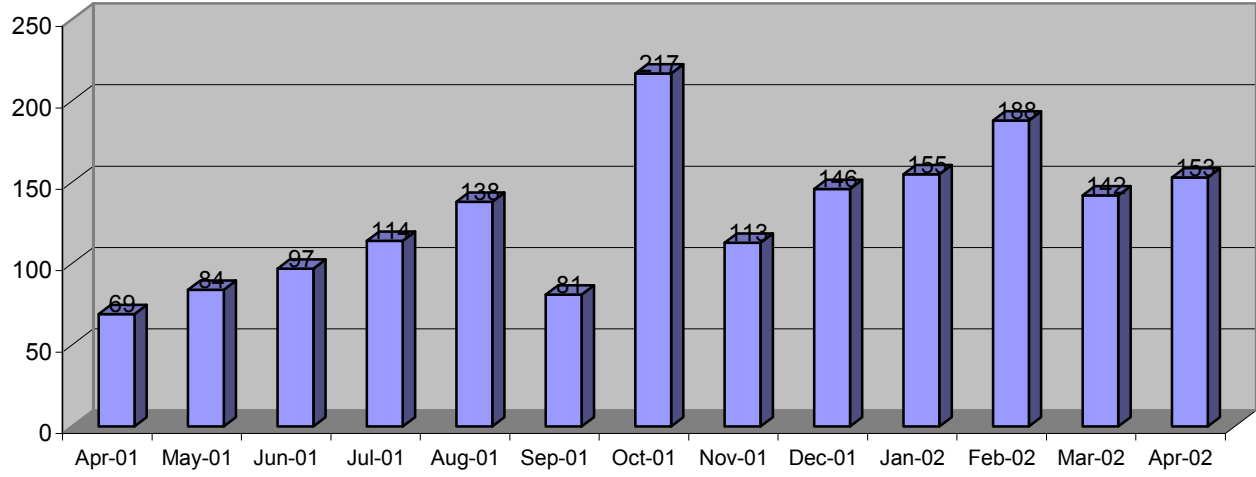
Total Activity Recorded - Telephone Calls and Emails Combined 13-Month History



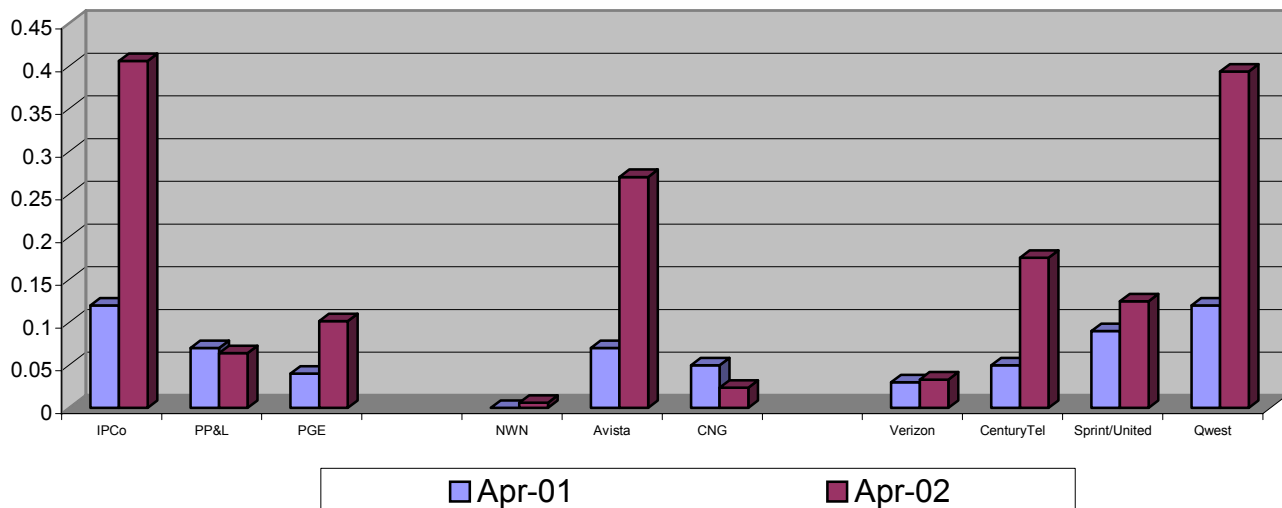
Telephone Activity - Total Calls Per Month 13-Month History



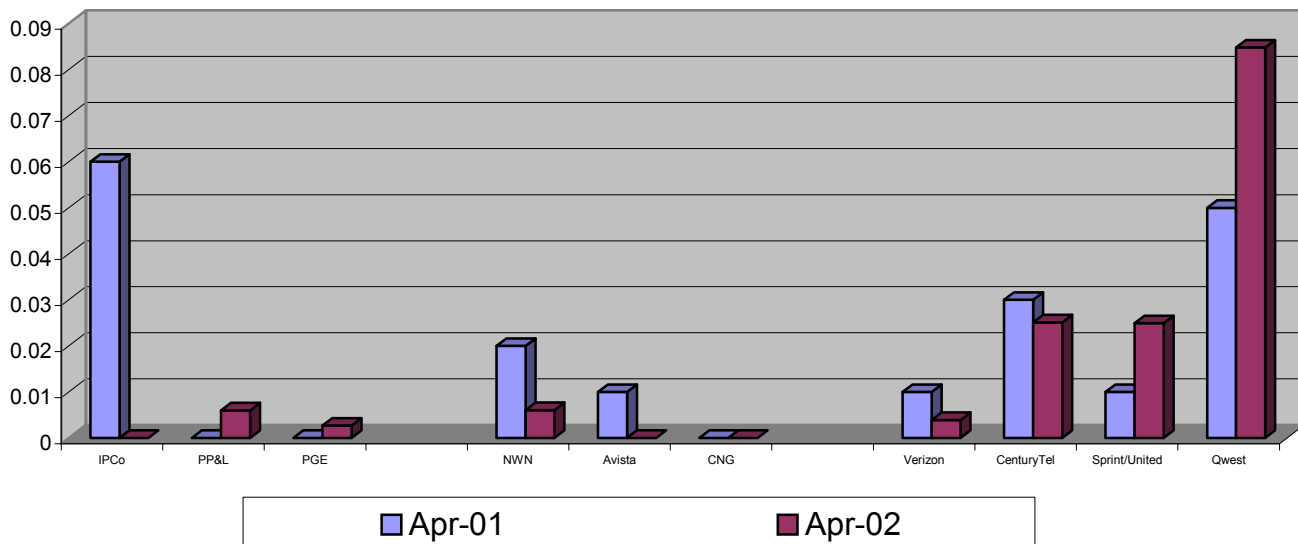
Email Activity - Total Emails Processed Per Month 13-Month History



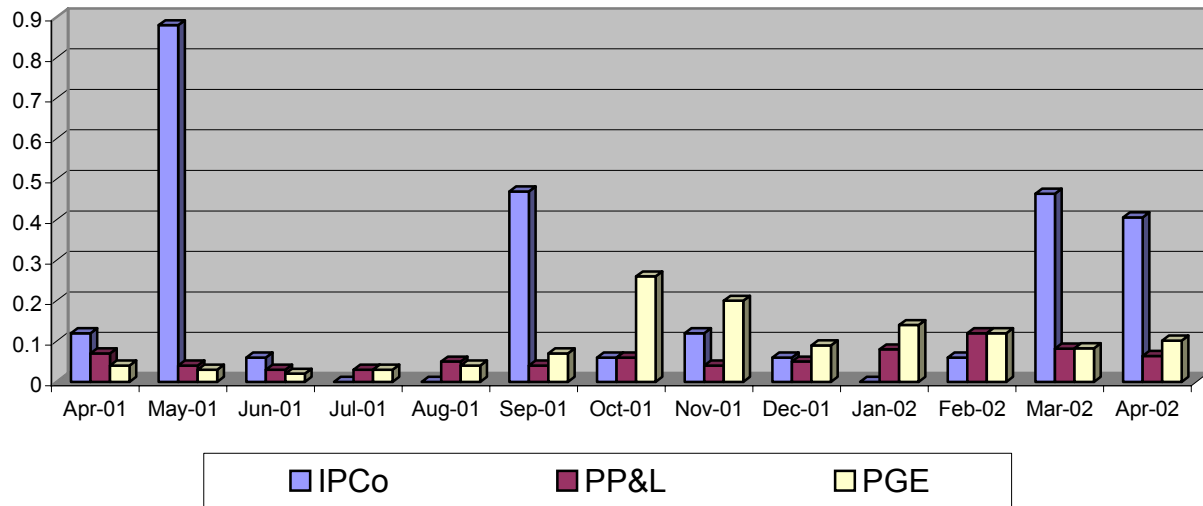
**Major Utilities: Total Complaints per 1,000 Customers
April 2002 compared to April 2001**



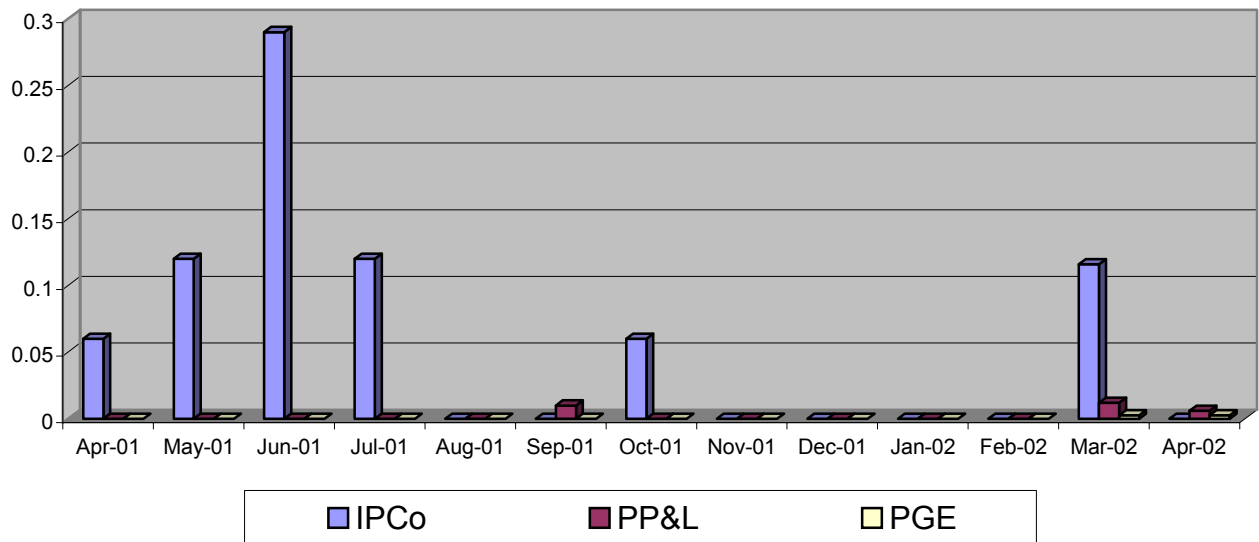
**Major Utilities: Total Complaints At Fault per 1,000
April 2002 compared to April 2001**



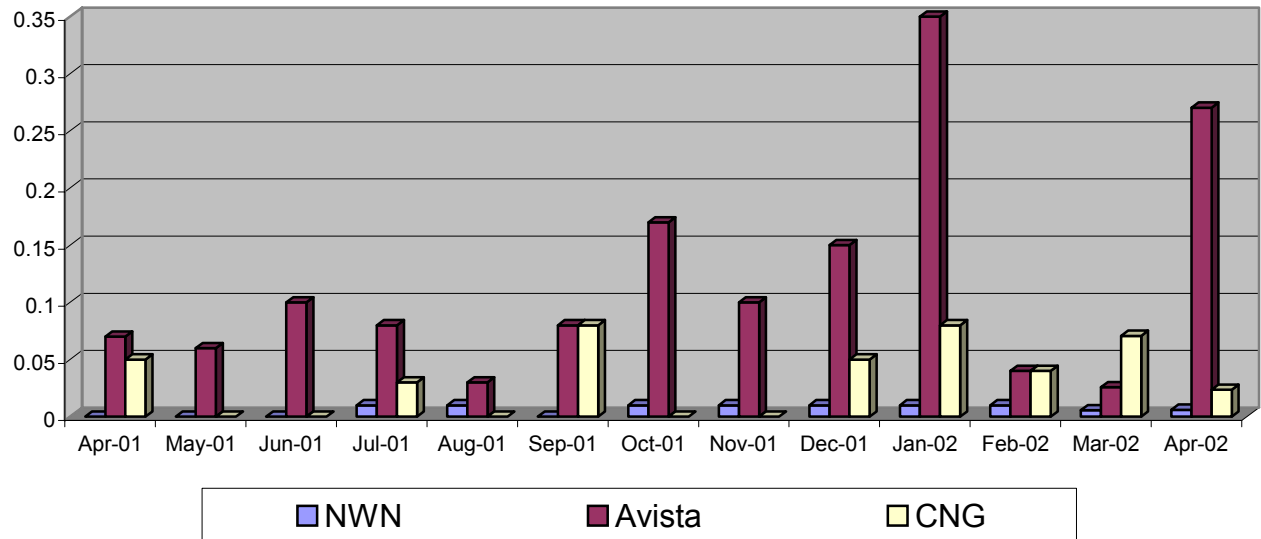
Major Utilities - Electric - Total Complaints Per 1,000 Customers 13-Month History



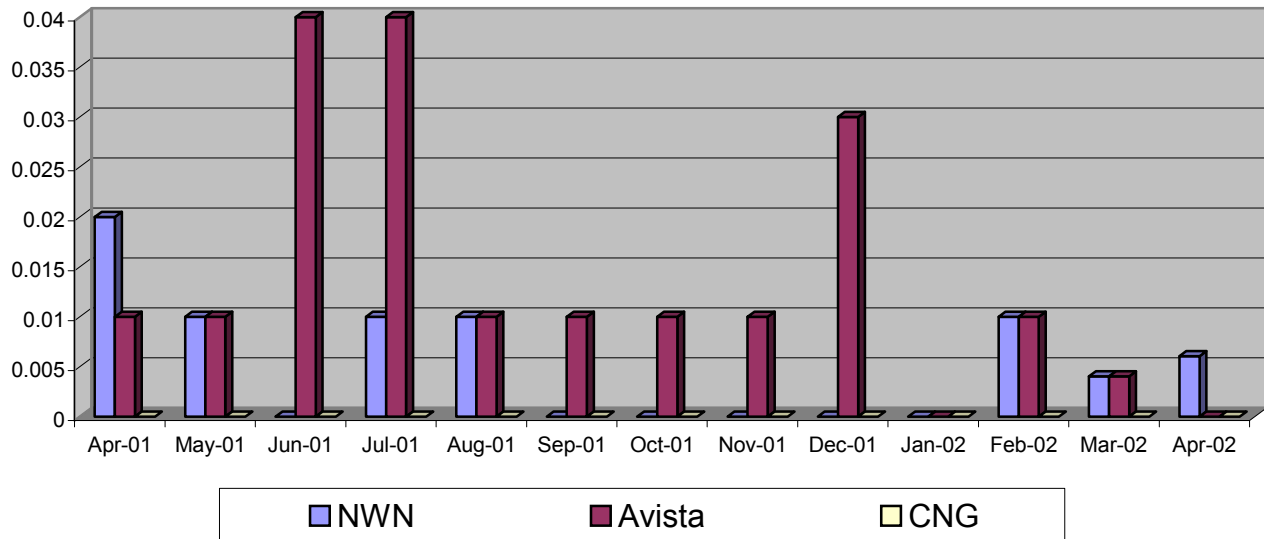
Major Utilities - Electric - Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000 13-Month History



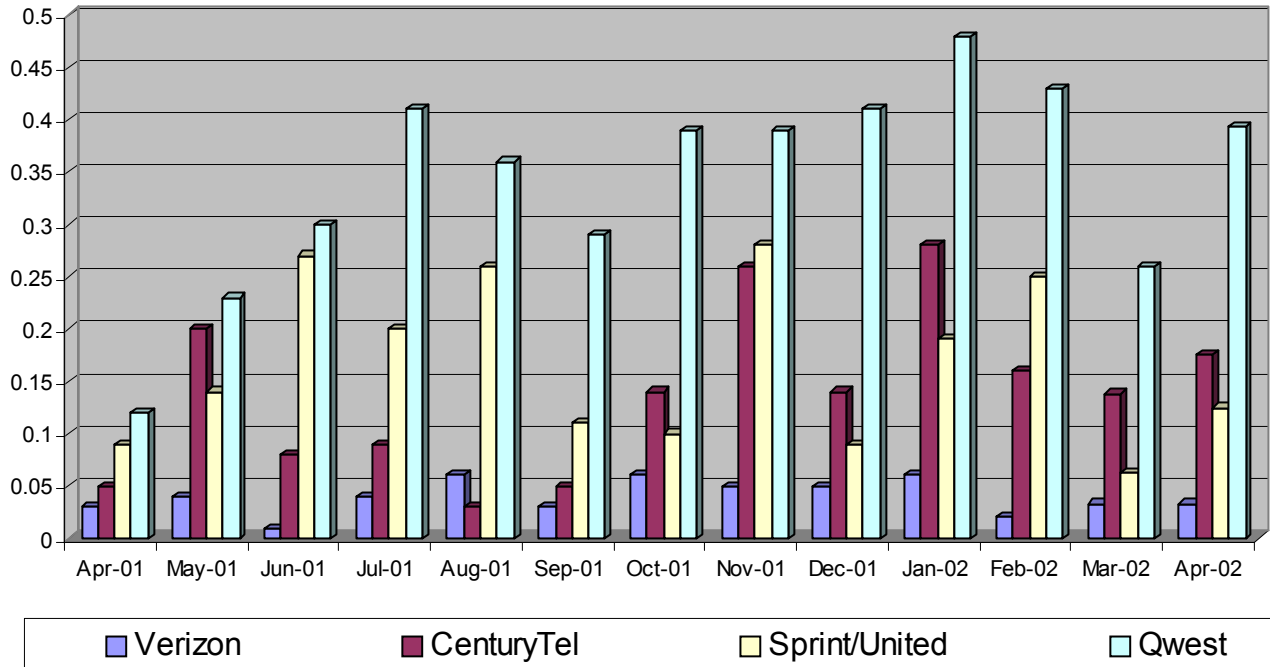
**Major Utilities - Gas - Total Complaints Per 1,000 Customers
13-Month History**



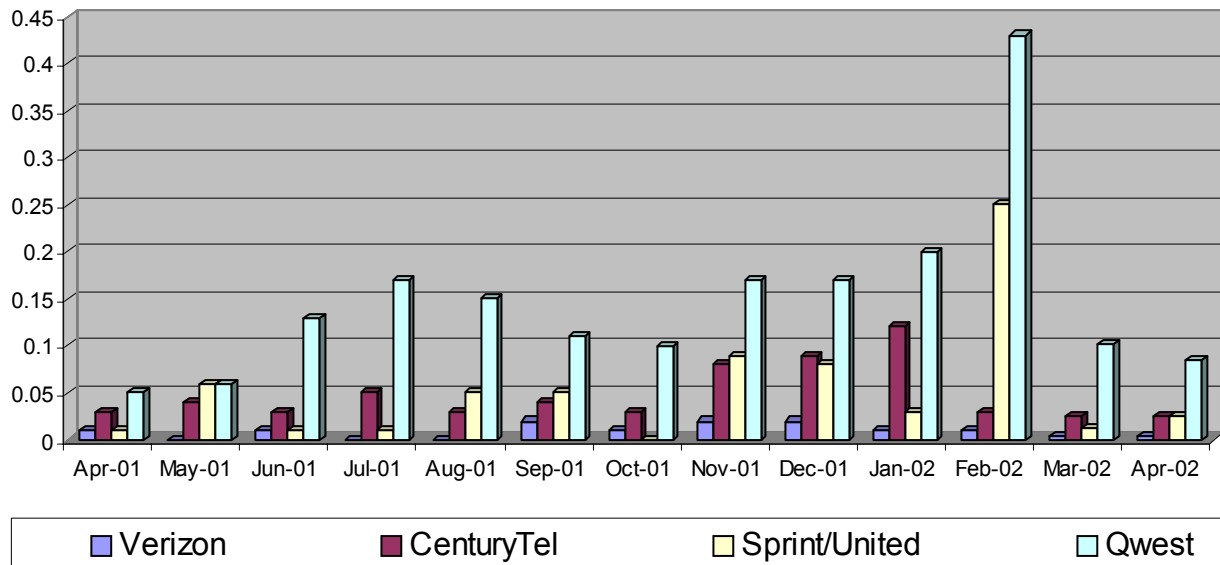
**Major Utilities - Gas - Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000
13-Month History**



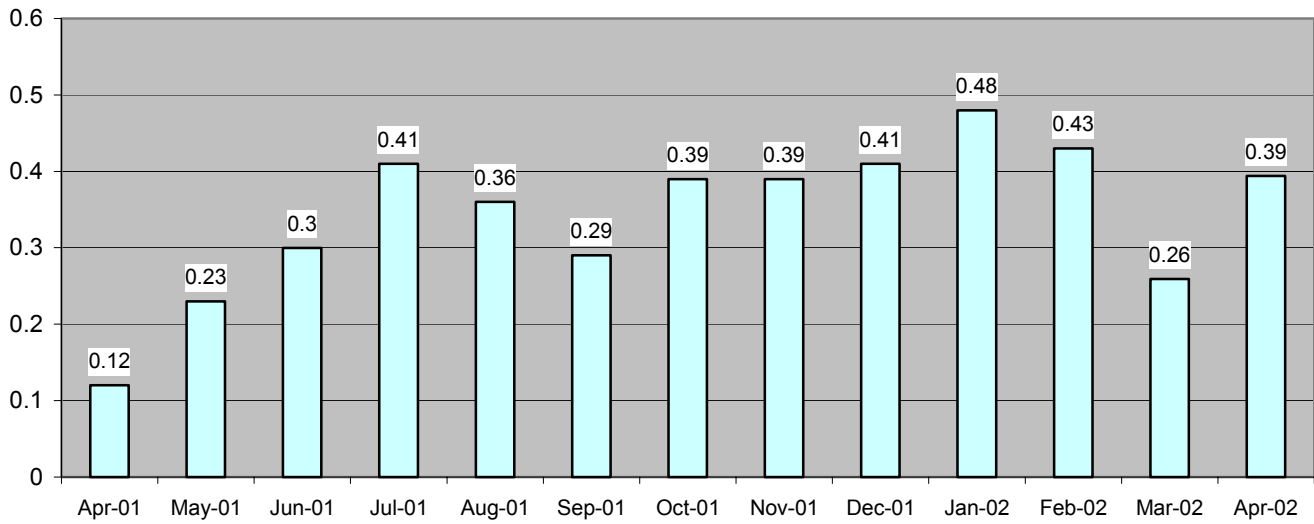
Major Utilities - Telecommunications - Total Complaints Per 1,000 Customers 13-Month History



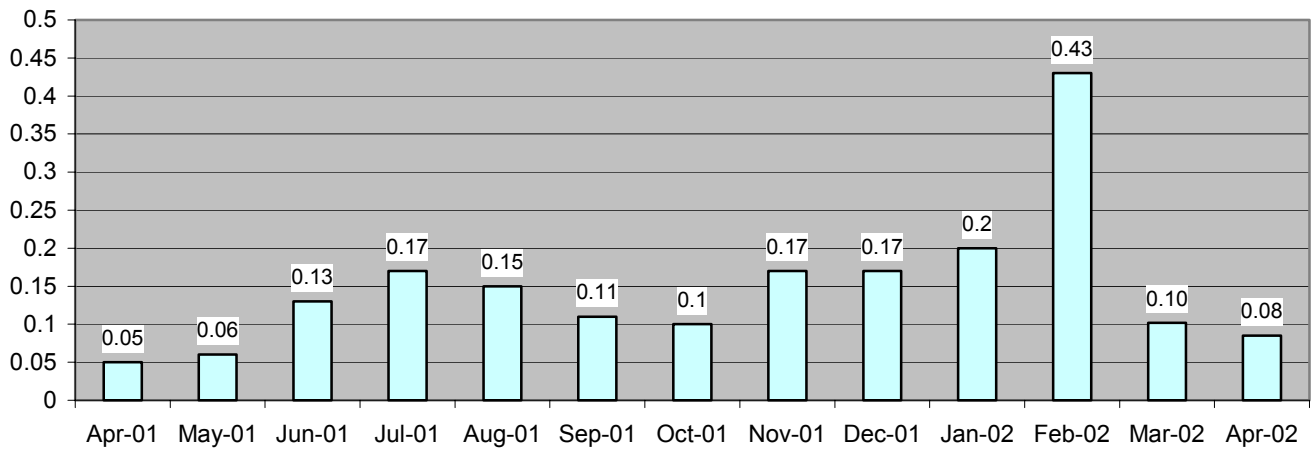
Major Utilities - Telecommunications - Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000 13-Month History



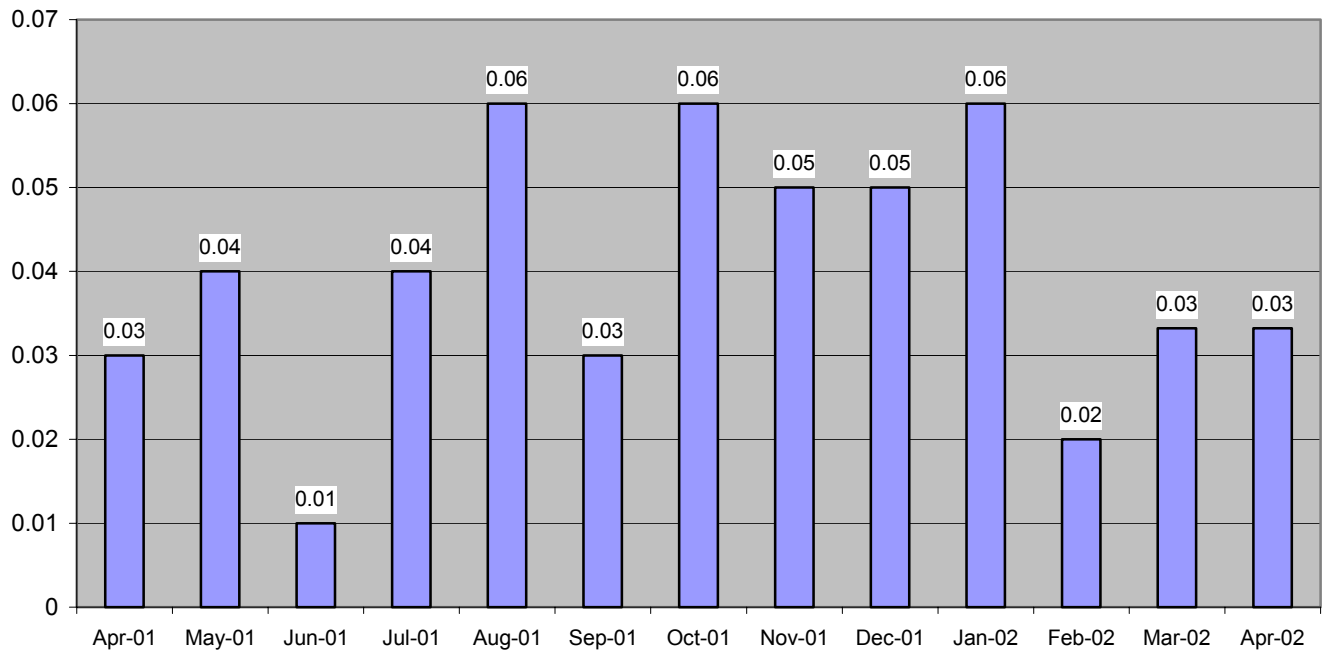
Qwest Total Complaints Per 1,000 Customers 13-Month History



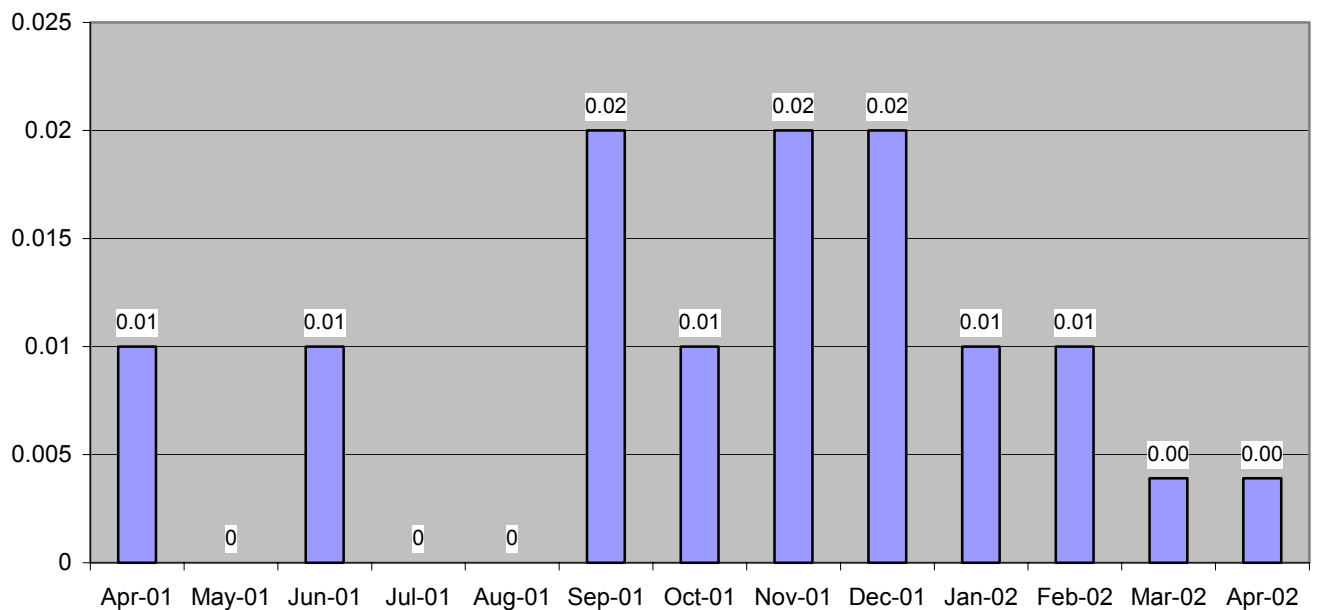
Qwest Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000 13-Month History



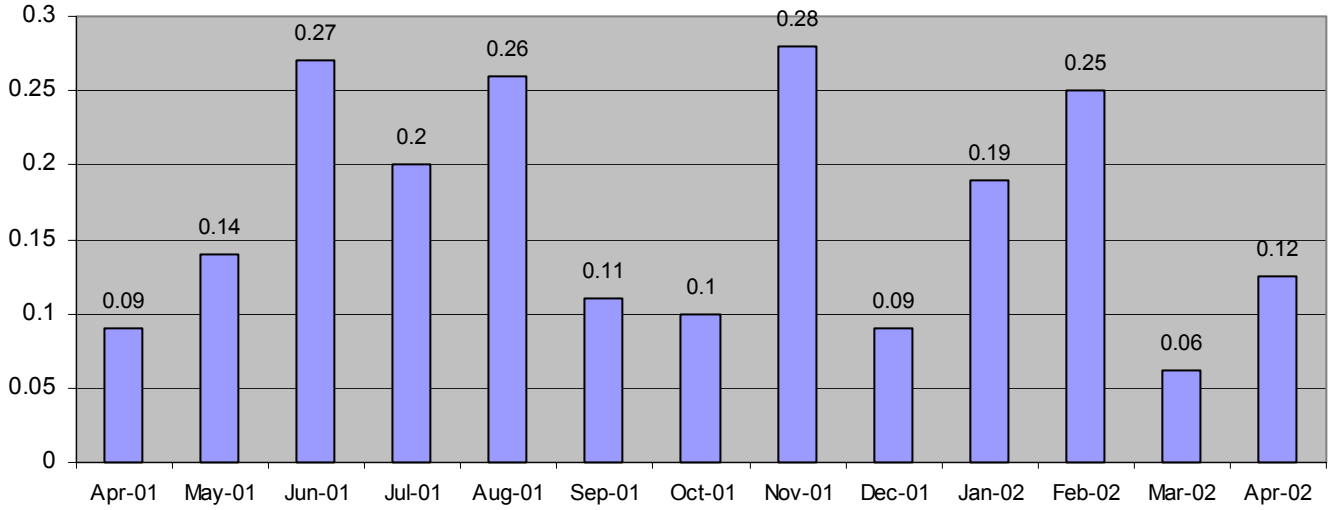
Verizon Total Complaints Per 1,000 Customers 13-Month History



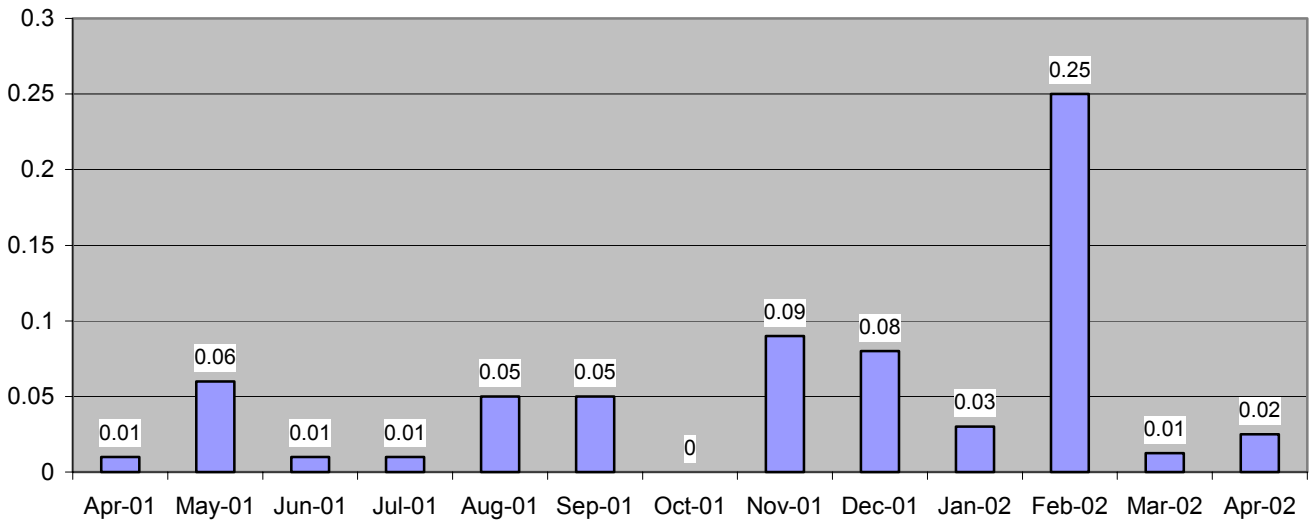
Verizon Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000 13-Month History



**Sprint/United Complaints Per 1,000 Customers
13-Month History**



**Sprint/United Total At Fault Complaints Per 1,000
13-Month History**



Definitions:

- Contacts are the telephone calls, letters, emails and online comments.
- Inquiries are recorded contacts.

Types of contacts:

- Complaint: The Consumer Services specialist has identified issues that need investigation or the customer has specifically requested their jurisdictional "complaint" be registered with the PUC. There can be multiple complaints as components of a single case.
- Case: The database BizApps record.
- Mediation: If the customer has a situation that needs supervisory review by the utility, and the circumstances warrant, the PUC may intercede on behalf of the customer. When a contact is coded as mediation, the Compliance Specialist has made an initial determination the utility followed the rules and regulations and the customer has asked for a management decision. The most common mediation cases involve customers with Emergency Medical Certificates who need special payment arrangements.
- Information: PUC staff often talks to consumers to give them information or to advise them of their rights and responsibilities. Unless there is reason to believe a record is necessary, these contacts are not written up. Most informational comments are not forwarded to the utility company. However, if the customer sends the PUC a letter, fax, or e-mail then a file is always created.

Most common types of complaints:

Customer Service: In the day-to-day business operations of the company where poor, misleading, or inadequate customer service was provided by the utility.

- Access – problems reaching the business or repair office. They include busy, left on hold, dropped out of queue or recently when customer reached the recording, "due to the unusually high number of calls being received, could you call back on Thursday or Friday."
- Personnel – complaints about actions by a specific representative including rudeness, refusal of supervisory review, not returning messages.
- Misinformation – when a representative provides incorrect or incomplete information to a customer.
- Sales Promotions – misrepresenting the cost or elements of a sales package, adding a package to an account without authorization (Custom Choice, Value Choice, or 2 Line Custom Choice).

Billing: These are about specific charges or billing practices that are being disputed by the customer. Examples are billings for the Qwest bundled packages Custom Choice, Value Choice, or 2 Line Custom Choice. The complaints are based on a misunderstanding of the Qwest features or products. The features or products were not ordered or not received by the customer, but they were billed for them and continue to be billed on their monthly statements. These disputes have often taken months in the attempt to resolve with the customer calling Qwest on multiple occasions requesting a correction of the items in dispute. These complaints come to the PUC often after Qwest representatives have time and again stated, "The credits were coming and will be on your next months bill."

- Dispute – complaints about the amount of charges on the bill.
- Payment Allocation – complaints about how the company allocates payments between entities (payments applied to unregulated charges instead of regulated).
- Format – complaints about how the bill looks, difficulty understanding the charges.

Service: These often relate to poles and wires or services from a central office.

- Repair – the turnaround time on repairs, and chronic repair problems the company cannot correct.
- Availability – complaints from customers who want custom features that are not available in their exchange.
- Porting – the problems associated with the "win-back" program, and customers who are not ported on a timely basis. Win-back is the department handling consumers who want to port back to Qwest.
- Held Order – an order for service that cannot be filled due to lack of facilities.
- Delay – an order for service that was delayed due to process or personnel problems.

Disconnection:

- Nonpayment – Issues involving collection action.
- Timeliness – Requests for disconnect, which are either delayed or done before the date the customer requested.

Non-jurisdictional: Issues that are not under the direct authority of the Commission, but are often involved with a billing dispute that included the regulated portion of the customer's telephone service.

- Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) – these high speed cable Internet service complaints about availability, cost, billing, and customer service including access and personnel. The complaints also include Qwest using a splitter line thus not allowing for a high-speed line for the customer (lack of enough line capacity in the area or at the residence). These disputes have included billings for undelivered cable modems. When we receive these complaints, the dispute has often reached a level involving the threat of disconnection of basic telephone service and billings totaling several hundred dollars.
- Cellular phones – these are complaints about misrepresentation, billing, customer service, access, and personnel. These include services having been sold where Qwest has no Home Calling area available. The disputes have included billings for undelivered phones and for phones received but not ordered. These bills often total several hundred dollars. Some of the disputed charges have involved the roaming costs incurred by Qwest's not having Home Calling areas in regions where their marketing representatives have told the customer they existed. The customer believed they were in their Home Calling area where all regional calls would be included in the contracted monthly charge. Because all Qwest provided services are consolidated on one bill, disconnection, including basic service, is often at risk by the time the PUC is contacted.