



State of Vermont
Department of Public Service
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Montpelier, VT 05620-2601
<http://publicservice.vermont.gov>

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March 15, 2024

Dear Environmental Justice Advisory Council,

As required pursuant to 3 V.S.A § 6004(d), the Department of Public Service (PSD) is pleased to offer this report on Environmental Justice and Civil Rights (Title VI) complaints. The enclosed report covers the following sections:

- The Role of the PSD
- Environmental Justice & Civil Rights Complaint Reporting Systems – Overview
- Complaints Received Since May 31, 2022

The Role of the Department of Public Service

The PSD represents the public interest in matters regarding energy, telecommunications, water, and wastewater and helps carry out state energy policy (Title 30, Section 202a). This means ensuring to the greatest extent practicable that Vermont can meet its energy service needs in a manner that is adequate, reliable, secure, and sustainable; ensuring affordability and encouraging the state's economic vitality; using energy resources efficiently and managing demand costs effectively; and in a manner that will achieve greenhouse gas reductions requirements. The PSD does so in several ways, including resolving utility customer complaints and informing the public about utility-related matters. The PSD's Consumer Affairs & Public Information (CAPI) Division supports these efforts through helping members of the public resolve informal disputes with regulated utilities and by investigating complaints filed against entities holding a Certificate of Public Good (CPG). Contact information for CAPI is on every utility disconnection notice and CAPI provides regular outreach, such as webinars, for referring organizations inside state government and community-based organizations.

More information about CAPI's work can be found here:

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/consumer-affairs-and-public-information>

Environmental Justice & Civil Rights Complaint Reporting Systems – Overview

Environmental Justice Complaint Reporting

Vermonters may contact the PSD via an online form to make a complaint relating to regulated utilities (ex. electric, cable, natural gas) and unregulated broadband or wireless providers. The form can be accessed through a link on CAPI's webpage at Consumer Affairs and Public Information | Department of Public Service¹. The online complaint form is available directly at <https://capi.epsd.vermont.gov/?q=node/51>.

¹ <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/consumer-affairs-and-public-information>



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In February 2024, CAPI added information on its homepage specific to *Environmental Justice Complaint Reporting*². This provides members of the public with information on CAPI's role in investigating complaints relating to environmental justice and non-discrimination and provides links to the Agency of Natural Resource's Environmental Justice Law page. It also offers information on filing complaints through the online form and via contacting CAPI staff directly over the phone or email.

Nondiscrimination Complaint Reporting

In October 2023, the PSD updated its website relating to policies and procedures³, including for those related to nondiscrimination⁴. Questions or complaints regarding nondiscrimination related to PSD programs or activities, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, can be filed by contacting the PSD's Director of Planning or the Director of CAPI via email, telephone, or mail. This contact information is available on the website. Complaints received by the PSD are assigned to an investigator. Formal or informal investigations will be conducted as determined by the nature of the complaint and findings will be addressed per the PSD nondiscrimination policy.

Ongoing Staff Training Efforts

To enhance the CAPI division's capacity to identify environmental justice complaints and related issues, staff have been engaging in training and other professional development activities specific to environmental justice. These include:

Trainings & Conferences

- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Environmental Justice Training (two employees)
- Energy Justice: Fostering More Equitable Energy Futures, Dartmouth College (completed by two employees)
- US Department of Energy [Justice Week 2023](#) 4-day conference (one employee)

Presentations:

- Taking a local health and equity approach to climate change: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (one employee)
- Initiative for Energy Justice Webinar California Power shut offs (one employee)

² The PSD's information on environmental justice complaint reporting is available here:

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/environmental-justice-complaint-reporting>

³ For all PSD Policies & Procedures, go to the website <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/about-us/policies-and-procedures>

⁴ The PSD's Notice of Nondiscrimination and information on submitting related questions or complaints is available here: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/notice-nondiscrimination>



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- VT Municipal Vulnerability Index Public Presentation (two employees)

Resources Reviewed

- Initiative for Energy Justice Utilities 101 slide deck (one employee)
- Initiative for Energy Justice: Utilities 101 and Energy Justice Workbook & Scorecard (one employee)

Environmental Justice Complaints Received Since May 31, 2022

A resident of Essex complained about the financial costs to participate in “going green.” They described having received an estimate of \$5,000 to upgrade electricity service from 100 to 200 amps (not including additional costs to upgrade the transformer). These costs make “going green” unaffordable for this resident. Unfortunately, the PSD could not provide a referral to a grant program at this time but did refer them to a lender -- Opportunities Credit Union -- and advised the resident about checking the PSD website for future program offerings.

Civil Rights Complaints Received Since May 31, 2022

No complaints have been received.

The PSD looks forward to any recommendations, feedback or guidance the Environmental Justice Advisory Council has regarding this overview and looks forward to continued collaboration on this work.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "June E. Tierney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'J' and 'T'.

3B0A6AACB54C46E...

June E. Tierney

Commissioner
Department of Public Service