

MONTHLY DATA REPORT

March
2019



Consumer
Protection and
Enforcement
Division
California Public
Utilities Commission



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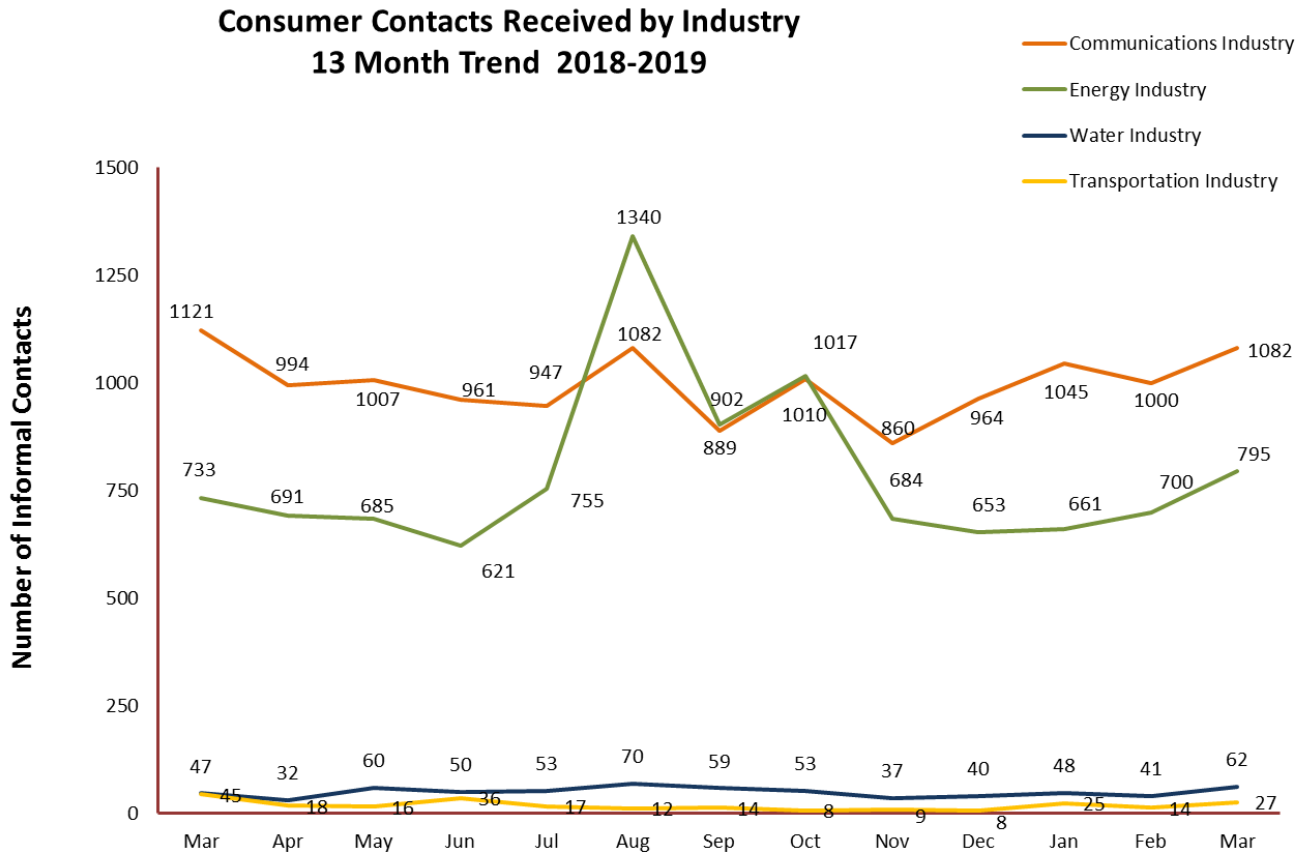
The Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division (CPED) serves the public interest and the mission of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) by assisting consumers in resolving their informal complaints against service providers under the Commission's jurisdiction. CPED is proud to be able to assist consumers with an informal complaint resolution process, with answers to questions, and with referral information. In assisting consumers, we are able to gain a useful picture of consumer issues and trends.

This report is based on contacts (informal complaints and questions) received by the Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) and the Transportation Enforcement Branch (TEB) within CPED, and presents both annual and monthly data for the communications, energy, water, and transportation industries. Page 2 presents annual trend data, and Page 3 through Page 6 report data by industry for the current month. For context, the report also includes comparable data from the previous month. Page 7 presents contact data specifically related to safety concerns, by industry. A glossary of terms used in this report can be found on Page 8.

The Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division serves as the first line of support for consumers of CPUC-regulated services. CPED collects and resolves consumer informal complaints, enforces laws and regulations governing transportation carriers, and investigates allegations of utility waste, fraud, and abuse.

Overview

1,966 CONTACTS (March 2019)



Overall, 1,966 total informal consumer contacts were received during March across the four regulated industries. March 2019 shows an increase of 12.0% from the 1,755 informal contacts received during February; and a 6.6% Increase from the prior 12-month average of 1,845.

Communications: 1,082 categorized informal contacts related to Communications were received during March, which is an increase of 8.2% from the 1,000 contacts received during February. The contacts received during March are 9.3% higher than the prior 12-month average of 990.

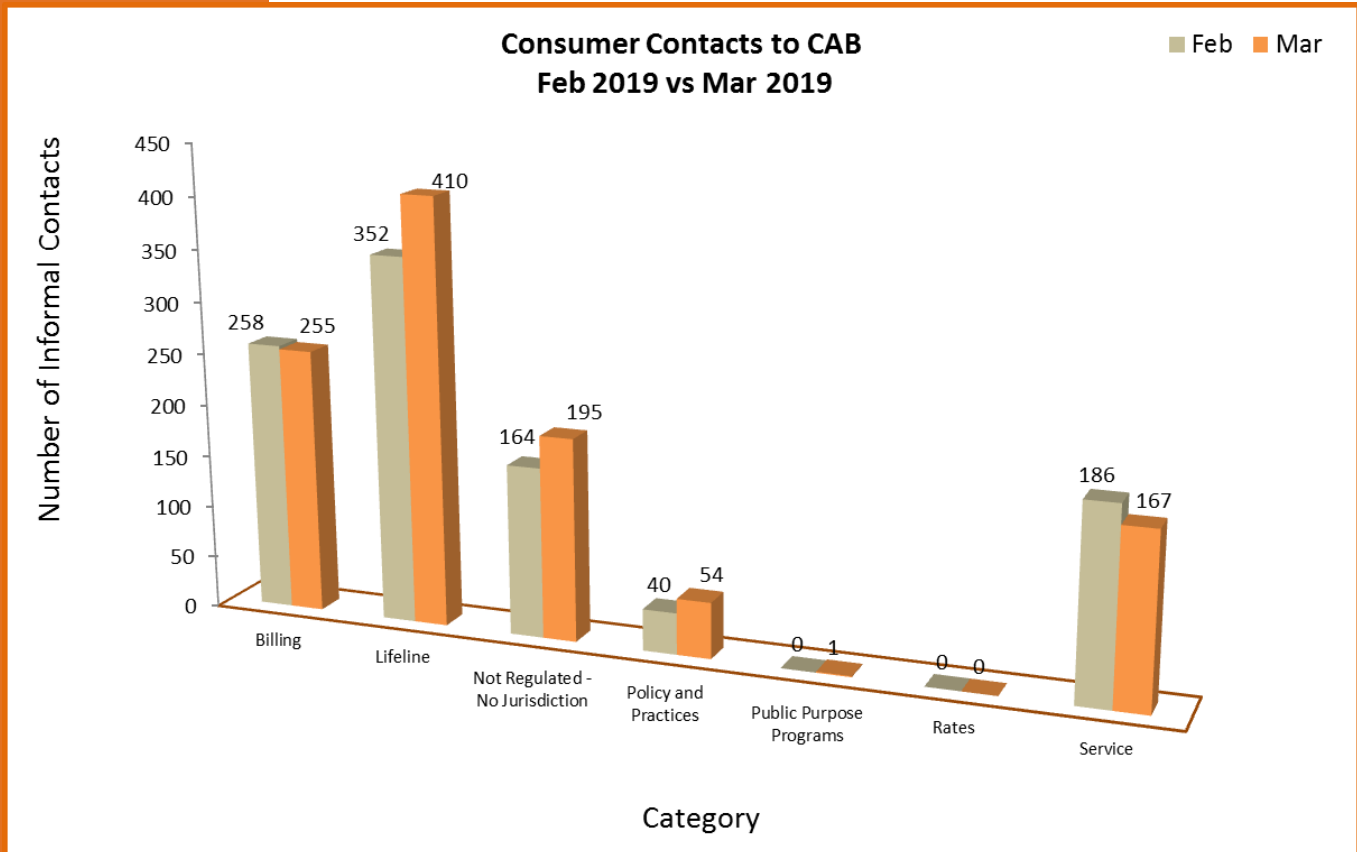
Energy: 795 categorized informal contacts related to Energy were received during March 2019, which is an increase of 13.6% from 700 contacts received during February. Contacts received in March are 1.0% higher than the prior 12-month average of 787.

Water: 62 categorized informal contacts related to Water were received during March 2019. This is a 51.2% Increase from the 41 contacts received in February. Water contacts received in March are 26.1% higher than the prior 12-month average of 49.

Transportation: The CPUC's Transportation Enforcement Branch (TEB) received 27 categorized contacts in March 2019. Transportation contacts are 92.9% higher than the 14 contacts in February 2019 and 45.9% higher than the prior 12-month average of 18.5. (Note: TEB no longer handles complaints regarding Household Good Carriers and Private Carriers as of July 1, 2018, pursuant Senate Bill 19 Hill-2017.)

Communications

1,082 CONTACTS (March 2019)



During March 2019, CAB received 1,082 Communications-related informal contacts, allocated into one of the defined categories of Billing, LifeLine, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

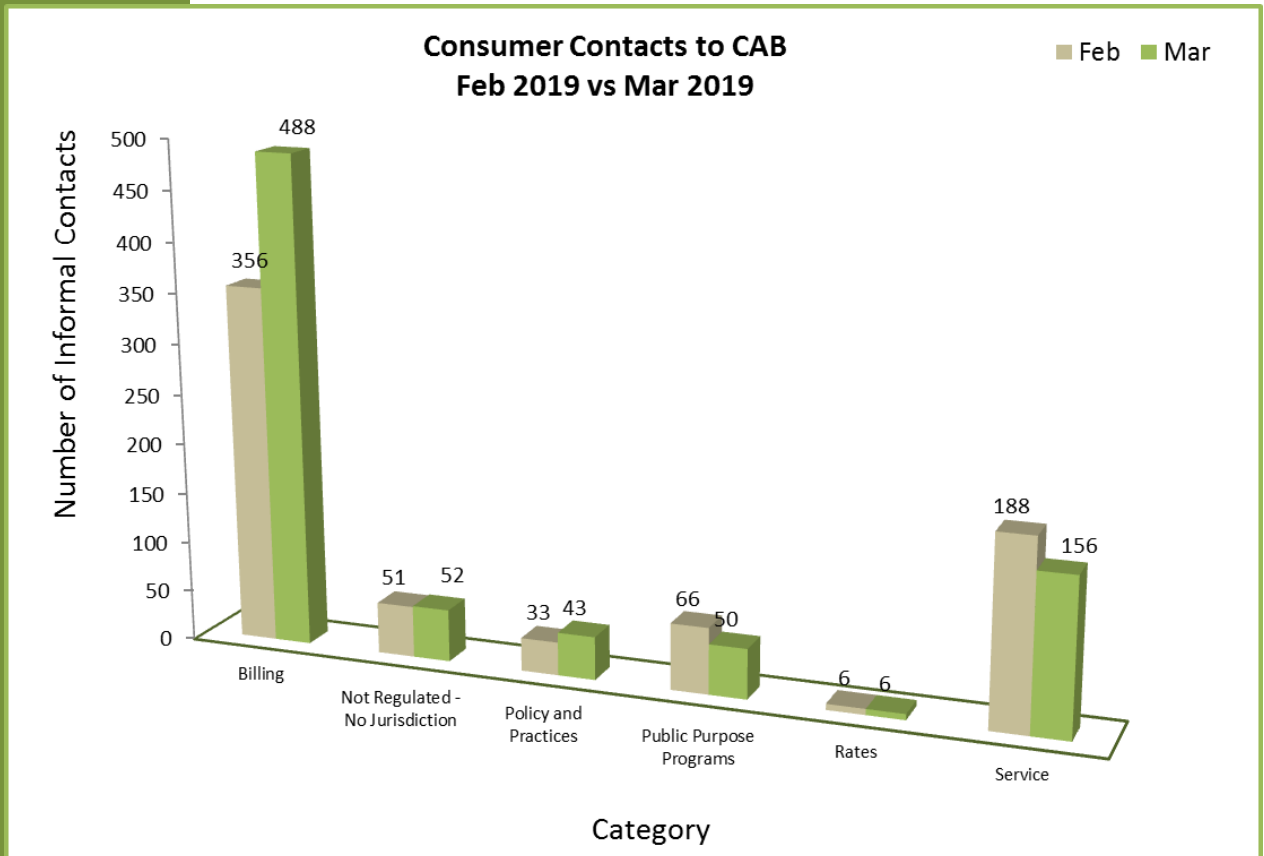
Lifeline related contacts increased by 16.5% in March as compared to the previous month. New account activations as well as account renewals appear to have increased in February, which contributed to the overall rise in informal consumer contacts for the month.

In addition, Service-related contacts decreased by 10.2% in March. One factor in this change is that outage complaints with AT&T California and Frontier California Inc. decreased from February to March. Moreover, there was a slight decrease in contacts related to Delayed Orders/Missed Appointments for these same companies.

In addition to the 1,082 categorized contacts, CAB received 126 uncategorized (pending processing and misdirected) contacts.

Energy

795 CONTACTS (March 2019)



In March, CAB received 795 Energy-related informal contacts allocated amongst the six defined categories of Billing, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

Billing related contacts increased by 37.1% in March due to several factors. While several subcategories generally increased, informal consumer contacts regarding High Bills experienced the greatest increase, especially from Southern California Edison and PG&E consumers. Moreover, CAB received increased informal contacts from consumers of various investor-owned utilities regarding Back billing, Bill not Received, Disputed Customer of Record, and Payment Arrangements.

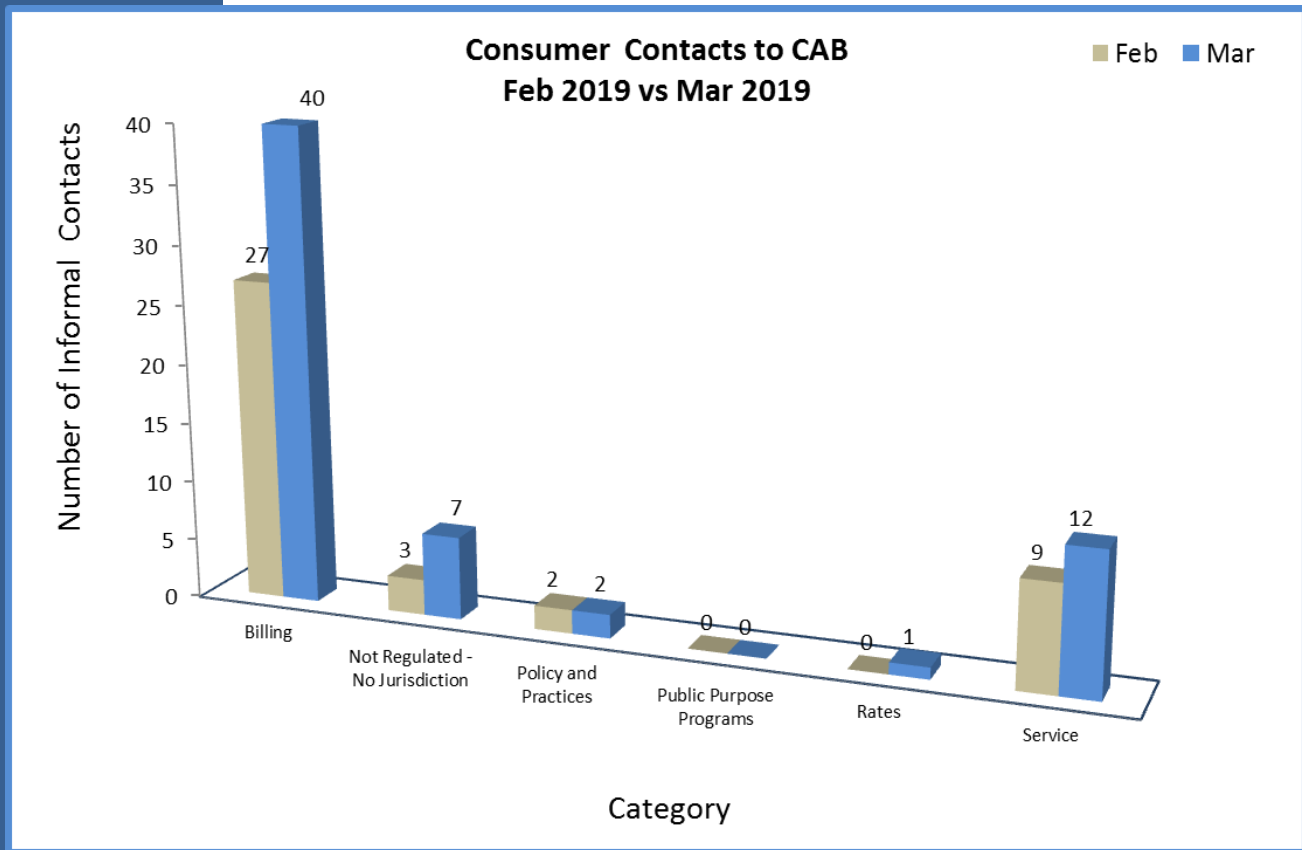
Service related contacts decreased by 17.0% in March. Outage cases PG&E and SCE consumers rose in February and have since decreased.

In addition to the 795 categorized contacts, CAB also received 78 uncategorized (pending processing and misdirected) contacts.



Water

62 CONTACTS (March 2019)



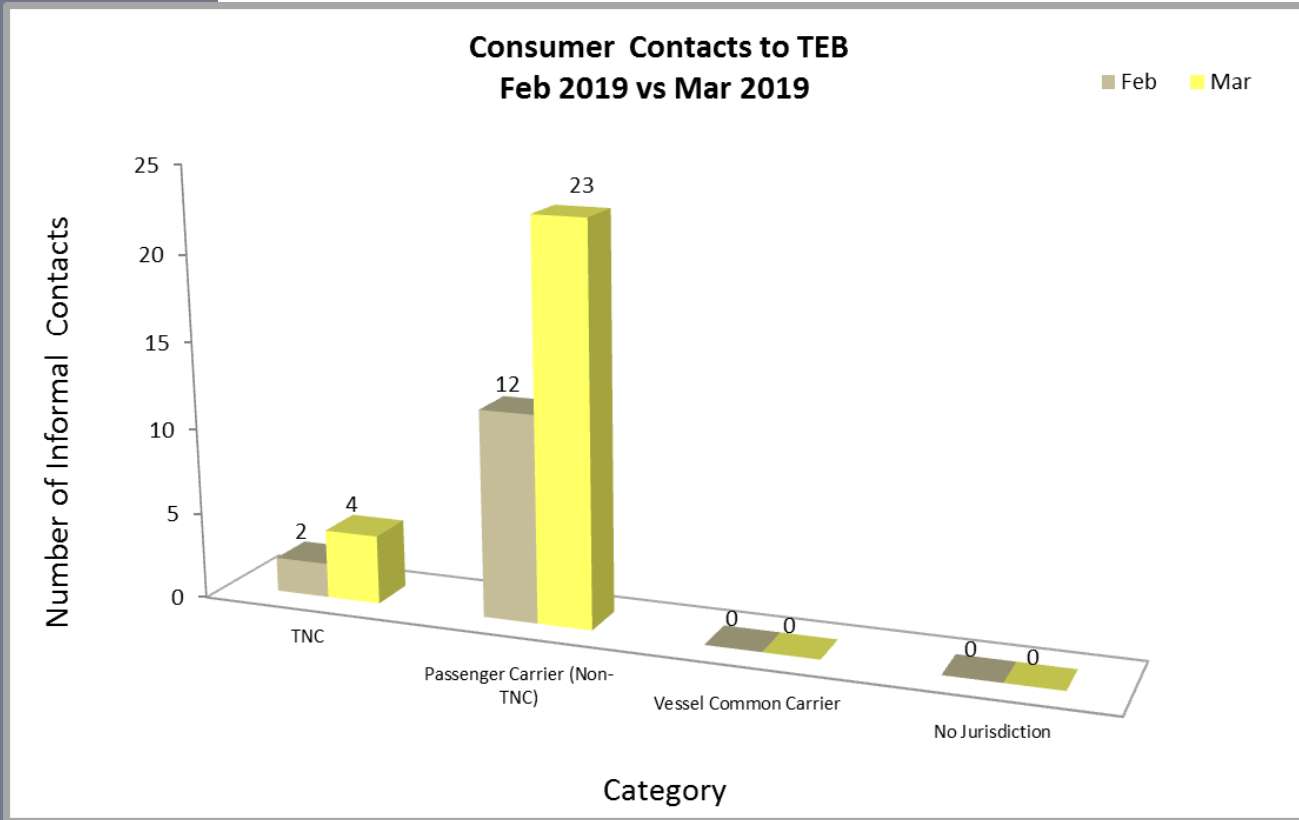
CAB received 62 Water-related informal contacts in March, allocated into one of the six defined categories of Billing, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

Billing related cases shows an increase of 48.1% between February and March, which represents the majority of the overall 52.1% increase in total water cases in that period. However, the increase in these consumer cases is spread across several Billing subcategories with consumer contacts from no carrier as the primary driver of the increase.

In addition to the 62 categorized contacts, CAB also received 19 uncategorized (pending processing and misdirected) contacts.

Transportation

27 CONTACTS (March 2019)



TEB received 27 Transportation-related contacts in March 2019, allocated into one of the 4 defined categories of Passenger Carrier (TNC), Passenger Carrier (Non-TNC), Vessel Common Carrier, and No Jurisdiction.

Passenger carrier complaints (TNC, limo, buses) consisted of (14) operating or advertising without a permit (safety issue), (7) operating on a suspended or revoked permit (safety issue), and (3) refund requests. CIU referred (22) complaints for enforcement action, resolved (3) complaints, and will likely complete the remaining (2) complaints within 30 days of receipt. CIU closed (25) complaints in March 2019: (25) within 30 days of receipt.

Each of the complaints involved a specific carrier, so no trend or pattern could be attributed to the complaints relative to the over 7,000 carriers under CPUC jurisdiction.

Safety Concerns Across Industries

During March 2019, CPED received **42** contacts identified as having a safety component across three of the four reported industries. The contacts presented below are a subset of those presented on pages 3-6 of this report. Safety contacts are classified by the type of safety concern.

Communications	9
Consumer Property	1
Emergency Services/Health Concerns	2
Utility Infrastructure	6

Energy	12
Emergency Services	1
Gas Leak	2
Property Restoration	1
Utility Infrastructure	8

Water	0
No Safety Contacts	

Transportation	21
Operating Without Active Authority	21

Definitions for Safety-Related Contacts:

Company Practice includes service-related issues perceived to impact consumer safety such as lengthy appointment wait times for service restoration.

Consumer Property includes issues with consumer owned property such as unsafe appliances (heaters, stoves, etc.)

EMF/Power Surges/Voltage fluctuations include cases related to Electromagnetic Field (EMF) concerns (e.g. Smart Meters), consumer household power surges and electricity voltage fluctuations.

Emergency Services/ Health Concerns include immediate or perceived concerns due to potential outages or events, such as inability to reach 911 during phone outage, or failure of medical equipment during power outages.

Gas Leak includes any concerns related to gas leaks in the utility distribution system or in the consumer's premises.

Operating Without Active Authority involves operations without a valid permit or certificate, including operations with a suspended or revoked permit or certificate.

Property Restoration includes issues regarding ground hazards such as holes, trenches, tripping hazards, debris removal, tree trimming and street lighting.

Security Concerns includes issues perceived to impact consumer security such as phone line privacy issues, unlisted phone numbers, or utility personnel identification.

Utility Infrastructure includes issues regarding infrastructure that is faulty or in disrepair such as hanging cables, exposed wires, leaning utility poles, analog meters and transformers.

Water Safety or Quality includes immediate or perceived concerns relating to water quality such as color, odor or presence of chemicals in drinking water.

Definitions

Consumer Affairs Branch

The following definitions were compiled to assist with understanding consumer contacts information.

Type of Contacts Definitions	
Informal Consumer Contacts	Informal Contacts are consumers' communications received by CAB via phone calls, letters and electronic submissions (email/web form). Contacts can consist of complaints, questions, or feedback from consumers regarding the policies and practices of specific utilities or the CPUC. These contacts are reported as Categorized or Uncategorized.
Categorized Contacts	These are informal contacts which have sufficient information to be allocated into one the defined categories: Billing, Lifeline, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, and Service based on the primary (overarching) reason for the contact.
Uncategorized Contacts	These are contacts which are pending assignment, lack sufficient information to be processed (Unknown), or contacts in which the consumer intended to contact some other entity, and mistakenly contacted CAB (Misdirected).

Category Definitions	
Billing	Consumer contacts related to disputed items appearing on a consumer's utility bill, the appearance of the bill, or other utility charges.
Lifeline (Billing & Appeals)	Consumer contacts related to the Lifeline Program, which assists low income telecommunications customers. It includes items related to Lifeline Appeals or Lifeline Billing disputes.
Not Regulated – No Jurisdiction	Consumer contacts related to concerns, disputes, and issues where the CPUC does not have jurisdiction.
Policy and Practices	Consumer contacts related to utility and/or CPUC policies and practices.
Public Purpose Programs	Consumer contacts related to programs that assist utility consumers, including income-based and disability-based programs.
Rates	Consumer contacts related to rate design, rate protests and baseline rates.
Service	Consumer contacts related to the service provided to the consumer by the utility.
Uncategorized Definitions	
Misdirected	Consumer contacts intended for some other entity such as consumer attempting to contact their utility. CAB assists these consumers by redirecting them to the entity best able to address their concerns.
Pending Assignment	Category not identified due to case pending processing.
Unknown	Category not identified due to lack of information from consumer.