



SUEZ New York and SUEZ Westchester *Customer Service Performance Incentive Mechanism*

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RATE ORDER 13-W-0295

BACKGROUND

As part of the United Water New York (now SUEZ Water New York or SWNY) final rate case order, a Customer Service Performance Incentive (CSPI) mechanism was implemented in 2015. The CSPI is designed as a customer service measure that may be taken into consideration when New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) staff review the quality of customer service delivered by an individual utility. There are two metrics captured under this mechanism: the number of customer complaints to the PSC (Annual Escalated Complaint Rate), and the results of a Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS).

GOALS

SWNY - The goal provided in the rate order for the annual escalated complaint rate is a 12 month rolling average of 5.3 complaints per 100,000 customers. In addition, *SWNY* would maintain a CSS score over 75.7%. If *SWNY* scored higher than 5.3 or lower than a CSS score of 75.7% penalties could be imposed as per the rate order.

SWWC - Shortly after the rate order in *SWNY*, part of the CSPI mechanism was included in the rate order for SUEZ Water Westchester (*SWWC*). The only mechanism to be tracked for *SWWC* is the annual escalated complaint rate. The goal provided in the rate order for the annual escalated complaint rate is a 12 month rolling average of 5.1 complaints per 100,000 customers.

OBJECTIVES

To work within the parameters set forth in the regulations to resolve complaints directly with the customer before inquiries are escalated through the PSC.

SUMMARY

Providing an outstanding customer experience is the top priority for SUEZ. There have been advances in our self-service features over the phone and on our new website. In addition, SUEZ works hard to resolve customer inquiries with the customer before escalated to a complaint.

The chart below is a summary of *SWNY* and *SWWC* goals and results:

2015 Annual Escalated Complaint Rate		
Company	Goal	Result
SWNY	5.3	3.9
SWWC	5.1	2.5

2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey		
Company	Goal	Result
SWNY	75.7%	87%

ANNUAL ESCALATED COMPLAINT RATE

RESULTS (GOALS ACHIEVED)

According to the PSC “Monthly Report on Consumer Complaint Activity” for December of 2015, SWNY had a 12 Month Escalated Complaint Rate of 3.9, and SWWC had a 12 Month Escalated Complaint Rate of 2.5.

In both business units, SUEZ has met goals provided in the rate order and should therefore not be penalized.

Providing an outstanding customer experience is the top priority for SUEZ. In addition, the company always endeavors to resolve all customer inquiries in an equitable fashion to enhance customer satisfaction and avoid escalation to the PSC. However, during 2015 there were instances where even though SUEZ was fully compliant with tariff language and regulations, an escalated complaint resulted. Below are some details on the analysis performed:

- 32% of escalated complaints involved customers who were in the collection process, had received shut off fees or had broken multiple payment plans. SUEZ works closely with customers to ensure they receive multiple phone calls, letters and at times door hangers to avoid termination of service. SUEZ has also extended payment plans for customers enduring hardships once they provide us with financial documentation. In addition, the SUEZ Cares Program is available, which provides for up to \$100.00 of assistance for qualifying customers. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and the availability of these programs, there are some customers that refuse to take advantage of our assistance or continue to break payment plans and they are ultimately shut off.
- 29% of escalated complaints were related to high bills for a leak on the customer’s property, where the meter passed our testing and did not qualify for a leak adjustment. SUEZ works closely with our customers to provide them every opportunity for relief with leak adjustments (when they qualify) and possibly conservation credits depending on each unique situation. However, there are still customers that insist the meter is faulty or that the water was never used. Even after we have tested the meter and shared results some customers are still convinced that they did not use the water. At that point, SUEZ will try to offer conservation credits and in many instances customers are not satisfied and continue to escalate the complaints.
- 16% of the escalated complaints were regarding back-bills for a one year period. Customers that may have had estimated bills for a period of time and have denied access to our equipment or those that have potential meter tampering at their property (theft of service) make up the majority of this category. According to our tariff, SUEZ is permitted to back-bill customers for one to two years, depending on the circumstances. For the majority of cases, excluding verified theft of service, SUEZ will only go back one year and offer customers a payment plan if needed for the new billed amount.
- The remaining 23% of complaints are related to miscellaneous tariff related complaints such as monthly billing implementation, the meter / facility charge, burst meter fees, etc. These issues are fully explained to each customer and the relevant tariff sheets are provided upon request, however, in many of these cases, the complaint is still escalated.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

As previously stated, SUEZ makes it a top priority to provide the best customer experience for all of our customers. In the 2015 survey of our customers, SWNY received an 87% satisfaction rating, well above the benchmark of 75.7%. Even though this was an outstanding score, SUEZ continuously looks for opportunities to further improve the customer experience.

Programs such as meeting with Customer Advisory Panel members once a quarter, and soliciting feedback via surveys are in place, as well as enhancements to our phone system that provide more self-service options. In addition, a new website was introduced during the fourth quarter of 2015 which has provided for an enhanced experience and ease of use for our customers. These improvements to our web site will continue over the next several years to provide our customers with additional benefits.

While meeting all targets in full compliance with the order, SUEZ strives to make sure we meet our customers' expectations, and looks forward to continued opportunities to improve that experience.

Below is a snapshot of the survey.

