



# Railroad Commission of Texas

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## Report on Customer Service

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## Report on Customer Service

### Introduction

The Railroad Commission of Texas was established in 1891 under a constitutional and legislative mandate to prevent discrimination in railroad charges while establishing reasonable tariffs. In 1917, pipelines were declared common carriers and the Commission was given jurisdiction over them. By 1932 the Commission assumed jurisdiction over oil and natural gas exploration and production. The Railroad Commission marked its 130th anniversary in April 2021 making it the oldest regulatory agency in the state and one of the oldest of its kind in the nation. Three commissioners elected statewide by Texas voters serve six-year staggered terms. One commissioner is elected every two years.

The Railroad Commission has four regulatory divisions. The Critical Infrastructure Division oversees enforcement and adherence to weatherization rules, as well as critical infrastructure asset registration by companies within the natural gas supply chain. The Oil and Gas Division oversees the Texas oil and gas industry, specifically exploration and production activity. The Oversight and Safety Division has jurisdiction over natural gas utilities, pipeline safety and alternative energy safety oversight of the liquefied petroleum gas (propane), liquefied natural gas (LNG), and compressed natural gas (CNG) industries. The Surface Mining and Reclamation Division oversees the surface mining of coal and uranium in Texas, as well as the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation program.

As articulated in its mission statement, the Railroad Commission serves the people of Texas through stewardship of natural resources and the environment, concern for personal and community safety and support for enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texas. An integral part of the Railroad Commission's commitment is its focus on providing the best possible service to the citizens of Texas.

Consistent with that mission and commitment, the Railroad Commission of Texas submits this Report on Customer Service.

### Inventory of External Customers

**Table 1: Identification of Customers by Strategy**

<b>Customer Groups by Strategy</b>	<b>Customer Sub-groups</b>	<b>Brief Description of Services Provided</b>
<b>1.1.1 Energy Resource Development</b> Protect correlative rights and prevent waste while maximizing opportunities for the development of lignite, oil and gas resources through well site permitting, production allowables, production rule reviews, and exception processing.	Oil and Gas Producers	Permitting—based on spacing and density rules. Review on monthly basis production allowables on oil and gas wells.

Customer Groups by Strategy	Customer Sub-groups	Brief Description of Services Provided
<p><b>2.1.1 Pipeline Safety</b> Ensure the safe operation of pipelines through permitting, field inspections, accident investigations and emergency response.</p>	<p>Pipeline Operators</p>	<p>Conduct pipeline safety inspections and identify violations; take necessary enforcement actions; conduct accident investigations; administer pipeline permits issued and renewed.</p>
<p><b>2.1.2 Pipeline Damage Prevention</b> Support education and partnership initiatives to increase the overall awareness and effectiveness of damage prevention.</p>	<p>General Public and Landowners</p>	<p>Educate public about Texas “one-call” centers and increase awareness of third-party damage incidents.</p>
<p><b>2.2.1 Regulate Alternative Energy Sources</b> Regulate Alternative Energy Sources: Protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public by ensuring the safe storage and transportation of LP- gas, Compressed Natural Gas, and Liquefied Natural Gas as alternative energy sources through safety education, accident investigation, inspection and enforcement of safety regulations.</p>	<p>LPG/CNG/LNG Operators</p>	<p>Perform safety inspections and identify violations; administer qualifying examinations, licenses, certifications, and registrations.</p>
<p><b>3.1.1 Oil and Gas Monitoring and Inspections</b> Assure that Oil and Gas permitted activities comply with applicable state and federal regulations through field inspections, witnessing tests, monitoring reports, processing applications and enforcement actions.</p>	<p>Oil and Gas Producers, Waste Management, Landowners</p>	<p>Conduct inspections and identify violations; and take necessary enforcement actions.</p>
<p><b>3.1.2 Surface Mining Monitoring and Inspections</b> Assure that Surface Mining permitted activities comply with applicable state and federal regulations through field inspections, witnessing tests, monitoring reports, processing applications and enforcement actions.</p>	<p>Surface Mining Operators, Landowners</p>	<p>Conduct inspections and identify violations; and take necessary enforcement actions.</p>

Customer Groups by Strategy	Customer Sub-groups	Brief Description of Services Provided
<p><b>3.2.1 Oil and Gas Well Plugging and Remediation</b> Protect public health and the environment by identifying, assessing, and prioritizing sites that require the use of state managed funds for well plugging and remediation.</p>	<p>General Public, Landowners</p>	<p>Orphaned wells managed/plugged, and abandoned pollution sites investigated, assessed, or cleaned up with the use of state funds.</p>
<p><b>3.2.2 Surface Mining Reclamation</b> Protect public health and the environment by identifying, assessing and prioritizing mine lands that require the use of state funds for reclamation and provide assistance for operator- initiated corrective actions.</p>	<p>General Public, Landowners</p>	<p>Abandoned surface mine sites on which reclamation has been initiated.</p>
<p><b>3.3.1 Gas Utility Compliance</b> Oversee natural gas utility rate structures that promote safe, efficient, and reliable supply at a reasonable cost and audit regulated gas utilities to ensure compliance with rate structure and submission of Gas Utility Taxes.</p>	<p>Gas Utilities Consumers</p>	<p>Provide economic regulation over intrastate natural gas utilities. Operate and maintain the state's natural gas electronic tariff system. Audit utilities to ensure properly authorized rates are being computed and billed to residential or commercial users.</p>
<p><b>3.4.1 Critical Infrastructure Weather Preparedness</b> Ensure that designated facilities incorporate weatherization and reliability standards and practices through communication, inspections, processing applications, and monitoring reports.</p>	<p>Natural Gas Producers, Natural Gas Facility Operators, Natural Gas Pipeline Operators, Natural Gas Underground Storage Facilities, General Public/Consumers</p>	<p>Enforce and manage weatherization rules. Perform site visits and track winter preparation. Provide training on importance of winter preparedness.</p>
<p><b>4.1.1 Public Information and Services</b> Collect, maintain, and preserve oil and gas data submitted to the Commission; provide efficient public access to this information; provide regulated industries the ability to conduct their business with the Commission electronically.</p>	<p>Oil and Gas Operators, General Public/Consumers</p>	<p>Electronic filing, production information, and website access to information.</p>

**Information Gathering Methods**

The Railroad Commission of Texas is committed to delivering the highest level of customer service. How the agency responds to those who conduct business with the Railroad Commission reflects not only on the agency, but on the state as well. Employees at the Railroad Commission strive daily to provide the

level of service Texans expect and deserve, and the agency has several mechanisms in place to achieve this goal.

To capture feedback from the agency's external customers, the Railroad Commission features a link on its website homepage to an online Customer Service Survey. The survey may be submitted anonymously, or the constituent may include contact information for follow up action by the Railroad Commission. Staff monitors responses on a continuing basis to ensure quick resolution of any issues reported via the survey.

The Customer Service Survey is available year-round on the Railroad Commission website. Also, a link to the survey is included when responding to inquiries received via Public Assistance email account, [Publicassist@rrc.texas.gov](mailto:Publicassist@rrc.texas.gov). In addition, employees include a link to the survey in their email signature.

In 2020 and 2021, the Railroad Commission received 377 responses to its Customer Service Survey. The survey responses are highlighted in this report.

Additionally, the Railroad Commission regularly receives public input in several other ways, to increase information gathering, and to ensure staff resources are utilized to their greatest effect in delivering the high level of service that RRC customers demand.

#### Toll Free Number

The Railroad Commission maintains a toll-free number (1-877-288-5740) that anyone may use to obtain information about agency programs and services. A recording directs callers to the appropriate Railroad Commission contact for their needs.

The Commission has another toll-free number dedicated to reporting of emergency situations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A dedicated emergency reporting number is easier and more expedient for the public when they report emergency situations. Constituents have the option to call 1-844-773-0305 toll free, or 512-463-6788.

#### Railroad Commission Website

The Railroad Commission regulates an industry that is constantly evolving and one of the most technologically advanced in the world. In January 2021 the RRC launched a new website with user-friendly enhancements, including a new layout that is easy to navigate and more task oriented than the previous version.

Over the past two years, the Railroad Commission initiated several new online filings and research tools, allowing the agency to better serve Texans and the industries we regulate, including:

- numerous online application filings,
- new online research queries,
- new interactive data visualizations,
- new GIS Map Viewer features,
- Case Administration Service Electronic System (CASES),
- Pipeline Inspection Permitting & Evaluation System (PIPES), and
- RRC Access Management Process (RAMP) or single sign on.

These improvements are in addition to previously existing resources:

- data, statistics, forms, and maps,
- regulatory information,
- educational opportunities,
- publications and news releases,
- information on environmental services and safety,
- information on executive orders, rules, and proposals for decisions,
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Public Map Viewer,
- Pipeline Online permitting System (POPS),
- RRC Online Inspection Lookup (RRC OIL),
- online filing, reporting and query systems,
- automated fee collection, and
- information via the Public Assistance email account ([Publicassist@rrc.texas.gov](mailto:Publicassist@rrc.texas.gov)).

The Railroad Commission has long recognized the value of its information and continually works to improve access to its data repositories and services. In 2019, the Commission embarked on its largest information technology project in agency history to build a Risk Based Data Management System to replace its 50-year-old mainframe system. The new system will house all Oil and Gas Division functions in one system and allows external users online filings, tracking and record viewing capabilities.

#### Information Services

The Information Technology Services Division, through its Central Records and Public Sales units, provides public access to Railroad Commission oil and gas data collected over the past 90 years as well as information on all aspects of the Railroad Commission's regulatory functions. The section also fulfills requests for publications and data in electronic format. The public may call or visit Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. Requests for information may be emailed to [ims@rrc.texas.gov](mailto:ims@rrc.texas.gov).

#### Customer Service Principles

The Railroad Commission developed Customer Service Principles to help employees provide a high level of customer service in their day-to-day work activities. The principles are detailed for telephone and email customer service from the public, information technology issues, legislative inquiries, and media inquiries. Phone calls and emails are to be responded to no later than the close of the next business day, ensuring the prompt resolution of any issues that may arise. Staff are trained on the principles and the information is available on the staff intranet website.

#### Public Assistance Email Account

The Contact Us section of the Railroad Commission's website includes a Contact Form for the public to submit questions and complaints. The Contact Form submissions are forwarded to the Public Assistance email account and each inquiry is logged and assigned to the appropriate staff for processing. As outlined in the Commission's Customer Service Principles, Public Assistance emails must receive a response from staff no later than the following business day. A spreadsheet is used to track each inquiry and the eventual resolution.

In Calendar Years 2020 and 2021, the RRC responded to 4,300 Public Assistance inquiries, an average of 12 responses per day.

### Executive Assistance Email Account

In addition to inquiries received via the Public Assistance email account, many constituents reach out directly to the three elected Commissioners that lead the Railroad Commission. As with the Public Assistance email account, all such emails, letters and phone calls are logged and processed to ensure quality customer service.

In Calendar Years 2020 and 2021, the RRC responded to 354 Executive Assistance inquiries, an average of three responses per week.

### Area Specific Contacts

The Contact Us area of the Railroad Commission website includes contact information for topic-specific questions and complaints including:

- Alternative Fuels,
- Critical Infrastructure,
- Gas Services,
- Government Relations,
- Human Resources,
- Oil and Gas,
- Open Records, and
- Pipeline Safety.

Furthermore, the Commission interacts with the public and stakeholders daily in its District and Regional offices throughout Texas.

### Data

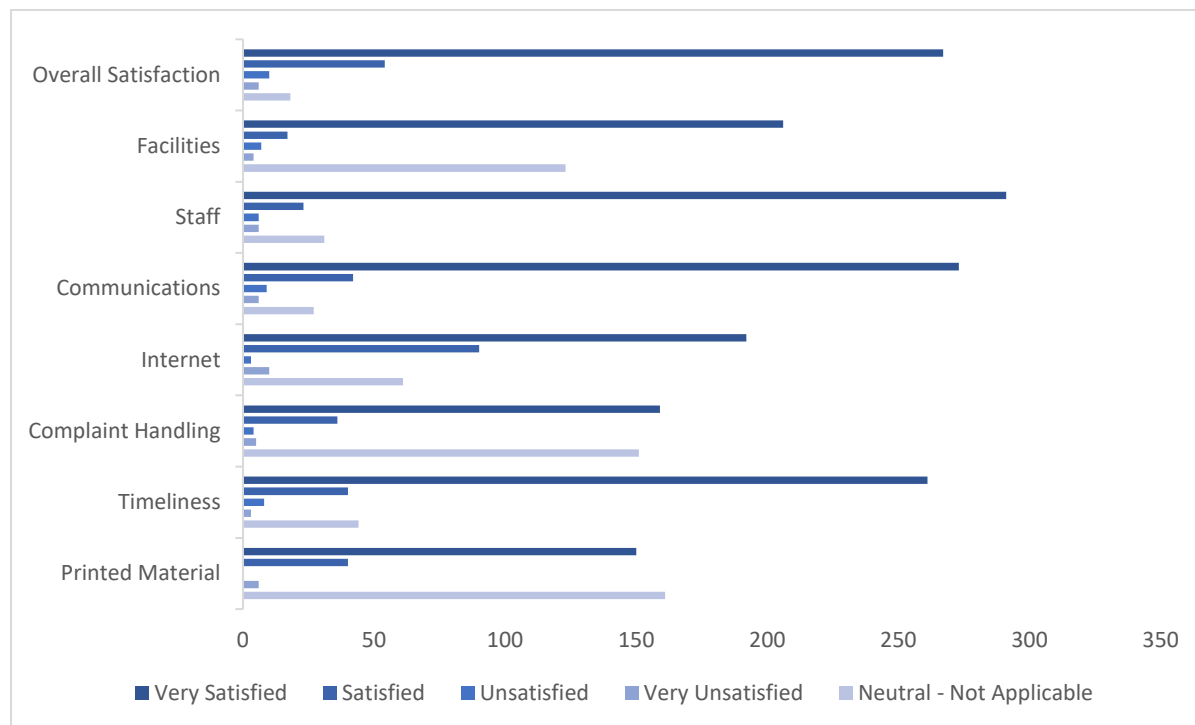
This section of the report contains the following:

1. Link to the Compact with Texans: <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/site-policies/>
2. Graph representing Customer Service Survey responses (Figure 1)

Customer Service Survey responses reporting a complaint are resolved by forwarding the response to the appropriate division director and their staff for follow up and resolution.



Figure 1: 2020 and 2021 Customer Service Summary of Responses



### Analysis

The link to the Customer Service Survey on the Railroad Commission’s website is accessible to the public year-round making it possible to capture feedback and quickly respond to comments or complaints. A link to the survey also appears in employees’ email signature for easy access when they are communicating with the public.

The number of survey responses has increased since the 2020 Report on Customer Service. The Commission continues to investigate methods of engagement to increase participation in the Customer Service Survey as it provides valuable feedback that results in agency improvements. Some options for survey outreach, include incorporating the survey into existing seminars and conferences evaluations and the examinations/certifications process. Ultimately, the goal is to include a larger population of customers in the survey process.

The findings of the 2022 Customer Survey Report show over half of respondents say they are “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the Commission’s overall customer service. The highest scores were received in the categories of *Overall Satisfaction*, *Communications*, and *Staff*. They are followed closely by *Timeliness*, which was much improved since 2020. Results also indicate improvement is needed in the areas of *Printed Materials* and *Complaint Handling*.

Looking ahead, the Commission will examine steps to increase both constituent participation and the percentage of “Very Satisfied” responses to the survey.

The industries regulated by the Railroad Commission continue to evolve placing greater demands on Commission staff resources. Continued improvements to agency technology have resulted in increased access to data, streamlined online filing processes and faster processing of forms and reports. Even so,

improvements can be made in the areas printed materials and complaint handling related to Commission processes by examining practices to ensure they fully support communications and responsive to stakeholders.

## Performance Measures

### Outcome Measure

- *Number of Customers Served:* Quantifying the number of customers served by the Railroad Commission is difficult. The following is a description of the regulated industry and the public served by the Commission.

#### *Oil and Gas Exploration and Production*

The Texas oil and natural gas industry consists of a wide spectrum of businesses, ranging from sole proprietorships to fully integrated multinational corporations. Activities range from well drillers, to well pluggers, to waste haulers. All aspects of the oil and natural gas production cycle from beginning to end are part of the regulatory responsibility of the Railroad Commission. As of February 2022, Texas producers operated approximately 162,109 active producing oil wells and over 84, 801 active producing gas wells. In 2021, Texas wells produced approximately 1.4 billion barrels of crude oil and 10.3 trillion cubic feet of gas.

#### *Pipeline Transportation*

To gather, transport and deliver Texas' oil and natural gas resources, an extensive network of pipeline is required. The Railroad Commission has responsibility to ensure these systems are designed, constructed, operated, and maintained safely, and rates for natural gas service are just and reasonable. There are more than 483,000 miles of pipeline in Texas including more than 432,000 miles of intrastate pipeline under the Commission's pipeline safety jurisdiction. The remaining 51,000 miles of pipeline fall under the pipeline safety jurisdiction of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). Pipelines in Texas are categorized as natural gas distribution lines, hazardous liquid and natural gas gathering and transmission lines, interstate lines and exempt lines. The Railroad Commission has direct safety responsibility over the first three categories. These regulatory responsibilities are extended to operators of intrastate gathering, transmission, distribution, and master metered systems.

#### *Natural Gas Utilities*

There are approximately 10,000 active tariffs on file with the Railroad Commission that reflect rates charged for natural gas utility transmission and distribution services. There are 223 investor-owned and 84 municipally owned natural gas utilities in Texas serving over 4.7 million rate regulated customers. The Gas Services department also administers an index-based price ceiling affecting approximately 74 propane distribution retail systems.

#### *Alternative Energy Companies*

This industry includes LP-gas (commonly called propane), compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Each year the Railroad Commission certifies about 16,000 individuals working in the industry, administers about 6,500 examinations, issues approximately 7,300 dealer licenses, investigates accidents and safety-related complaints, and conducts approximately 19,000 safety inspections.

The retail propane business is the largest sector within this industry. It consists primarily of small independent companies that provide fuel for space heating, cooking, and water-heating appliances in rural residences and commercial buildings; for portable applications such as outdoor grills, torches, and

agricultural equipment; and engine fuel for both off-road vehicles such as forklifts and on-road vehicles such as school buses and light trucks.

#### *Coal and Uranium Mining*

Currently there are 27 coal-mining permits administered by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Division. These mining permits, held by nine companies, cover approximately 319,000 acres in 18 counties. Of the 27 coal-mining permits administered, 18 mining operations no longer produce coal and are undergoing final land reclamation.

#### Efficiency Measure

- *Cost per Customer surveyed:* Staff determined the most cost-effective approach to surveying customers would be electronically through the Railroad Commission website.

#### Explanatory Measures

- *Number of Customers identified:* As described under Output Measure, Number of Customers served, it is difficult to quantify an exact number as the Railroad Commission has regulatory authority over many industries which in turn serve many Texans.
- *Number of Customer groups identified:* Eleven primary customer groups were identified. Please refer to Section 2, "Inventory of External Customers" for details.

#### Conclusion

In serving the people of Texas, the Railroad Commission of Texas remains committed to providing quality customer service. The results of the 2022 Customer Service Survey indicate that the employees of the Railroad Commission are succeeding in that effort. It also provides useful insight into the areas where improvements can be made, and the Commission will continue to improve and strive for excellence in service delivery.