

Chad and Sarah Kurtenbach



October 7, 2015

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission  
500 E Capitol Ave, State Capitol Building  
Pierre, South Dakota, 57501

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**OCT 15 2015**  
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S.D. Public Utilities Commission:

My wife, Sarah, and I would like to bring to your attention a matter that we believe is inconsistent with fair practices in the energy industry. We recently finished building a house in a new development in Sioux Falls, SD. As we designed our home, we made several conscious decisions to make this an energy efficient home. Some of those decisions include: energy efficient windows/doors, modern insulation, energy saving appliances, and a geothermal unit. The Federal and State Governments have consistently encouraged and mandated consumers and businesses to decrease energy waste, improve efficiency, and use renewable energy sources. Discounts, refunds, tax rebates and other incentives have been offered to encourage people to consider better energy options in their homes, businesses, vehicles, appliances, etc. Energy conservation is increasingly important in today's society and this requires efforts by the Government, energy supplying companies, energy distributors, and energy consumers. As you are aware, the Federal government has provided millions of dollars in funding to several companies to promote improved energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy.

We believe that MidAmerican Energy is discouraging and penalizing consumers who have made valuable decisions to make their homes more energy efficient. We have been charged \$872.10 for "installation of a non-heating gas service line." They are assessing unnecessary fees for those that choose to use geothermal as their heating source. This is certainly not consistent with the current Federal and State policies and goes against attempts at energy conservation. As an energy leader, they should be promoting and encouraging more efficient forms of energy consumption.

Our frustration with Mid-American is on several fronts.

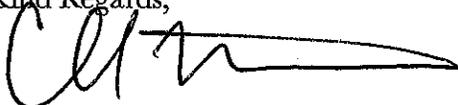
- The customer service has been very inconsistent and frankly misleading. We have been told several different explanations of the fee and have spoken at length with at least 7 people at the company. The confusion may be secondary to a general misunderstanding about the fee amongst employees, a tactic used to frustrate customers so they quit calling, or several other potential reasons. It is poor customer service and does not reflect well on their company.

- We have been told that this fee is required for "MidAmerican to recoup costs." This is a ridiculous statement for several reasons. We have a house that has SEVEN gas sources (gas heater for a 3-stall garage, 3 fireplaces, outdoor fire-pit, gas grill, gas range). MidAmerican will capitalize on services rendered as long as a house stands on this homestead, which will likely be decades/centuries. It doesn't make any sense to penalize bill paying customers with fees that have nothing to do with the service that they provide. They send monthly bills for services provided and shouldn't be allowed to also penalize those that use geothermal. As an orthopedic surgeon, I don't send bills to those that decide to have surgery elsewhere to "recoup my costs." We send a bill for their time in our clinic, but do not penalize them for not having surgery with our hospital. That would be unethical and illegal in the health care field. Would Best Buy send you a bill if you chose to buy a TV at Target? Does BP Oil send a bill to every Tesla customer?
- We have been told in several different ways that MidAmerican does not promote energy efficiency. In fact, one customer service rep even claimed that they "love trailer homes, because they have terrible installation and windows. We can make a lot of money from them." Those statements should never be made by an energy company and it illustrates a lack of understanding and/or poor appreciation of the energy industry. Energy companies should be encouraging and incentivizing those that make responsible decisions about energy use.
- MidAmerican has a monopoly on the industry in this region. If we could chose a different gas company, we would do so. Unfortunately, we do not have that option nor do our neighbors. Regulated monopolies in the energy industry are being scrutinized in other states and we would encourage similar transparency and competition in South Dakota.

We would like to see action from MidAmerican regarding this fee. This fee represents more than a costly fee. It is a principal and concept that should be addressed because it represents an inconsistency with goals of energy preservation as outlined by International, National, and State governments. Fees of this nature should be eliminated by MidAmerican and other similar companies in South Dakota and the United States. As leaders of the energy industry, these companies should be promoting, incentivizing and encouraging consumers to make wise decisions to limit energy waste, improve efficiency and use more renewable energy sources.

MidAmerican has indicated that the fee should be addressed by the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission so we would appreciate your input and cooperation in addressing this issue. Please contact us with further questions/concerns. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Kind Regards,



Dr. Chad Kurtenbach