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New Online eFiling System Makes Information From Utilities Available To The Public Immediately

Department of Commerce and PUC Improve Service and Productivity by Taking Utility and Telephone Filings Online

(St. Paul, MN...) –The Department of Commerce and the Public Utilities Commission recently launched a new electronic filing system, created at <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/home.jsp> as a shared service by the agencies and the Office of Enterprise Technology. The system allows documents from Minnesota's utilities to be filed and retrieved immediately via the Internet and was made possible by the 2005 Energy Bill (SF 1368) that authorized funding for the establishment of an electronic filing system.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regulates three cornerstone service industries in Minnesota's economy: electricity, natural gas, and telephone. It is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that vendors of these services provide safe, adequate, and reliable service at fair, reasonable rates. The Department of Commerce advocates for gas, electric and telephone regulation before the PUC.

Each year, the PUC receives over 2,000 formal new filings from Minnesota utility companies involving telephone or energy utility matters. In each of the last two calendar years, over 11,000 original documents were filed, totaling approximately 175,000 pages. Each document was manually scanned and indexed to record identifying metadata used in the storage, retrieval and archiving process. A scanned document may not be published for several days, but an eFiled document can be filed, submitted, reviewed and published within hours.

Electronic filing has given the former eDockets site a new look and feel, designed to make document filing and retrieval simple and intuitive. Also, documents filed electronically do not require the customary paper submission to either the PUC or the Department of Commerce. eFiled documents are time/date stamped upon receipt and published as soon as filing criteria have been verified.

The system has received positive reviews from many of the 100 registered filers who signed up for eFiling in the first few days of its implementation. Registration is not required for the simple document retrieval, but prospective eFilers can register for an account by completing a simple form <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/RegistrationForm.xls> and submitting it to the PUC. Filing credentials are usually provided by e-mail within a few business days. Several enhancements planned over the next few months will provide online registration and expand electronic information management and workflow.

While this system is designed specifically for utility regulation, the agencies are especially proud that eFiling's modular components can be replicated and adapted to meet similar needs throughout state government. eFiling illustrates the Drive to Excellence vision of transforming government by changing business processes from departmental thinking to a more collaborative model.