

CHAPTER 17 ASSESSMENTS

[Prior to 10/8/86, Commerce Commission[250]]

199—17.1(475A,476,546) Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the method the commission uses to assess expenses incurred by the commission and the consumer advocate on utilities and other parties pursuant to Iowa Code sections 476.10 and 476.95B and chapter 477C.

[ARC 8202C, IAB 8/21/24, effective 9/25/24]

199—17.2(475A,476) Definitions.

17.2(1) The following definitions apply to the rules in this chapter:

“Direct assessment” means the charge to a person bringing a proceeding or matter before the commission or to persons participating in proceedings or matters before the commission and includes expenses incurred by the commission attributable to the commission’s duties related to such proceeding or matter.

“Expenses of the commission” includes expenses of the entire agency.

“Gross operating revenues from intrastate operations” includes all revenues from Iowa intrastate utility operations during the last calendar year, except:

1. Uncollectible revenues,
2. Amounts included in the accounts for interdepartmental sales and rents, and
3. Gross receipts received by a cooperative corporation or association for wholesale transactions with members of the cooperative corporation or association, provided that the members are subject to assessment by the commission based upon the members’ gross operating revenues, or provided that such member is an association whose members are subject to assessment by the commission based upon the members’ gross operating revenues.

“Individual” means a human being as distinguished from legal entities.

“Industry direct assessment” means the charge to the utilities in a specific industry for expenses associated with regulation of that specific industry that are not directly assessed. An industry direct assessment includes a direct assessment in a specific industry for which no person is directly assessed under rule 199—17.4(476). The industries assessed are as follows:

1. Electric utilities are assessed for expenses associated with electric service, including expenses associated with the commission’s participation in or consideration of regional and federal issues.
2. Natural gas utilities are assessed for expenses associated with natural gas service, including expenses associated with the commission’s participation in or consideration of regional and federal issues.
3. Water utilities are assessed for expenses associated with water service, including expenses associated with the commission’s participation in or consideration of regional and federal issues.
4. Sanitary sewer utilities are assessed for expenses associated with sanitary sewer services.
5. Storm water drainage utilities are assessed for expenses associated with storm water drainage services.
6. Telecommunications companies, including all companies providing local exchange service and interexchange service in Iowa whether by landline or voice over Internet protocol, are assessed for expenses associated with telecommunications service, including expenses associated with the commission’s participation in or consideration of regional and federal issues.

“Overhead expenses” means all operating costs of the commission not directly attributable to a proceeding or matter, or a specific industry, that are included in direct and industry direct assessments.

“Person” includes individuals and legal entities as defined in Iowa Code section 4.1(20), except the definition does not include the consumer advocate.

“Remainder assessment” means the charge to all persons providing service over which the commission has jurisdiction for the total expenses incurred during each fiscal year in the performance of the commission’s duties under law after deducting the direct assessments, industry direct assessments, and other revenues.

17.2(2) Industry direct assessments and remainder assessments for gas and electric utilities exempted from rate regulation by the commission and for providers of telecommunications service that register with the commission pursuant to Iowa Code section 476.95A that are exempted from rate regulation under Iowa Code chapter 476 are computed at one-half of the rate used in computing industry direct assessments and remainder assessments for other persons.

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199—17.3(476) Expenses to be included in direct assessments. Direct assessments include the following expenses:

17.3(1) Salaries of commission employees and related costs borne by the state.

17.3(2) Travel expenses incurred in an investigation or in rendering services by the commission or by others employed by the commission. Travel expenses include costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and other normal expenses attributable to traveling.

17.3(3) Costs of consultants, contractors, facilities, and equipment if directly related to a proceeding or matter.

17.3(4) Overhead expenses of the commission.

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199—17.4(476) Direct assessments under Iowa Code section 476.10.

17.4(1) The following persons will not be directly assessed for participating in a commission proceeding or matter unless the commission issues an order finding that the person may be directly assessed for that participation:

a. An individual who files a complaint against a public utility, so long as the individual's participation in the proceeding is in good faith.

b. An individual who files a protest or inquiry or intervenes in a proceeding involving a rate change by a public utility, so long as the individual's participation in the proceeding is in good faith.

c. Any person filing written or oral comments in a rulemaking proceeding.

d. An intervenor in a commission proceeding. However, the commission may decide to directly assess a person who intervenes if the commission determines that the person's intervention or participation is not in good faith, the commission determines the intervention significantly expands the scope of the proceeding without contribution to the public interest, or the commission determines there are unusual circumstances warranting assessment.

17.4(2) In deciding whether to directly assess a person and, if so, the amount to be directly assessed, the commission may consider the factors contained in Iowa Code section 476.10 and other factors deemed appropriate by the commission in that particular case.

[ARC 8202C, IAB 8/21/24, effective 9/25/24]

199—17.5(476) Reporting of operating revenues. On or before April 1 of each year, every public utility shall file with the commission a report that includes the utility's gross operating revenues from Iowa intrastate operations during the preceding calendar year. Such revenues are to be reported on the accrual basis or the cash basis consistent with the report filed with the commission.

[ARC 8202C, IAB 8/21/24, effective 9/25/24]

199—17.6(475A,476) Compilation and billing of assessment.

17.6(1) The commission determines its own expenses to be billed and adds the certified expenses incurred by the consumer advocate. The commission does not review the expenses certified to it by the consumer advocate.

17.6(2) Unless otherwise ordered by the commission, bills must be paid within 30 days of receipt unless an objection is filed in writing pursuant to Iowa Code section 476.10. In the event an objection is filed under rule 199—17.9(475A,476), the portion of the bill not contested is to be paid within 30 days of receipt.

17.6(3) A person participating in a commission proceeding or matter may file a request in that proceeding or matter for the commission to determine how the expenses of that proceeding or matter will be assessed.

[ARC 8202C, IAB 8/21/24, effective 9/25/24]

199—17.7(476) Assessments under Iowa Code section 476.95B. In making assessments under Iowa Code section 476.95B, the commission will allocate costs and expenses to all parties and participants, but such allocation will not necessarily be an equal allocation. The allocation will be made on a case-by-case basis and may be based on Iowa revenues, grouping of parties and participants on the basis of similarity of positions, and other factors deemed appropriate by the commission in that particular case. The allocation will be included in the commission's final order in the docket, unless otherwise ordered by the commission.

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199—17.8(477C) Assessments of expenses for dual party relay service program and equipment distribution program.

17.8(1) Iowa Code section 477C.7 governs the payment of assessments by wireless carriers and wireline local exchange carriers to fund the dual party relay service program and equipment distribution program. Those carriers shall pay assessments in the amount of three cents per month for each telecommunications service phone number. "Telecommunications service phone number" means a revenue-producing telephone number.

17.8(2) Wireless carriers and wireline local exchange carriers shall file the number of telecommunications service phone numbers with the commission. The number of telecommunications service phone numbers may be filed as confidential and may be withheld from public inspection pursuant to the procedures in 199—Chapter 1.

17.8(3) The commission may audit the payment of Iowa Code section 477C.7 assessments for any purpose the commission deems necessary, including but not limited to examining whether wireless carriers and wireline local exchange carriers providing telecommunications services in Iowa are paying assessments in appropriate amounts.

[ARC 8202C, IAB 8/21/24, effective 9/25/24]

199—17.9(475A,476) Objection procedures.

17.9(1) A person subject to an assessment shall either pay the amount assessed or file an objection to the assessment as set forth in this rule within 30 days of the date the commission provides notice of the amount due to the person.

17.9(2) A properly filed objection is in writing; sets forth the specific grounds upon which the person claims the assessment is excessive, unreasonable, erroneous, unlawful, or invalid; and identifies whether the person objects to the assessment of expenses certified by the commission, to the assessment of expenses certified by the consumer advocate, or both. If the person wishes to orally present argument to the commission, the request for oral argument should be included in the objection. Absent a request for oral argument, the commission will consider the objection based solely on the submission of written evidence and argument. The person may include with the objection such evidence or information the person believes relevant to support the person's claim.

17.9(3) The consumer advocate or the commission may informally resolve an objection. In the event an objection is informally resolved, the fact that a resolution has occurred will be filed in the docket.

17.9(4) If the objection concerns the assessment of expenses certified by the consumer advocate, within 30 days from the date of the objection, the consumer advocate may file responsive argument, evidence, and other information with the commission. In the event the person filing an objection has not requested oral argument, the consumer advocate may request oral argument.

17.9(5) If oral argument is requested or if the objecting person or the consumer advocate requests additional opportunity to submit written argument and evidence, the commission will issue a scheduling order. At the time and place for oral argument, the objecting person and the consumer advocate, if applicable, will be afforded the opportunity to present argument to the commission.

17.9(6) Following the final submission of written material or oral argument, the commission will issue an order in accordance with its findings. In the event the commission affirms the assessment, in whole or in part, the person shall pay the amount identified in the commission's order within 30 days from the date of the order unless otherwise ordered by the commission.

17.9(7) The objection procedures set forth in this rule do not apply to challenges to a direct assessment made in a final commission order, including those issued under subrule 17.6(3). The judicial review procedures in Iowa Code chapter 17A and the rehearing provisions in Iowa Code section 476.12 are the exclusive methods for challenging a direct assessment determination made in a final commission order.

17.9(8) Commission expenses incurred in an objection proceeding will be included in industry direct assessments.

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199—17.10(476,477C) Refunds. If a person makes a payment in excess of the assessed amount, the commission may issue a refund to the person for the excess amount or credit the excess amount toward the person's next assessment. For overpayments of less than \$50, absent exigent circumstances, the commission will not issue a refund and will hold the excess amount as a credit toward the person's next assessment through the fiscal year in which the overpayment occurred. If a credit remains at the end of the fiscal year in which the overpayment occurred, the commission will issue a refund for any excess amount remaining.

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These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapters 475A, 476, 477C, 478, 479, 479A, and 479B.

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