

PSC to require utilities to publish diversity numbers in annual reports

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The Public Service Commission for the first time will require utility companies to publish workforce diversity numbers in annual reports.

The PSC yesterday announced all utility companies will be required to publish demographic figures on their employees in the annual reports they submit to the agency. The reports will include workforce breakdowns by race, ethnicity, gender, age, veteran status and disability status. The deadline for those reports was extended to June 1, 2021.

“Diversity and inclusion within the utility industry are not just important because of the tremendous impact they have on both employees and the financial health of the utility. Ultimately, diversity and inclusion efforts impact the manner in which utility customers are served,” PSC Chair Rebecca Cameron Valcq said in a statement.

A WE Energies spokesman told WisPolitics that the company already provides much of that information in its annual Corporate Responsibility Report.

“We share the Public Service Commission’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion,” the WE Energies spokesman said in an email. “We will work with the commission to ensure they have the data they are requesting.”

PSC will also require utility companies with more than 15,000 customers to publish data and goals about the diversity of their suppliers, including spending reports for

the women-, veteran-, minority- and LGBT-owned businesses they work with.

The Citizens Utility Board applauded PSC's new economic burden analysis requirement as a "step forward for low income customers."

For each county they serve, the PSC will require larger companies to publish the average percentage of household income their customers spend on utilities.

CUB announced in a statement that the new requirements will help with understanding which areas in the state are paying a higher than normal fraction of their income on utilities.

"Having more data about the magnitude of the problem across the state will be critical to help utilities gain insights on areas that need a closer focus," Executive Director of CUB Tom Content said in the statement.

WE Energies, Madison Gas & Electric and Wisconsin Public Service are already working on energy burden analyses under CUB negotiated rate settlements, the statement said.