

Customer Impact Report: Communicating Safety to Customers



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

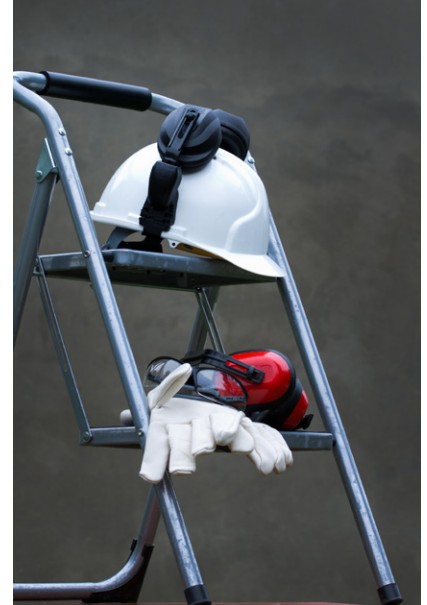
Most utilities make safety a top priority and provide employees with extensive training in how to stay safe while maintaining and improving the infrastructure that delivers energy to customers. Public safety is also imperative, and utilities work closely with local first responders, schools, and community associations to educate the public on how to be safe around electricity and natural gas. While utilities also take action to increase the safety of their infrastructure for customers, there is room for improvement in how well they communicate this activity.

J.D. Power research shows that customers have strong opinions about their utility's efforts in safety enhancements and the responsibility the utility has to the public to provide them with safety information. An analysis of customer data collected from tens of thousands of electric and natural gas utility customers finds that while they do not actively seek safety information from their utility, they expect their utility to provide it. Additionally, when customers do recall hearing about safety from their utility, their overall satisfaction increases.

Listed below are some of the key findings of this report:

- Communications in general result in a lift in overall satisfaction, and informing customers on how to be safe around energy is among the topics that generate high satisfaction. In the Communications Index, satisfaction scores are more than 100 points higher when customers hear or read communications about safety messages, compared with scores among customers who don't recall any such communications.

- Safety messaging is also measured in the Corporate Citizenship Index. Satisfaction is more than 150 points higher in the *2013 Electric Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study* among customers who are aware of their utility's efforts to improve safety of the electric system than among those who are unaware of such efforts.
- Both natural gas and electric utilities are improving in their efforts to communicate safety messaging, as customer ratings for this metric have steadily risen since 2008.
- However, utilities could do more to effectively communicate safety messaging, as fewer than one in 10 electric residential customers recalls getting safety information or tips from their utility in the past 3 months. The ratio for gas utility customers is not much higher, as even among customers who recall receiving communications from their utility in the past 3 months, only about one-fourth recall communications regarding safety.
- Customers want to hear a broader spectrum of safety information from their utility than it provides—especially gas utility customers. While a higher proportion of gas customers than electric customers recall messaging such as what to do if they smell natural gas or about the “Call Before You Dig” program, what more gas customers want but are not receiving is information on subjects such as how to safeguard their furnace; how to install carbon monoxide (CO) detectors; or about gas pipeline safety. However, this



isn't to say that customers do not want the information they are already receiving from their utility. For example, a sizeable percentage of customers also prefer to hear about leak detection and what to do in the event of a gas emergency.

- Utilities have a responsibility to communicate with and to educate their customers, employees, and stakeholders on safety. There is an overwhelming consensus on this among customers.

- Utilities that receive high ratings for customer recall of safety communications have in common a number of best practices, including dedication to messaging content, actively promoting safety through events in their communities, and offering creative and unique website content to maintain customers' interest.

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