

August
2016

MONTHLY DATA REPORT



Consumer
Protection and
Enforcement
Division
California Public
Utilities Commission



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The Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division (CPED) serves the public interest and the mission of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) by assisting consumers in resolving their informal complaints against service providers under the Commission's jurisdiction. CPED is proud to be able to assist consumers with an informal complaint resolution process, with answers to questions, and with referral information. In assisting consumers, we are able to gain a useful picture of consumer issues and trends.

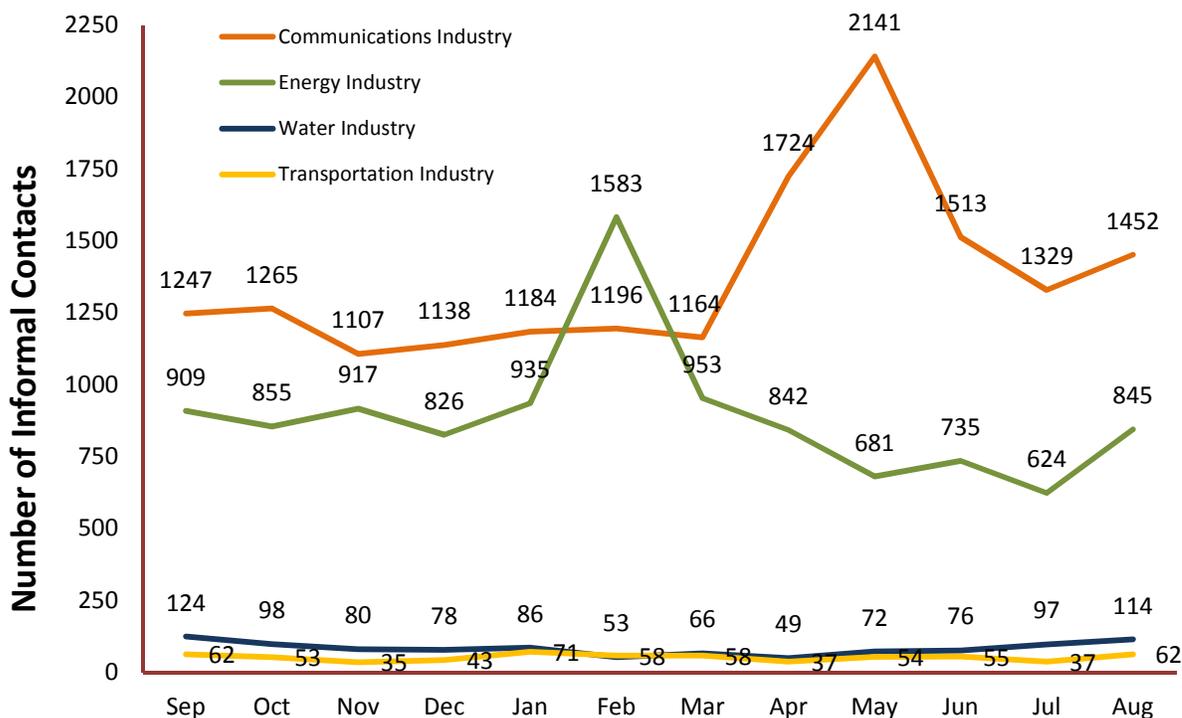
This report is based on contacts (informal complaints and questions) received by the Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) and the Transportation Enforcement Branch (TEB) within CPED, and presents annual and monthly data for the communications, energy, water, and transportation industries. Page 2 presents annual trend data, and pages 3 through 10 report data by industry for the current month. For context, the report also includes comparable data from the previous month, as well as August data from the previous year. Finally, the report includes contact data specifically related to safety concerns, by industry.

The Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division serves as the first line of support for consumers of CPUC-regulated services. CPED collects and resolves consumer informal complaints, enforces laws and regulations governing transportation carriers, and investigates allegations of utility waste, fraud, and abuse.

Overview

2,473 CONTACTS (August 2016)

Consumer Contacts Received by Industry 12 Month Trend 2015-2016



Overall, 2,473 total informal consumer contacts were received during August 2016 across the four regulated Industries, an increase of approximately 18% from July 2016. The biggest increases were in Transportation (68%), followed by Energy (35%). The increases in contacts related to Telecommunications (9%) and Water (18%) were less marked.

Communications: 1,452 informal contacts related to Communications were received during August 2016. The number of contacts is within 6% of the prior 12 month average, but within 15% of the 1,259 contacts average for the 12 month period prior to the sharp increase experienced during April-May 2016 as a result of issues related to Frontier's acquisition of Verizon California.

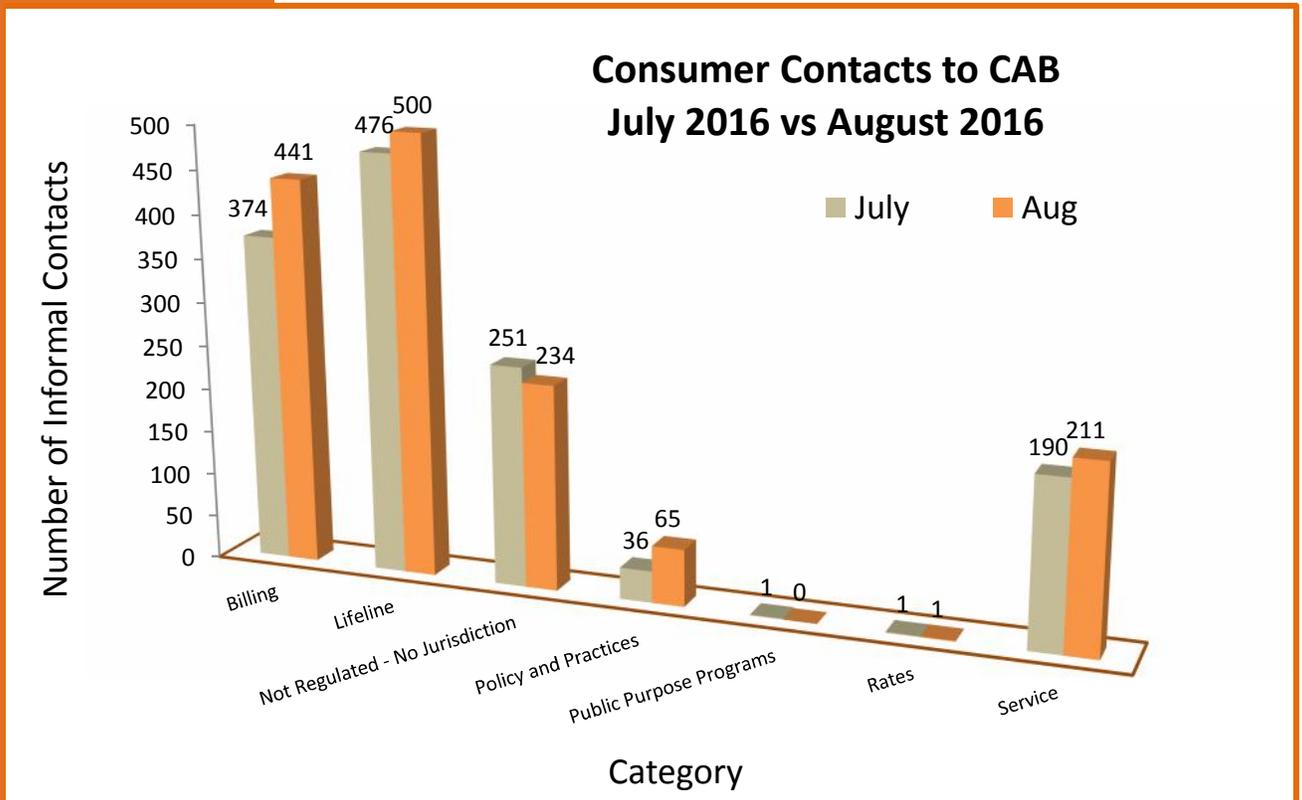
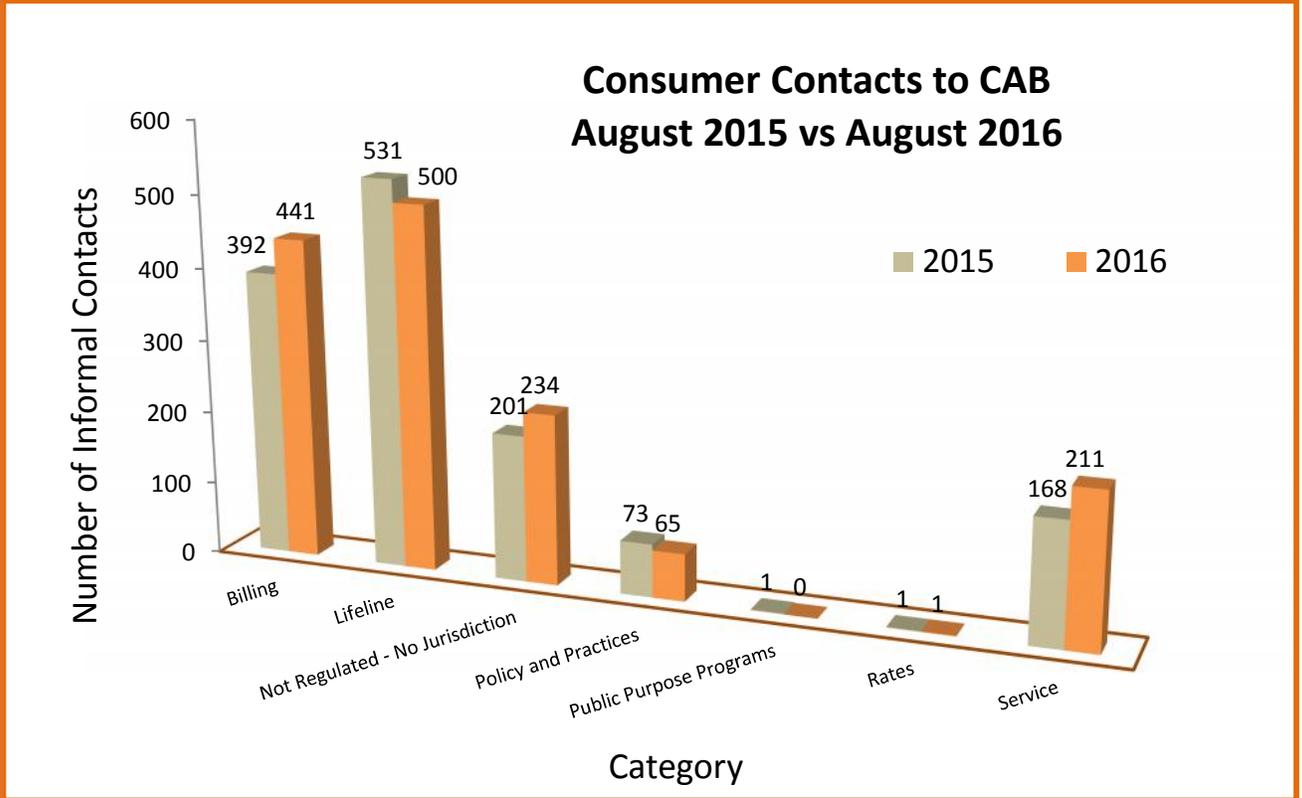
Energy: Informal contacts relating to Energy increased from 624 contacts in July to 845 contacts in August 2016, or a 35% increase. Although this could be considered a substantial increase, it is 5% lower than the prior 12 month average of 889.

Water: Informal contacts related to Water increased to 114 in August 2016 from 97 in July, for an overall increase of 18%. Water contacts have been increasing, showing an upwards trend during the last 4 months. This month's number of contacts is 32% higher than the prior 12 month average of 86.

Transportation: The overall number of Transportation-related contacts increased from July to August, from 21 to 28 for household goods-related contacts and from 16 to 34 for passenger carrier-related contacts. The number of Transportation-related contacts was comparable to August 2015, which saw the same number of household goods-related contacts, 30 passenger carrier-related contacts and one contact regarding a private carrier.

Communications

1,452 CONTACTS (August 2016)



Communications

In August of 2016, CAB received 1,452 communication-related informal contacts, allocated into the defined categories: Billing, Lifeline, Non-Regulated/ No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, and Service. There was a slight increase from July's 1,329 contacts to August's 1,452 contacts for an approximate 9% increase.

In addition to the 1,452 contacts, CAB also received 230 uncategorized contacts. These are contacts which are pending assignment, lack sufficient information to be processed, or contacts in which the consumer mistakenly contacted CAB when trying to reach their utility provider or another entity (Misdirected/Wrong Number). CAB assists these consumers by directing them to the entity which can best address their concerns.

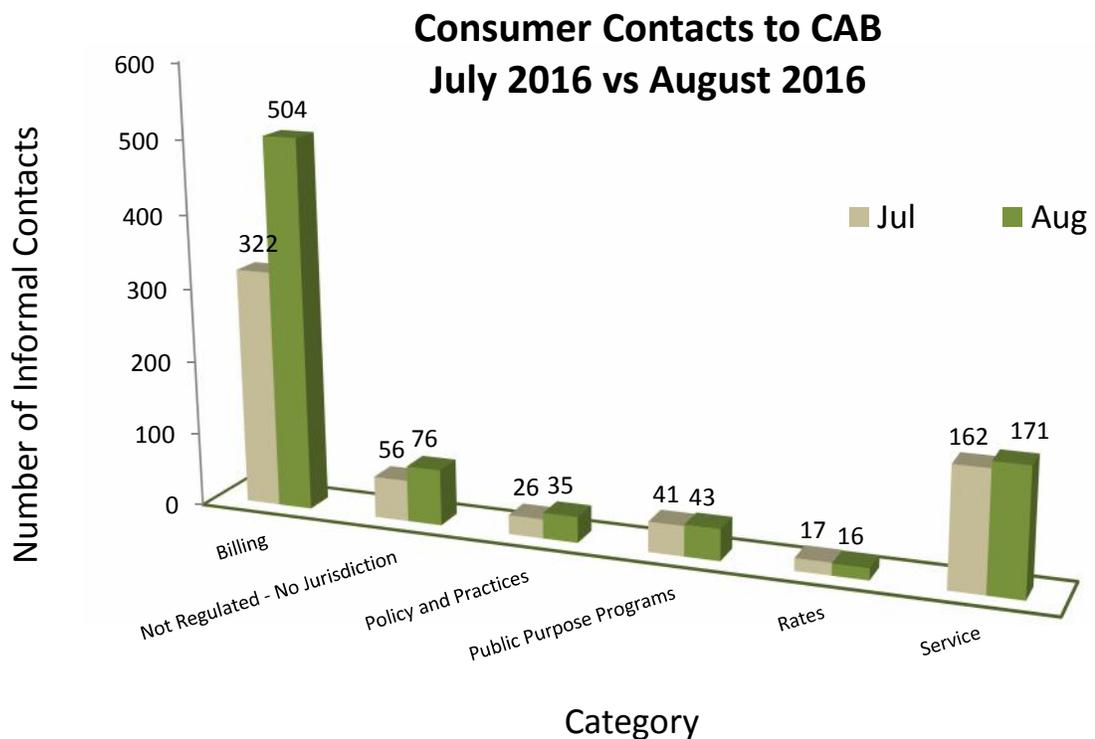
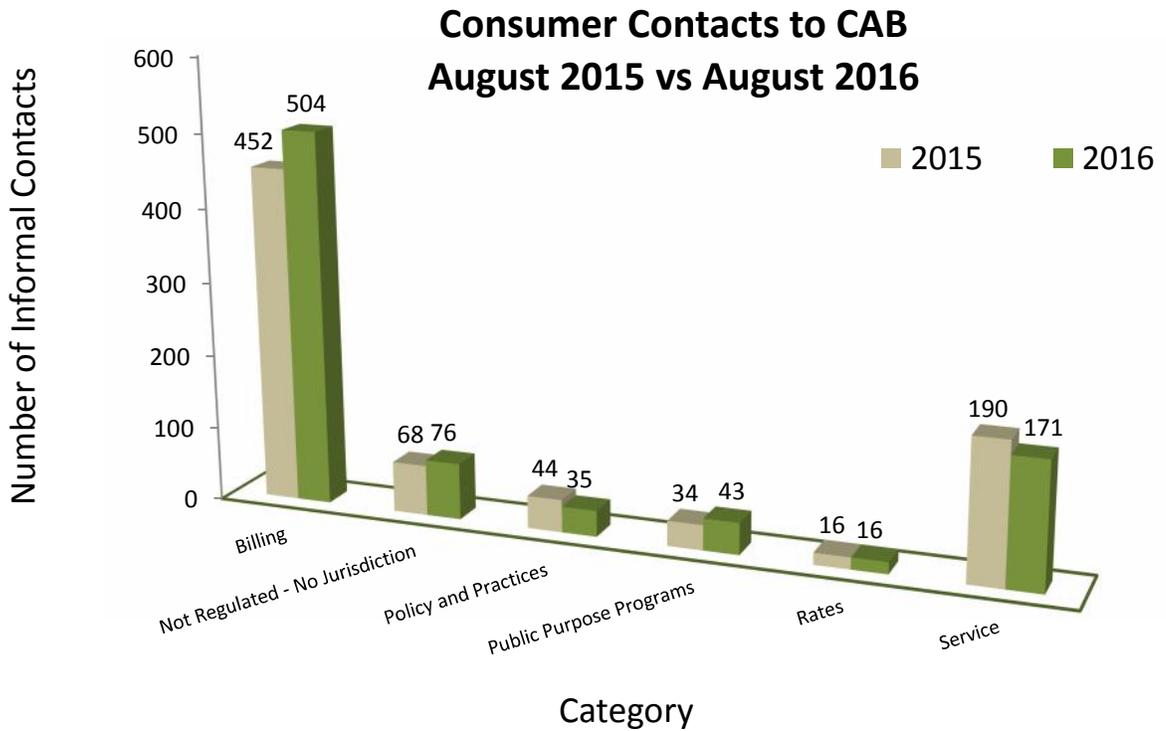
Safety

Communications Safety-related Contacts	15
Emergency Services/Health Concerns	7
Utility Infrastructure	8

CAB received 15 Communications related contacts identified as having a primary or secondary safety concern. Seven of these contacts were related to consumers expressing concern about the effect of service quality, or outages regarding their ability to reach emergency services such as reaching 911 for medical assistance. The remaining 8 safety related contacts received were utility infrastructure related issues perceived to impact consumer safety. Utility Infrastructure includes issues such as hanging cables/exposed wires, and utility poles.

Energy

845 CONTACTS (August 2016)



Energy

In August 2016, CAB received 845 Energy related informal contacts allocated into one of the six defined categories of Billing, Not Regulated/No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service. Even though there was a 35% increase in contacts between July 2016 and August 2016 the number of contacts is about 5% lower than the prior 12 month average of 889. This 35% increase can be in part attributed to an approximate 46% increase in contacts pertaining to the subcategory High Bills, from July to August, which can be considered in line with seasonal fluctuations. Although not a significant cause for the overall increase in contacts, of note is a cluster of contacts from the same mobile home park concerning meter accuracy, which led to an increase from 4 to 20 contacts from the prior month, for a 400% increase in the Mobile Home Master/Sub Meters subcategory.

In addition to the 845 categorized contacts received in August 2016, CAB also received 91 uncategorized contacts. Uncategorized contacts include contacts that are still pending assignment, or lack sufficient information to be processed. It also includes misdirected contacts where the consumer intended to reach some other entity. CAB assists these consumers by redirecting them to the entity best able to address their concerns.

Safety

Energy Safety-related Contacts	16
Gas Leaks	3
Health Concerns	1
Property Restoration	5
Utility Infrastructure	7

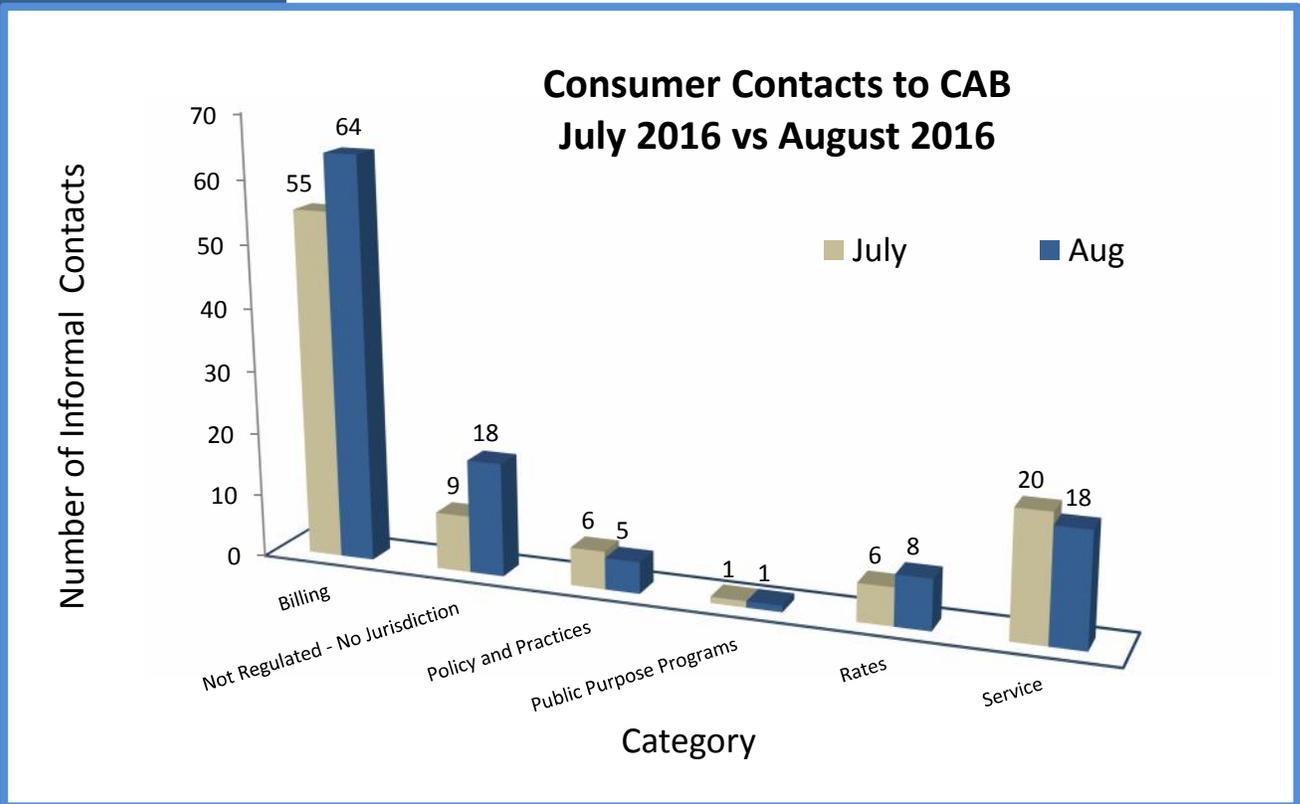
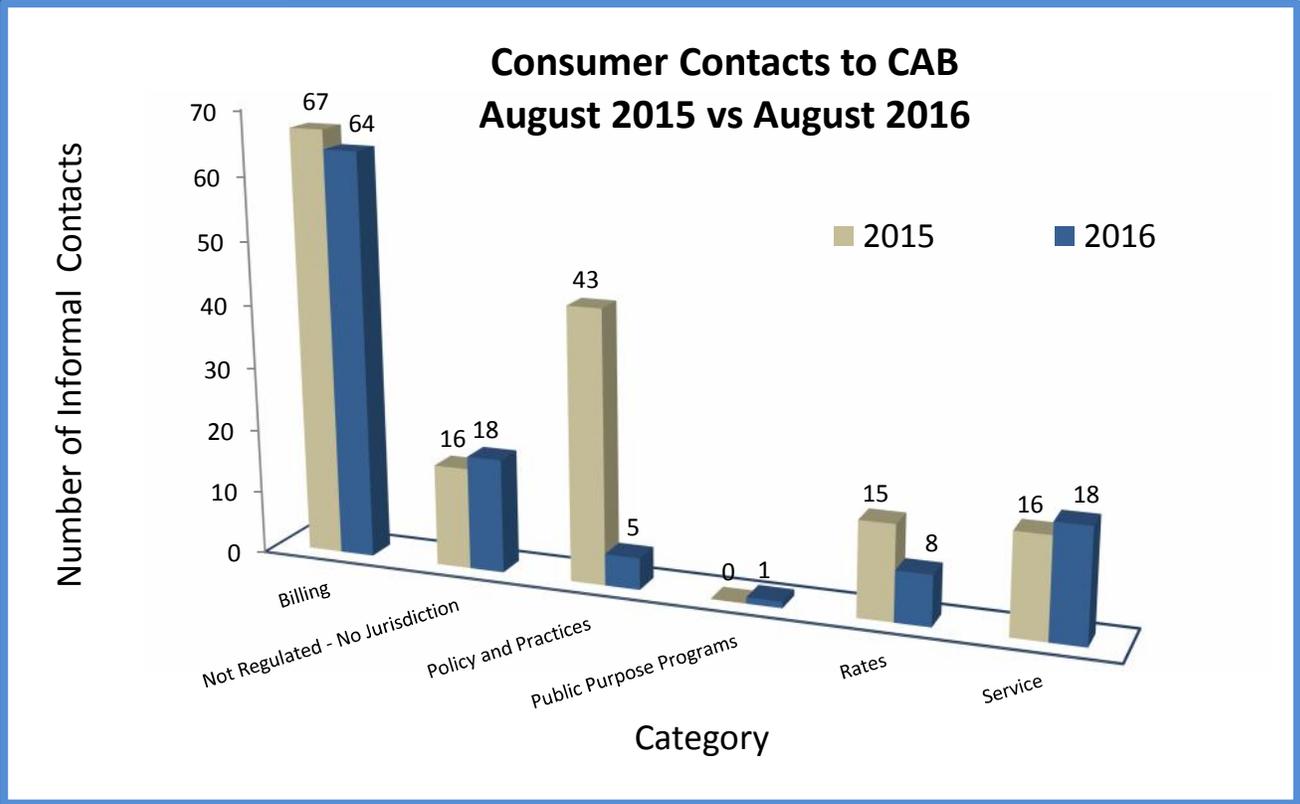
CAB received 16 Energy related contacts identified as having a safety concern. Of those, 3 were related to gas leaks and 1 about health concerns. There were 5 contacts about safety concerns involving property restoration, and 7 contacts about unsafe conditions involving utility infrastructure.

Complaints regarding utility infrastructure include issues regarding hanging cables, exposed wires, or unsafe poles. Other examples include infrastructure that is faulty or in disrepair, such as non-smart meters and transformers.



Water

114 CONTACTS (August 2016)



Water

CAB received 114 Water-related contacts in August 2016, which is an 18% increase from July 2016, when CAB received 97 contacts.

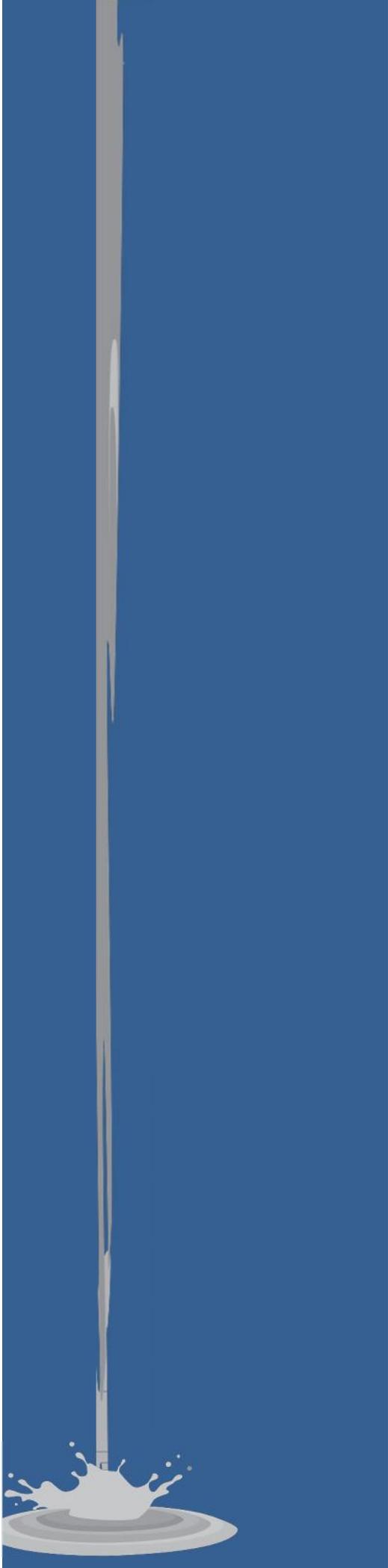
During August 2016 there were 9 contacts identified as pertaining to Taxes and Surcharges, a noticeable increase as it over 200% above the prior 12 month average of less than 3 contacts per month. The reason for this increase cannot be attributed to any one specific issue or utility company.

In addition to the 114 categorized contacts, CAB received 41 misdirected and uncategorized contacts relating to Water utilities in August 2016. The uncategorized contacts include contacts which are still pending assignment or lack sufficient information to be processed. Also included are contacts from consumers intended to be directed to another entity, such as consumers attempting to reach their utility provider. CAB assists these consumers by directing them to the entity best able to address their concerns.

Safety

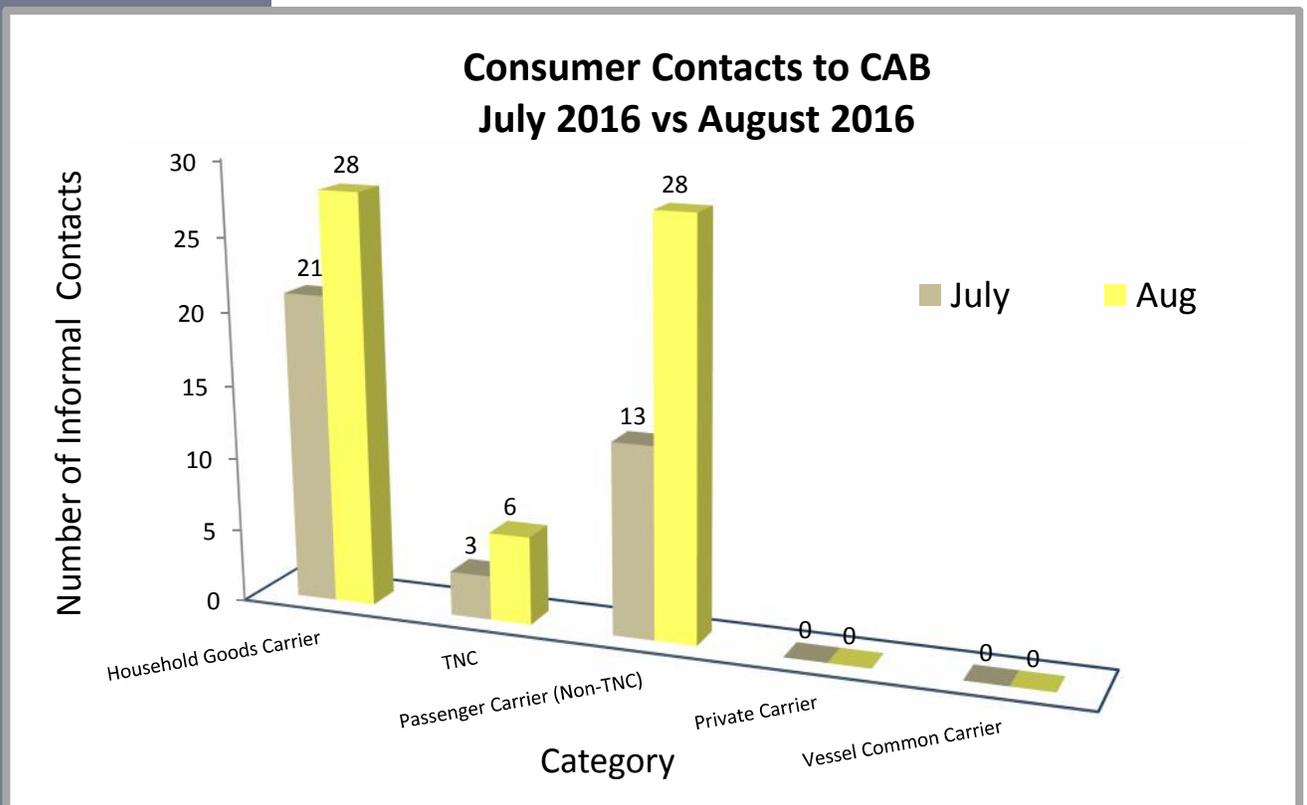
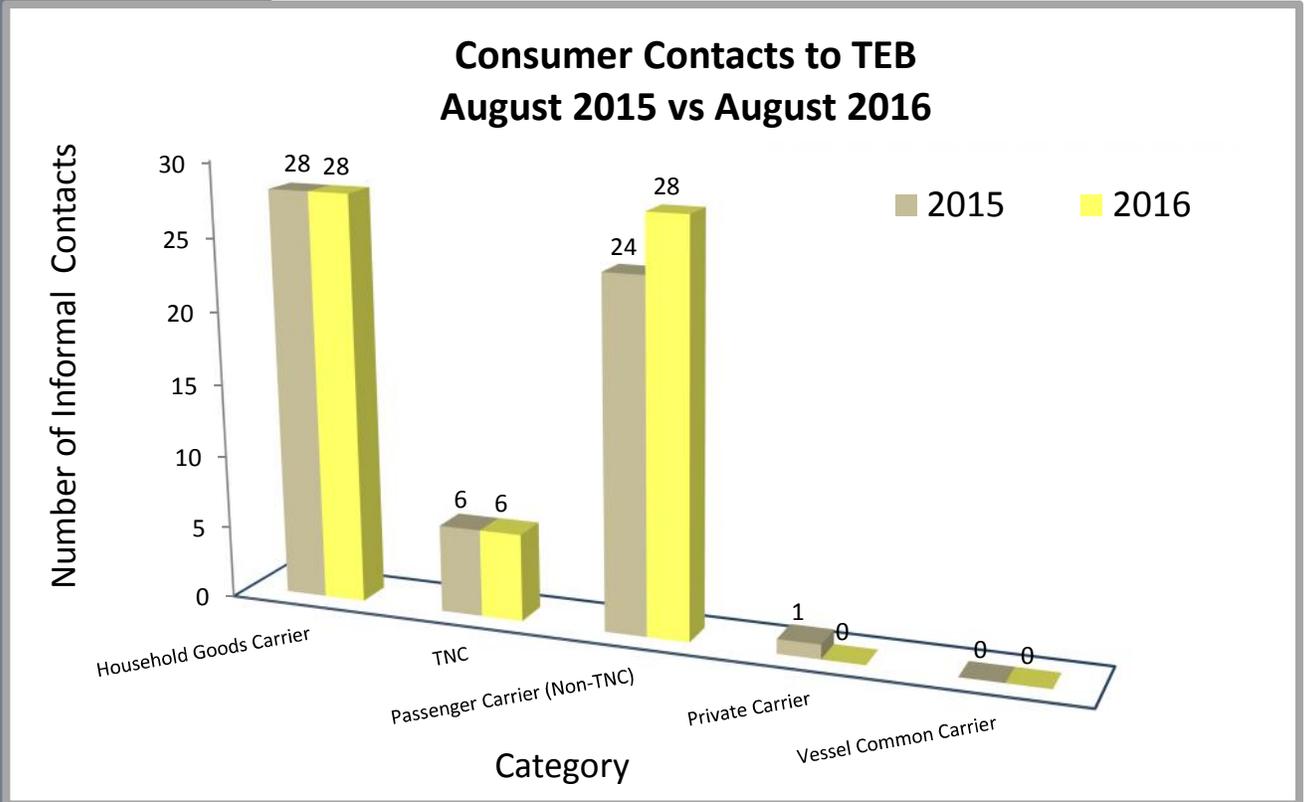
Water Safety-related Contacts	0
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CAB received no safety-related contacts in regards to a water provider in August 2016.



Transportation

62 CONTACTS (August 2016)



Transportation

In August 2016, transportation contacts regarding passenger carriers (34) were more than double those in July, though comparable to the average of the prior 12 months (32). Contacts regarding household goods carriers increased by seven (7), or 33%. Most informal complaints involved allegations of operating and/or advertising without active authority: 18 among household goods carriers and 12 among passenger carriers. Two contacts involved allegations of a hostage situation (i.e., the carrier takes possession of the customer's goods and demands additional payment as "ransom" for the goods held hostage). The remaining household goods-related contacts (8) involved allegations of overcharges, false price quotes, loss and damage. Eleven (11) passenger carrier-related contacts involved allegations of failure to maintain workers' compensation insurance; five (5) involved allegations of loss or damage; three (3) involved allegations of a passenger carrier operating as a taxi (two of these were against transportation network companies); and the remaining four passenger carrier complaints involved allegations of identity fraud, a parking violation, a TNC driver accepting a cash payment, a TNC driver transporting an unaccompanied minor, and a TNC hiring investigators to impersonate journalists.

TEB did not receive any contacts relating to vessel common carriers or private carriers during August 2016. Private carriers transport passengers on a "not-for-hire" basis, such as a church transporting members of its congregation or an employer transporting its own employees.

Safety

Transportation Safety-related Contacts	24
Operating Without Active Authority	24

All 24 transportation safety-related contacts received in August 2016 involved allegations of operating without active authority. TEB investigates all such allegations to ensure that each carrier maintains or obtains an active CPUC permit and submits proof of meeting all applicable requirements, including 1) an active insurance policy; 2) participation in a certified drug and alcohol testing program; 3) enrollment in the DMV's Employer Pull Notice (EPN) Program; 4) a CHP inspection; 5) workers' compensation; and 6) a background check. Complaints regarding a carrier's failure to keep their equipment list current are referred to Enforcement for further investigation.