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Public utility

"Utilities" redirects here. For other uses, see Utility (disambiguation).

A **public utility** (usually just **utility**) is an organization that maintains the infrastructure for a public service (often also providing a service using that infrastructure). Public utilities are subject to forms of public control and regulation ranging from local community-based groups to statewide government monopolies.

The term **utilities** can also refer to the set of services provided by these organizations consumed by the public: electricity, natural gas, water, and sewage. Broadband internet services (both fixed-line and mobile) are increasingly being included within the definition.^{[1][2][3][4][5]}

United States

In the United States, public utilities are often natural monopolies because the infrastructure required to produce and deliver a product such as electricity or water is very expensive to build and maintain.^[6] As a result, they are often government monopolies, or if privately owned, the sectors are specially regulated by a public utilities commission.

[1][2][3] The first public utility in the United States was a grist mill on Mother Brook in Dedham, Massachusetts.^[7]

Developments in technology have eroded some of the natural monopoly aspects of traditional public utilities. For instance, electricity generation, electricity retailing, telecommunication, some types of public transit and postal services have become competitive in some countries and the trend towards liberalization, deregulation and privatization of public utilities is growing, but the network infrastructure used to distribute most utility products and services has remained largely monopolistic.

Public utilities can be privately owned or publicly owned. Publicly owned utilities include cooperative and municipal utilities. Municipal utilities may actually include territories outside of city limits or may not even serve the entire city. Cooperative utilities are owned by the customers they serve. They are usually found in rural areas. Publicly owned utilities are non-profit. Private utilities, also called investor-owned utilities, are owned by investors, [8][9][10] and operate for profit, often referred to as a rate of return.

Public infrastructure



Grand Coulee Dam

Assets and facilities

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Concepts

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Public utilities provide services at the consumer level, be it residential, commercial, or industrial consumer. In turn, utilities and very large consumers buy and sell electricity at the wholesale level through a network of RTOs and ISOs within one of three grids, the eastern grid, Texas, which is a single ISO, and the western grid.

The California Public Utilities Commission

The California Public Utilities Commission (or CPUC) is a public utilities commission that officially regulates the privately owned electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water, railroad, rail transit, and passenger transportation companies that operate in the state of California.^[4]

Public Utility Commission of Texas

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (or PUC) is a state agency that regulates the state's electric and telecommunication utilities, implements respective legislation, and offers customer assistance in resolving consumer complaints. Over the years, various changes have dramatically re-shaped the PUC's mission and focus, shifting from up-front regulation of rates and services to oversight of competitive markets and compliance enforcement of statutes and rules. [11]

Fields of study

Architecture · Civil · Electrical ·
Mechanical engineering · Public economics ·
Public policy · Urban planning

Examples

Akashi Kaikyō Bridge · Trans-Alaska pipeline · Autobahn · Brazilian energy independence · Brooklyn Bridge · Channel Tunnel · Chicago wastewater · China's high-speed rail · Curtiba rapid bus transit · Danish wind-power · British offshore wind-power · Nuclear power in France · Solar power in Germany · Hoover Dam · Hong Kong Int'l Airport · Intercity-Express · Interstate highways · Jamnagar Refinery · Kansai Int'l Airport · Panama Canal · Port of Shanghai · San Francisco Bay Bridge · Three Gorges Dam · Shinkansen · Spanish high-speed rail · French TGV rail · Spanish autovias and autopistas · Transcontinental Railroad Power transmission in the USA

Infrastructure portal

United Kingdom and Ireland

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, the state, private firms, and charities ran the traditional public utilities. For instance, the Sanitary Districts were established in England and Wales in 1875 and in Ireland in 1878.

The term can refer to the set of services provided by various organizations that are used in everyday life by the public, such as: electricity generation, electricity retailing, electricity supplies, natural gas supplies, water supplies, Sewage works, sewage systems and broadband internet services. [12] They are regulated by Ofgem, Ofwat and Ofcom. Disabled community transport services may occasionally be included within the definition. They were mostly privatised in the UK during the 1980s.

References

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- 2. 1 2 "public utility definition". Investorwords.com. Retrieved 2011-10-11.
- 3. 12 "Public Utilities: West's Encyclopedia of American Law". Answers.com. 2009-06-28. Retrieved 2011-10-11.
- 4. 1 2 "California Public Utilities Commission". Cpuc.ca.gov. 2007-03-23. Retrieved 2011-10-11.
- 5. \http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/technology/net-neutrality-fcc-vote-internet-utility.html
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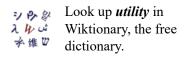
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- 8. ↑ Energy Dictionary
- 9. ↑ Investor Owned Electric Utilities
- 10. ↑ Investor-Owned Utilities: Asleep at the Switch or Above the Law?
- 11. ↑
- 12. ↑ "Utilities Websites". Uk250.co.uk. Retrieved 2011-10-11.

External links

- World Bank report on Water, Electricity and Utility subsidies
- Latest News in Utilities and Information Technology
- Latest in UK business utility news



Public services	
Municipalization · Nationalization · Progressive tax	
Concepts	Public administration · Public domain · Public health · Public interest · Public land · Public ownership · Public policy · Public procurement · Public value
Basic services	Civil service · Fire department · Law enforcement · Postal service (Savings system) · Public broadcasting · Public transport
Public utility	Electric utility · Oil & gas · Telecommunication (Municipal broadband) · Public water system · Waste management
Public works	Infrastructure · Public bank · Public hospital · Public library · Public school · Public space · Public university
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