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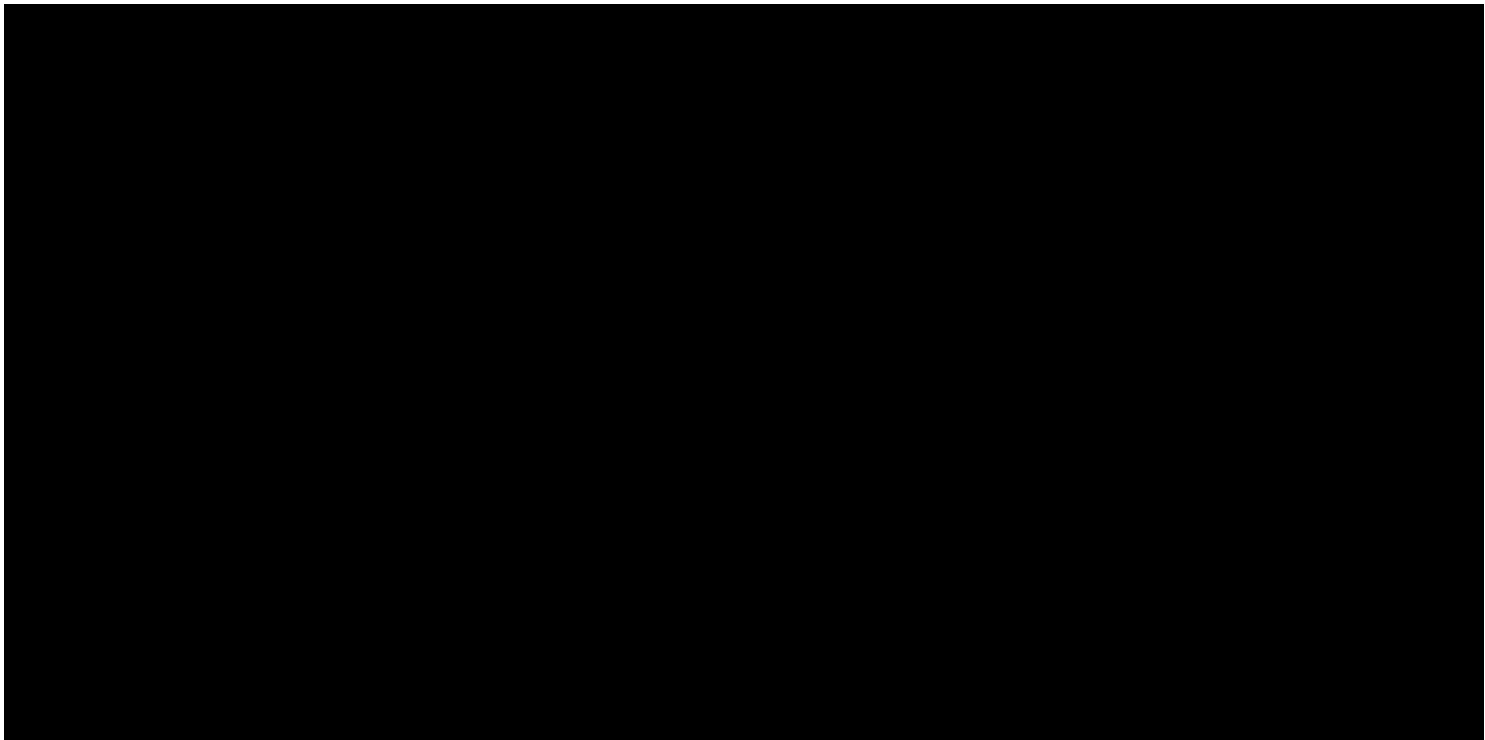
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I-Team: Customers file class-action lawsuit against CMP, claim overcharging

by Marissa Bodnar
Thursday, July 19th 2018



A class-action lawsuit has been filed against Central Maine Power, alleging the company overcharged customers while attempting to cover up problems with its meters and new billing software.

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PORTLAND (WGME) -- A class-action lawsuit has been filed against Central Maine Power, alleging the company overcharged customers while attempting to coverup problems with its meters and new billing software.

Attorneys from the Augusta-based Lipman & Katz are taking on the case, along with two other firms. They filed a complaint Thursday afternoon in Cumberland County Superior Court, demanding a jury trial and compensation for customers.



"It's like David versus Goliath," said CMP customer, Judith Hopkins.

Hopkins said she started the new year with a bill she couldn't explain.

"Our usage went up by 250 percent for our January bill and there was no reason for it," Hopkins said. "It should have gone down."

Hopkins said over the next several months they didn't get any bills, but then a disconnect

customers said over the next several months they didn't get any bills, but then a disconnect

notice suddenly showed up.

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On Thursday, she and hundreds of others took action with a civil lawsuit against CMP.

"It's just blatantly clear that these bills don't make sense," said Attorney Sumner Lipman.

The CBS 13 I-Team analyzed hundreds of bills earlier this year, which led state regulators to launch an investigation in February.

Since then, the company has revealed 97,000 customer accounts saw a 50 percent increase, or more, in their usage or total charges compared to the same time last year.

"All of this would not have been really exposed if not for the efforts of the media," Lipman said.

CMP Spokesperson Gail Rice released this statement from the company: "The timing of this litigation certainly is peculiar given that the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is undergoing an extensive investigation and has yet to issue its findings and recommendations. We continue to cooperate fully with the PUC and the independent auditor. While we understand class action lawyers are motivated to aggressively pursue claims and related legal fees, we hope all of our customers understand the PUC's role. Under Maine law, the PUC is the body specifically charged with ensuring fair, accurate electric bills for all customers."

"No one is talking about paying back the customers who are being overcharged," said Lipman. "That's what we're here for."

Lipman said 400 ratepayers have signed on in the last 48 hours. According to the complaint, attorneys believe there are approximately 297,000 CMP customers who are members of the class.

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Hopkins hopes it will bring some relief.

"People are working three jobs just to pay their light bill," Hopkins said. "That's not fair."

Lipman said it could be three to five months before they find out if the court will certify the case as a class-action.

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