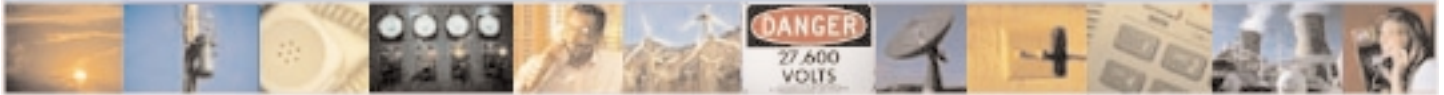




PUBLIC UTILITY CONNECTION



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Utilities eye trees near power lines

Recent news articles have detailed the controversy of trimming trees near power lines. Utilities are faced with difficult decisions when they have to balance the need to prune trees for safety and reliability reasons with their customers' desire to maintain the beauty and health of their trees.

Properly planted and maintained trees improve air quality and beautify neighborhoods. However, trees that are planted too close to power lines can create fire and safety hazards and cause power outages.

Texas law (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 752) says only professionals who are authorized by the local electric utility are allowed to prune or remove trees closer than 10 feet to high voltage power lines.

These professionals have been properly trained and equipped to do so. Serious

injury and even death can occur when untrained persons attempt to prune trees closer than 10 feet to high voltage power lines. Call your local utility for assistance.

Electric utilities routinely require access to inspect trees near their lines and schedule periodic maintenance. The utility will prune trees that interfere with its power lines and may completely remove a tree because of its condition.

When pruning trees the utility will determine the required distance based on the voltage of the power line and the type of tree. Some trees will need to be pruned more than others to prevent problems. Electric utilities use natural or directional pruning methods, which direct the growth of trees away from the lines (Fig.1).

See Plant, p. 2

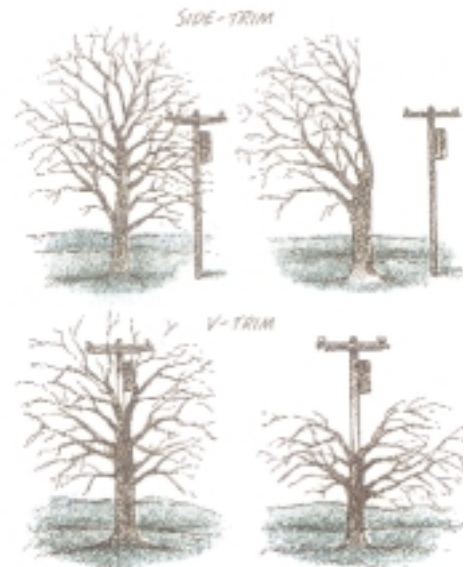


Fig. 1

From the Commissioners

Consider shopping for electric service

Dear Customer,

As we enter our fifth year of retail electric competition, we firmly believe it's time for you to get off the beat, specifically, the "Price-to-Beat."

Texas lawmakers and we Commissioners established the Price-to-Beat as a benchmark for electricity prices, knowing you could get a discount if you shopped for a competitive provider. That's still the case, but now there are two more reasons that make shopping even more compelling.

First, for more than a year now the Price-to-Beat has served only as a price ceiling and not a price floor. That means that your affiliated provider,

whether it's TXU in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, Reliant in the Houston area, or CPL/Direct Energy in the south Texas and Abilene- San Angelo regions, can offer you a discount below their Price-to-Beat.

Second, natural gas prices that help determine the Price-to-Beat have fallen dramatically since the post-hurricane price spikes of 2005. In fact, natural gas prices used in calculating the Price-to-Beat have fallen approximately 15 percent. But so far the affiliated providers haven't filed any applications to reduce their Price-to-Beat.

What does all this mean? Now that fuel (natural gas) costs are getting

lower, it's reasonable to assume that retail electric providers have more ability to offer you a lower price for electricity. This applies to all providers, not just competitors.

You have a few ways to do your shopping. If you haven't switched providers yet, your first step may be to contact your current traditional provider and see if you're getting all the discounts you may be entitled to. It doesn't hurt to ask and your provider may make you a better offer to keep you as a customer.

A more comprehensive way to shop for available discounts is to check out

See It's not too late, p. 2



Hudson



Parsley



Smitherman

Plant low growing trees near power lines

continued from p. 1

The Public Utility Commission is serious about public safety. Do not attempt to prune your own trees near power lines or hire someone to do it. Every year in Texas, people are injured or even killed when they climb or prune trees near power lines. High-voltage lines are not insulated, and direct contact usually results in death by electrocution. A tree contacting a power line can become energized. Children should never climb or play in trees near power lines.

Texas has a wide variety of low-growing trees that can be planted near power lines. Most electric utilities have tree-planting booklets available to their customers that give advice on types of trees to plant.

Remember, before you plant a tree, look up for power lines and call the "Call Before You Dig" toll-free line at 800-344-8377 to locate any buried lines.

Fact Sheets Available

Did you know we have a fact sheet "All About Trees and Power Lines"? The Public Utility Commission is committed to giving Texans accurate and complete information on a variety of telephone and electric topics. One of the ways the Commission does this is through the distribution of fact sheets by the Information and Education section of the PUC's Customer Protection Division. These fact sheets offer a wealth of information on topics ranging from electric submetering to slamming. You may request fact sheets by calling us toll-free at 1-888-782-8477 or you may find them in the PUC publications section of the PUC Web site at www.puc.state.tx.us.



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TEXAS ELECTRIC CHOICE

1-866-PWR-4-TEX (1-866-797-4839)

www.powertochoose.org

It's not too late to shop for electricity

continued from p. 1

the latest prices offered by competitors at www.powertochoose.org or call 1-866-PWR-4-TEX (1-866-797-4839) toll-free to compare offers from all the providers in your area. It's as simple as giving your zip code.

Electric customers who switched to lower cost providers back in 2002 and 2003

have each saved hundreds of dollars in the process. If you haven't shopped yet, it's not too late to enjoy similar savings in your electric bills.

Sincerely,

Paul Hudson, Chairman

Julie Parsley, Commissioner

Barry Smitherman, Commissioner

Dictionary of Utility Terms

Average Payment Plan

Some customers may take advantage of average payment plans that bill you a similar amount every month. Your monthly bill will be based on previous usage and your rate may be adjusted on a quarterly or yearly basis depending on your REP.

Retail Electric Provider REP

Electric companies that compete for your business by offering lower prices, renewable energy options, added customer service benefits or other incentives.

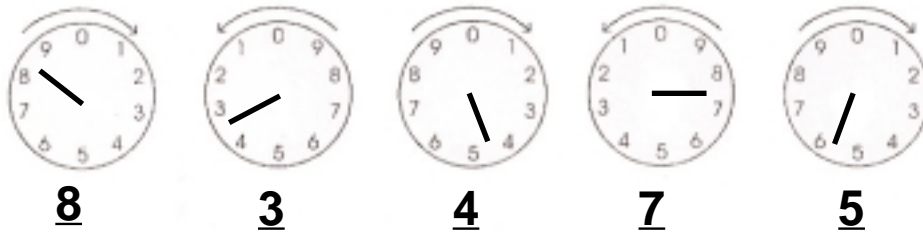
Affiliate Retail Electric Provider (A-REP)

Retail Electric Provider that was part of the original electric company in your area. Now this A-REP only sells electricity and provides customer service.

Billing Cycle

The beginning and ending dates for a specific bill. These dates are approximately the same each month.

HOW TO READ YOUR ELECTRIC METER



Have you ever wanted to read your electric meter? We can help you do that with these simple instructions.

- Look at your meter. It has five or possibly four dials.
- Some dial hands turn clockwise and some counterclockwise.
- To read your meter, read each dial starting from left and record the number that each hand has just passed and not the number it is approaching.
- On the dials above, you'll see the reading is 83475.
- If you read the meter a month later and the new reading is 84675, the difference of 1200 is the number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) you used between the two readings.

Homeowners can reap big savings with a little preventive maintenance

A little preventive maintenance can mean big savings and increased comfort for homeowners anytime of year. For example, experts say in colder weather it's possible to save as much as 10 percent on an energy bill by reducing the air leaks in a home.

Find and fix the leaks

There are a number of places that can be the source of an air leak. Homeowners are encouraged to pay particular attention to doors, windows and places where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring penetrate exterior walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.

To test your home for leaks, hold a lit incense stick next to a suspected source of an air leak. This is best done on a windy day. If the smoke travels horizontally, you have found a leak that may need caulking, sealing or weather-stripping.

Don't let energy go out the window.

While windows can add to a home's style and comfort, they can also be the source of a lot of wasted energy. The experts at the Department of Energy suggest:

- Close your curtains and shades at night, open them during the day.
- Tape clear plastic sheeting inside of a

window frame if drafts, water condensation and frost are present

- Install tight-fitting insulating window shades on windows that feel drafty after weathering.
- For long-term savings install storm windows over single-pane windows or replace with ENERGY STAR® double-pane windows with low-e coating.

Insulate your home against high energy bills

Insulating a home can help reduce energy costs year-around.

- Start by insulating the hot water heater and hot water pipes. It's best to follow the insulation manufacturer's instructions or get professional help.
- Check the insulation in the attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors and crawl space to see if it meets recommended levels for your region. ENERGY STAR® retailers and installation professionals can advise consumers.

Cut costs by controlling temperature.

- Installing a programmable thermostat can be an excellent way to cut your heating bills. Such a thermostat can be an great way to cut your heating bills.

Texas No Call List Registration

Residential phone customers: You may add your name and phone number to the Texas No Call lists by using one of three methods:

1. **Online:** www.texasnocall.com. This is a free service.
2. **By Phone:** Call toll free 1-866-TXNOCAL (1-866-896-6225). An automated payment system is available 24/7. Payments may be made with MasterCard or Visa. Costs: \$2.25 for statewide list; \$2.55 for electric list.
3. **By Mail:** Ask for a registration form by calling the toll-free number (1-866-896-6225) or by downloading and printing a form from www.texasnocall.com. Payment may be made with MasterCard or Visa or by mailing a check or money order to TEXAS NO CALL, P.O. Box 313, East Walpole, MA 02032. Costs: \$2.25 for statewide list; \$2.55 for electric list.

Technology driving customer's choice of phone carrier

For the first hundred years since the invention of the telephone in 1876, consumers in the U.S. had no choice in who provided their phone service. Congress began opening telecom markets to competition in the mid-1970s, and by 2000, many Americans had a real choice in who provided their phone service.

Now, we can not only choose between carriers but among different technologies, each of which has its benefits and limitations.

Traditional landline phone service still remains the dominant means by which we call. But wireless services and emerging digital calling services are making headway in gaining a share of the local and long distance calling markets.

With all these choices, here are some tips for shopping for and choosing a phone carrier:

Do Your Homework

If you're considering an alternative to your traditional phone carrier, you're probably interested in saving money, new features, better quality, or a combination of these. To make an apples-to-apples comparison among your choices, it's worth taking a little time to review your calling history and to look at which features (like call waiting, call forwarding and messaging services) you find useful.

Figure out your average local and long distance calling volume. If you make infrequent local calls and don't need long distance service or calling features, your phone company may have a "bare bones" calling plan that will save you money. Most carriers offer long distance as well as local service, but they may charge a monthly fee in addition to the per-minute rate they quote. Multiply your average monthly long distance minutes by your per-minute rate, add the monthly charge, then divide by the total minutes again to see what your real rate is. Use that rate as the basis for comparison with other carriers' long distance rates.

Bundle Up

Do you need wireless phone service, broadband Internet access



Online Information

For more information on choosing a phone carrier and saving money on your phone bills, check out these consumer fact sheets on the PUC's Website:

<http://www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/electric/elecfacts/T&EBills.pdf>

<http://www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/telephone/telefacts/LDQUES.PDF>

<http://www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/telephone/telefacts/BORDER.PDF>

<http://www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/telephone/telefacts/VoIP.pdf>

or subscription television services? If so, you may want to consider a "bundled" product offering that might save you money over buying each service separately from your phone service. Compare the price of buying these services separately with the bundled cost, then consider whether a particular bundle includes services you don't want (like unlimited long distance calling, messaging services, or TV channels you don't want).

Go Digital

Most large cable TV providers now offer broadband Internet access. With this service, you can also subscribe to a digital or Internet-based phone service (Voice over Internet Protocol, or "VoIP"). You can consider using the cable provider's telephone service or sign up with a separate VoIP provider. Not every digital phone or VoIP service has the same sound quality as traditional landline phone service, so you should demo a service if possible to make sure the service quality meets your expectations.

Digital and VoIP phone services offer many computer-based features that landline phone carrier can't offer, like managing your voice messages from a computer. The Federal government has required all digital and VoIP carriers to provide enhanced 911 services so that the operator can identify where you're calling from in an emergency.

Most landline phone carriers offer DSL, a broadband Internet access service, but some require you to have basic local phone service in order to have the DSL service. Make sure your phone company offers "naked DSL" (DSL without local phone service) if you want to go with a VoIP provider for your local and long distance calling.

Get Unwired

A growing number of people are tossing their local landline service and using their wireless phone for all their calling. Consider the number of local and long distance calls you make, when you make them, and the service quality where you live before dropping your landline carrier for a wireless service. If all signals point to a wireless future for you, consider buying a docking station that interfaces your cell phone with the landline phones in your home.

Be Alarmed

If you have home security services, check with your provider to make sure your alarm system will work with an alternative local phone carrier. Some VoIP phone services won't work with many alarm systems.