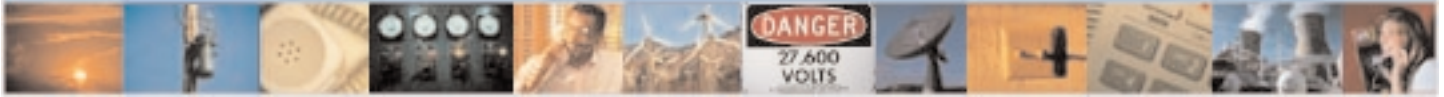




PUBLIC UTILITY CONNECTION



VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

June 2008

Shopping for electricity made easier

Power-to-Choose web site gets improvements

Significant improvements and new features at www.powertochoose.org make it easier for residential electric customers to select the electricity service that is right for them in Texas areas with electric competition.

Shopping for electricity is an essential part of the Texas retail electric market because residential prices and terms can vary significantly. Some customers have saved up to 25 percent by switching providers. Powertochoose.org is maintained by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) and allows electric customers to shop for electricity providers by price, length of contract and fuel source.

“Powertochoose.org is better than ever,” said PUC Chairman Barry Smitherman. “It’s an important tool in managing your household budget.”

Customers can find several dozen available offers by connecting to powertochoose.org and entering their zip code or wires company. The Web site now lets customers sort and narrow offers down to a handful.

After reviewing available products, customers can simplify their options based on price, fixed or variable rate, renewable energy products, contract length, and individual provider offers.

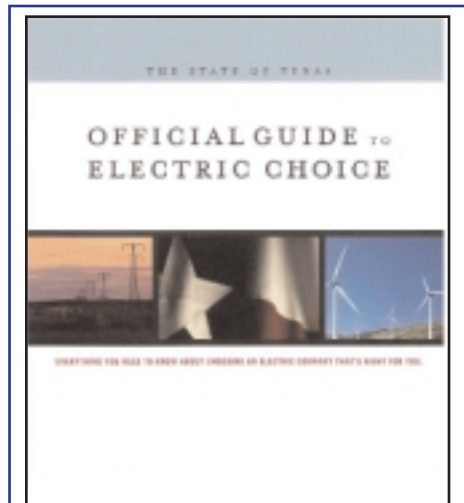
“The PUC monitors powertochoose.org to ensure its accuracy,” said Commissioner Julie Parsley. “It gives customers the information they need to save money and choose a provider that offers the services they need.”

The Web site also includes links to an

Electricity Facts Label for each offer to allow for direct comparisons among providers. There are also links to a Terms of Service document for each offer. The Terms of Service contain important information regarding deposit policies, cancellation fees and other contract terms that can affect overall cost.

If customers are interested in a particular offer, direct links are provided to sign-up pages to start the enrollment process.

Retail electric providers (REP) are required by law to provide accurate and current information to customers. They are now expected to honor prices and terms posted on www.powertochoose.org. Customers who believe a REP is not honoring an offer on the site or is posting misleading information can file a complaint with the PUC at www.puc.state.tx.us or by calling 1-888-782-8477 (1-888-PUC-TIPS) toll-free.



INSIDE:

The PUC’s Texas Electric Choice publication wins top prize for brochures at the 2008 Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards.

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.

Public Utility Connection
Customer Protection Division
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

Editor: Henry Garza

Copy Editor: Henry Garza

Contributors: Henry Garza, Grace Godines,
Steve Hudson

Publication design: Henry Garza

For a free online subscription to this
newsletter, please visit

[www.puclist.puc.state.tx.us/scripts/
pucsubscribe.asp](http://www.puclist.puc.state.tx.us/scripts/pucsubscribe.asp)

This newsletter may be reproduced, and
all articles within may be reproduced
and reprinted without permission.

PHONE: 512-936-7000

FAX: 512-936-7003

TTY: 512-936-7136

E-MAIL: publications@puc.state.tx.us

QUESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS:

1-888-782-8477

WEB SITE: www.puc.state.tx.us

TEXAS ELECTRIC CHOICE

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

www.powertochoose.org

Texas Official Guide to Electric Choice wins national award

The flagship publication of the PUC's Texas Electric Choice campaign won the top prize for brochures at the 2008 Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards sponsored by the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) in Albuquerque on May 1.

"The Official Guide to Electric Choice" is a bilingual, five-page primer on electric deregulation and how to shop for a retail electric provider. The PUC's Information & Education section has distributed more than 80,000 of the brochures since its publication last fall. The creative concept was developed and executed by Sherry

Matthews Advocacy Marketing, the campaign's marketing contractor since 2004.

At the awards dinner, outgoing NAGC president Gene Rose commented that the brochures/booklets category was particularly strong this year.

Government communicators at the federal, state and local levels submitted hundreds of entries in 46 categories for the annual awards.

This was the third major distinction for the Texas Electric Choice campaign since its inception in 2002. The PUC won silver and bronze Addys for its public service announcements in 2002 and 2006.

Do you have a utility complaint?

To contact the PUC with
a complaint:

Call: 1-888-782-8477
In Austin 512-936-7120
Se habla español

Fax: 512-936-7003

Write: PublicUtility
Commission
Customer Protection
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

Web: www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp

PUC commissioner, former chairman to resign in August

Public Utility Commissioner and former Chairman Paul Hudson has announced his resignation effective Aug. 15.

“Five years ago, I came to the PUC with a very long to-do list,” said Hudson. “Having worked through that list with my colleagues, market participants, customers and our extraordinary staff, it’s time for a new list, a new set of challenges.”

Texas Gov. Rick Perry appointed Hudson to the Commission Aug. 26, 2003 and designated the Commissioner as Chairman Jan. 26, 2004. He continued as Chairman until November 2007.

“Paul has served the State of Texas with the utmost integrity,” said Gov. Perry. “His service on the PUC has significantly enhanced our state’s economy, paving the way toward continued innovation and diversification of the Texas energy industry to ensure its ongoing success.”

Texas became the national leader in wind generation while Hudson was chairman. In addition, he helped establish electricity market rules leading to a dramatic increase in generation capacity to meet the demands

of a rapidly growing state. Other achievements include a vibrant development of added electric transmission, steering the PUC through the legislative review process known as Sunset and guiding the development of electricity interconnections between Texas and Mexico to bolster economic growth along the border.

“We have more to accomplish,” added Hudson. “In my final weeks, choosing the optimal transmission investment for delivering wind power and kick-starting the digitization of electricity through advanced meters are key steps to a sustainable energy future.”

Before his appointment to the PUC, Hudson served as Director of Policy, Deputy Director – policy, and Policy Director for Business and Regulatory Issues in the Office of the Governor.

He also worked at the Commission as advisor to Commissioner Brett Perlman and on policy development staff under the former Chairman of both the PUC and the Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC) Pat Wood.

Frequently Asked Questions on Lifeline

How do I apply?

To apply for Lifeline call toll-free to 866-454-8387. An application can be obtained by phone or online.

What proof of eligibility do I need to provide?

You will be asked for proof of your eligibility by submitting a form signed under penalty of perjury that you receive benefits from, or a copy of any dated document which verifies your participation in, one of the qualifying programs listed above. Proof of total household income may be required for income based qualification. Your Lifeline benefits will take effect when proof of eligibility is received.

How do I continue to receive Lifeline benefits?

Eligibility is reviewed periodically. Your benefits will be discontinued when you no longer meet the eligibility requirements or when proof of eligibility is not received. Customers who are no longer eligible for Lifeline benefits must notify their service provider.

Being a Lifeline or Link Up customer does not protect you from being disconnected if you fail to pay your telephone bill.

Lifeline and Link Up discounts cannot be applied to an outstanding balance owed to your phone company.

Volunteers assist in Electric Choice educational effort

The Texas Electric Choice Education Campaign continues to distribute educational materials throughout the state as part of its efforts to educate Texans on choosing an electricity provider.

Efforts are underway to distribute hand fans and other educational literature at various events including Forth of July celebrations.

Police departments across the state have been helpful in distributing educational materials during National Night Out gatherings. Many churches have also shown interest in educational products.

Look for more information in our next newsletter about possible distribution efforts and visits to your area.



Texas Electric Choice Campaign representatives and PUC employees Steve Hudson and Henry Garza speak to a customer about choosing an electricity provider during IBM's Earth Day Exhibit in Austin.

Discount for low-income electricity customers resumes

Some may qualify for 20 percent cut May through September

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) authorized a 20-percent discount effective May 2008 through September 2008 for low-income residential electric customers in areas participating in retail electric competition.

Most customers who are eligible for the discount are automatically enrolled through a matching system operated by the Low-Income Discount Administrator (LIDA) using data provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and retail electric providers.

Approximately 366,000 customers are currently matched.

Customers who qualify for the Low-Income Discount but are not automatically matched are encouraged to apply directly by calling 1-866-454-8387 toll-free. In addition, customers who self-enrolled over the past year need to re-enroll. Self-enrolled customers are required to re-enroll every seven months. Every self-enrolled customer should have received an application and information by mail. Customers who have not received this information should call the above toll-free number. The Web site

www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/assist/liteup/index.cfm also contains this information in both English and Spanish.

Completed applications must be mailed with a copy of the most recent electric bill and income documentation to:

LITE-UP TEXAS
1779 Wells Branch Parkway, Ste. 110B,
#320

Austin, TX 78728-7022

A customer qualifies if family income is at or below 125 percent of federal poverty level guidelines (\$26,500 annually for a family of four), or if the customer receives certain benefits from HHSC, including food stamps or Medicaid.

The customer must have an electric account in an area with retail customer choice. Residents of master or sub-metered apartments cannot get the discount.

The discount does not affect eligibility for any other government benefit.

Funding for the discount comes from the System Benefit Fund.

The fund collects 65 cents per 1,000 kWh from electric customers in areas of retail electric competition within Texas.

Top 10 Things Families Can Do to Reduce Energy Use

Summer's hot weather can bring an increase in energy use. Below are some tips to help you reduce your energy bills and help the environment at the same time.

1. Replace all incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
2. Replace all gasoline-powered lawn equipment with human-powered or electric-powered lawn equipment.
3. Replace air conditioning/heating filters regularly with a filter that has a MERV 11 rating or higher.
4. Always choose Energy Star labeled appliances.
5. Improve your roof by installing light-colored, durable materials and by adding insulation.
6. Don't waste car trips. Combine necessary errands into fewer trips.
7. Install weather stripping, and seal cracks around windows and other wall penetrations.
8. Lower the thermostat on your water heater.
9. Except for refrigerators and freezers that keep food cold, unplug appliances when they are not being used.
10. Utilize programmable thermostats.

GET THE FACTS!

The Public Utility Commission of Texas 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 (I&E) 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.

