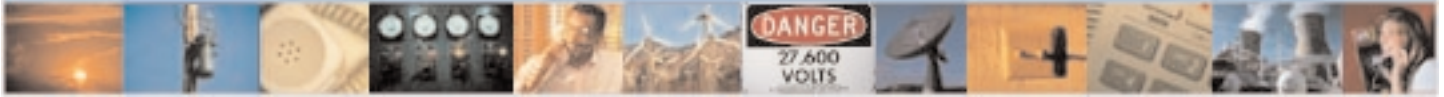




PUBLIC UTILITY CONNECTION



VOLUME 9, ISSUE 4

June 2007

New logo, Web site help promote Electric Choice

Makeover will help Texans make educated choice

The Public Utility Commission's customer education program on retail electric choice is undergoing a makeover after five years.



Texas Electric Choice
EDUCATION PROGRAM

Program managers within the PUC's customer protection division felt the program's look should emphasize that it's an unbiased, government-sponsored education program. As retail electric competition has grown, so has the number of Web sites for electricity brokers (who are paid commissions for placing customers with retail electric providers) claiming to be unbiased sources of information on competing electric plans and providers. The PowerToChoose Web site is the only comprehensive source of providers and plans available in Texas.

The new Texas Electric Choice logo has a simple, official look, emphasizing that it's an education program.

The program's educational materials, including Official Guide to Electric Choice and "Power Pages" fact sheets, are all being redesigned, as is the program's centerpiece "Power To Choose" Web site (see accompanying story). The PUC plans to distribute more than 100,000 of the new guides this summer through its Power Partner grassroots outreach members and during the annual National Night Out events.

New Web site offers fresh look, enhanced sorting capability

Customers wanting to compare retail electric plans and providers in Texas will soon have an easier time sorting through the growing number of electric service options available.

The PUC's Texas Electric Choice Web site (www.PowerToChoose.org, and its Spanish language counterpart at www.PoderDeEscoger.org) is being revamped with a clean new look and powerful new sorting features. In some areas of Texas, there are more than 20 different retail electric providers and 60 plans to choose from.

That's a daunting task to retail

See PUC enhances p. 2

From the Commissioners

We're helping you shop for best electricity offer

Dear customer,

We're working to make it easier for you to shop for your electricity. Amidst all the debate during this year's Legislative session, one issue found lawmakers in total agreement – the need for more customer education.

We couldn't agree more with a recent Dallas Morning News editorial recommending "A mega-education effort." The editorial continues by saying "such information is critical for deregulation to work to its fullest."

As lawmakers discussed customer education there was disagreement on how much money to spend and where to find a funding source. A lot still needs to be sorted out since the Texas state government fiscal year doesn't



Hudson



Parsley



Smitherman

See Web site p.2

PUC enhances www.powertochoose.org

Customers will get to choose plan specific to their needs

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electric customers who want to decide which plan is best for them. The new sorting features will allow Web site visitors to select plans to review based on their rate structure (fixed, variable, prepaid), environmental quality (renewable and other “green” products), length of contract, and other key factors.

The new Web site will also allow visitors to enter their current electric rate and see how much savings they

SHOP. SWITCH. SAVE.



AN OFFICIAL WEB SITE OF THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS

Welcome to the Texas Electric Choice Web site, where you can choose the Retail Electric Provider that's right for you.

[Site Map](#) / [Contact Us](#) / [Glossary](#) / [FAQs](#) / [Publications](#) / [Your Rights](#) / [Low Income](#) / [Business Info](#)
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could realize (based on average consumption of 1,000 kilowatt hours a month) by choosing a particular

provider's plan.

Look for the new Web site to launch sometime in July.

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Customer Protection Division
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P.O. Box 13326
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Editor: Henry Garza

Contributors: Henry Garza, Grace Godines,
Terry Hadley, Steve Hudson

Publication design: Henry Garza

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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



Web site changes will help Texans

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begin until September. But we're not going to waste any more time in helping you find the best available value for electricity.

The PUC's Customer Protection Division is revamping the www.PowerToChoose.org Web site to reduce the clutter. You'll be able to plug in the features that are most important to you, be it rate type, contract length or fuel source. The result will be a customized list of offers with the features you want.

We're also working on a new Customer Guide and want to distribute at least a hundred thousand copies so potential customers can join the nearly two million Texas households that already have switched their elec-

tricity provider.

We'll continue to work with our Power Partners who serve as a valuable and credible asset to your local community. These volunteers provide a valuable service and save money for all Texans by offering their help without extra compensation.

This expanded outreach will not replace but will definitely enhance the marketing efforts of retail electric providers in the state. You can trust the PUC as an unbiased source of information as you shop for electricity. We hope to be in touch with you before the summer ends.

Sincerely,

Paul Hudson, Chairman

Julie Parsley, Commissioner

Barry T. Smitherman, Commissioner

Do you have a telephone or electricity 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: Public Utility Commission
Customer Protection
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

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

PUC hits the road sharing information on Electric Choice

Representatives of the PUC's customer protection and governmental affairs teams have been logging hundreds of miles this spring to share information on electric choice with customers across the state.

With the Texas Legislature in session, the PUC was invited to attend three events sponsored by legislators to discuss electric rates. Steve Hudson, Information & Education Coordinator, and Gabriel Cárdenas, Legislative Assistant, attended town hall meetings in Dallas hosted by Senator Royce West (D-Dallas) and Rep. Barbara Mallory Caraway (D-Dallas) during February and March. The event sponsored by Sen. West attracted more than 80 customers who had questions about their electric service and payment assistance programs.



Hudson and Cárdenas then attended a retail electric fair in Corpus Christi on April 14 sponsored by Rep. Solomon Ortíz Jr. (D-Corpus Christi). There were representatives of eight retail electric providers in attendance, and PUC staff served

as a general resource for the hundreds of customers who attended the event to shop for a new electric plan.

On May 10, Steve Hudson and Grace Godines staffed a booth at the McAllen Chamber of Commerce's second annual business fair at the McAllen Convention Center. Several thousand residents of the Rio Grande Valley attended the event, and over 750 hand fans – the PUC's popular "brochure on a stick" – were distributed to attendees.

The majority of attendees who stopped by the PUC booth said they were not aware they could choose their retail electric provider and save money by switching plans or providers.

10 Ways to Lower Your Summer Electric Costs

1. Use ceiling fans and portable fans to circulate the cool air. Fans use very little electricity. Fans circulate air in the house, to make the house feel cooler by doing this, the thermostat setting for your central air conditioning unit can be raised and still maintain the same comfort as a lower setting.

2. Install a whole-house fan in your attic, it draws cool air into your home through the windows while forcing hot air out through your attic vents. Use the whole-house fan after sundown when the outside temperature drops below 80 degrees, and in the early morning to cool your house and help reduce your air conditioning use.

3. Install patio covers, awnings, and solar window screens to shade your home from the sun. Shade south and west windows with plants or trees to keep the heat out during the summer.

4. Unplug or recycle that spare refrigerator in the garage if you don't really need it. After air conditioning refrigerators are typically the largest users of electricity in a home. If your refrigerator is more than ten years old you should consider replacing it.

5. Install a programmable thermostat. Programmable thermostats automatically adjust your home's temperature settings, allowing you to save energy while you're at work or sleeping.

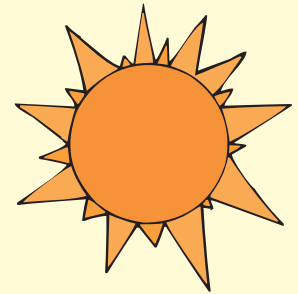
6. Close blinds, drapes and shades during the hottest part of the day. This keeps the strong sunlight from heating your home.

7. Use a clothesline instead of a clothes dryer.

8. Use compact florescent light bulbs.

9. Turn off appliances, lights and equipment when not in use. Unplug electronic devices and chargers when they aren't in use-most new electronics use electricity even when switched "off."

10. Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 115° F. and install low flow showerheads. You'll be surprised how much this simple device can cut your hot water costs.



PowerfulAdvice offers more tips on electricity

Improved features on the PowerfulAdvice Web site give Texans more information to use electricity more efficiently, lower their bills, and reduce strain on the electric grid.

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) has updated the site that uses a color-coded system to alert Texans about conditions on the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) grid. PowerfulAdvice can be accessed through the PUC's homepage www.puc.state.tx.us by clicking on the colored box at the bottom of the page with Today's Conservation Alert.

PowerfulAdvice uses the following four color codes:

On **GREEN** days, no Electricity Emergency is likely, but normal conservation measures are recommended to reduce Texans' electricity bills. On **GREEN** days, conservation, in conjunction with shopping for a lower cost electricity provider, can significantly reduce your electric bill:

On **YELLOW** days, extra conservation

measures are urged because electricity shortages may occur during peak usage hours.

A **YELLOW** Alert will be declared for days where temperatures statewide are expected to be extremely hot, leading to record or near-record electricity consumption.

A **YELLOW** Alert also will be declared if unexpected high demand and unexpected outages of power plants occur. During **YELLOW** alerts there is an expected or actual declaration of Step 1 of ERCOT's Emergency Electricity Curtailment Plan (EECP), which includes procurement of additional generation.

An inability to get more generation could lead to a declaration of EECP Step 2, which includes interruptible loads, usually to large industrial electric customers. All customers are encouraged to reduce their electricity use as much as possible.

On **RED** days, conservation is critical to avoiding Electricity Emergencies and con-

trolled rolling outages may be needed to prevent uncontrolled rolling blackouts.

RED Alerts will be declared when there is insufficient electricity available or expected to be available to meet customer demand and rolling outages may be needed. Customers should reduce electricity use as much as possible.

During a **RED** alert, ERCOT will be in Step 3 of its Emergency Electricity Curtailment Plan (EECP), which includes the deployment of emergency interruptible loads.

On **BLACK** days, controlled rolling outages are occurring and are needed to prevent uncontrolled rolling blackouts. During **BLACK** alerts, there is insufficient electricity available to meet demand and ERCOT is in Step 4 of its Energy Electricity Curtailment Plan (EECP), which includes rolling outages. Customers should reduce their consumption of electricity as much as possible to help prevent rolling blackouts.

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.

Governor's Division of Emergency Management
Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines
 Preparing for Hurricane Season: June 1-Nov. 30



Residents of Texas Gulf Coast **EVACUATION ZONES** should **BEGIN NOW** by making an evacuation plan, preparing an emergency kit and learning evacuation routes well in advance.

Special Transportation Registry
If you have special transportation needs, register by dialing 2-1-1:
 Gulf Coast residents with special transportation needs (including those who are disabled or medically fragile) who live in evacuation zones and do not have friends or family to help in an evacuation should register for a ride in advance by dialing 2-1-1. The 2-1-1 Special Transportation Registry must be dialed **IN ADVANCE**. Do not wait until a storm is in the Gulf to register for assistance.

If you need transportation to evacuate for any reason, register with 2-1-1:
 If you do not have a car or other vehicle, and you cannot get a ride with friends, neighbors or family, register **IN ADVANCE** for a ride by dialing 2-1-1.

Evacuation zone information:
 If you have a disability or special transportation need and no one to help you evacuate, or if you have no transportation, you can check whether your residence is located in an evacuation zone by dialing 2-1-1.

Hurricane Preparedness tips on the web:
 Governor's Division of Emergency Management Web Site: www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem
 FEMA Web Site: www.Ready.gov Red Cross Web Site: www.redcross.org

Gulf Coast to get hurricane guidelines in mail

Governor Rick Perry's Division of Emergency Management has issued guidelines for upcoming hurricane season June 1 - Nov. 30. The guidelines are for residents of the Texas Gulf Coast and will be included in

telephone and electric bills mailed out June through November.

Perry believes the information is so important he asked that it be sent out in English and Spanish to maximize the usefulness of the bill inserts.