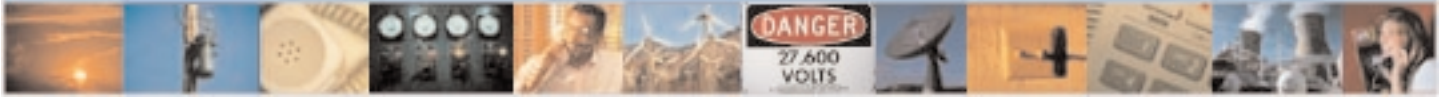




PUBLIC UTILITY CONNECTION



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Congress passes bill on Do Not Call List

Legislation that keeps numbers permanent awaits Bush's signature

The National Do Not Call Registry will keep blocking telemarketing calls long into the future, thanks to recently passed legislation in Congress. The House and Senate approved the Do Not Call Improvement Act in December that makes the list permanent. The bill awaits signing by President Bush.

On the Federal Trade Commission's website at www.donotcall.gov, it states "The Federal Trade Commission will

not drop any telephone numbers from the National Do Not Call Registry based on the five-year expiration period pending final Congressional or agency action on whether to make registration permanent."

DNC registrations are good for five years from the date of the most recent registration. The first re-registrations will take place beginning in June 2008. Re-registering your number on a state list does not re-register your number on the national list.

According to testimony, when the Registry was developed, the Commission adopted a five-year re-registration mechanism and said that the

list – which now contains more than 145 million phone numbers – would be periodically purged of disconnected or reassigned numbers. This was to ensure that the Registry was as accurate as possible. The goal was "to adequately balance the need to maintain a high level of accuracy in the Registry, with the imposition on consumers to periodically re-register their telephone numbers." The Registry only contains phone numbers and no other personally identifiable information. Since the Registry has been in place, several changes have occurred, including the increased use of cell phones and the popularity of

See Government, p. 2

From the Commissioners

New ways to meet electricity demands

Dear Customer,

We need more electricity. It's an essential tool for a growing state and a major component for increasing prosperity. More people are coming to Texas and every indication is for this trend to continue for the next 25 years. Part of our mission is to ensure that Texas has enough electricity to meet the demand not just now but in the future.

This process includes predicting future electricity supply and demand. It's a difficult task. To help us, we strive to maintain an

electricity surplus. We agree with federal and regional experts who say a 12.5 percent cushion, or reserve margin, ensures sufficient electricity and accounts for extreme weather conditions and unexpected outages.

However, last year a warning sign appeared. Our main indicator suggested the cushion could drop below 10 percent in 2009.

Fortunately, the latest report from the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) places the 2009 surplus above 12 percent. That's good news, but it includes a signif-

icant challenge, reducing pollution while growing the economy. In the electric industry, it requires using cleaner fuels to generate more electricity.

For the past ten years, natural gas has met most of the challenge. It's cleaner than our earlier dependence on coal and lignite, and the natural gas generator of today is cleaner than the gas plants of 40 years ago. However, the world-wide move to natural gas has dramatically increased the cost of this fuel, so the search is on for



Smitherman



Parsley



Hudson

See Customers, p. 3

Government releases list of Do Not Call violators

continued from p. 1

telephone number portability. In addition, the legal landscape surrounding the Registry has become clearer, and the Commission has more information about how the courts view consumer privacy in this context.

Also, the Registry has been implemented successfully for five years and has included a scrubbing program that has removed disconnected and re-assigned numbers each month. Telemarketers have to “scrub” their lists every 31 days.

Finally, “[T]he Registry has enjoyed unprecedented popularity and helped enhance the privacy of the American public in a tangible way.”

“The Commission will continue its robust efforts to maintain the Registry’s

accuracy and ensure the continued success of the Do Not Call program.” A Harris Interactive survey released in January 2006 reported that 94 percent of American adults have heard of the Registry and 76 percent have placed their phone numbers on it. Since the Registry has been in place, the Commission has initiated 27 cases alleging DNC violations, resulting in a total of \$8.8 million in civil penalties and \$8.6 million in consumer redress or disgorgement of ill-gotten gains.

Do Not Call Violators November 2007

Craftmatic - and three of its subsidiaries worked with defendant Eric Krafstow to run sweepstakes promotions offering consumers who filled out an entry form the chance to win a prize – a Craftmatic bed. The sweepstakes form indicated that the consumers’ telephone number was their entry number as well. Using this information, Craftmatic allegedly placed tens of thousands of calls to consumers who entered the sweepstakes, even though the form did not indicate that by filling it out they would receive sales calls, and the company did not seek their express consent to call them. In settling the complaint, Craftmatic has agreed to pay a \$4.4 million civil penalty – the second-largest ever for DNC-related violations.

ADT - and two of its authorized dealers – Alarm King and Direct Security Services (DSS) – were charged with violations similar to those alleged against DirecTV in 2005. ADT mar-

keted its security systems directly to consumers and through authorized dealers, which used a variety of marketing techniques, including telemarketing. In telemarketing its services, ADT, Alarm King, and Direct Security Services each called consumers whose numbers were on the DNC Registry. While the authorized dealers used their own telemarketers, the FTC alleged that ADT is liable both for the sales calls it made, as well as those made by its dealers, to numbers on the Registry. In settling the separate complaints, ADT, Alarm King, and DSS have agreed to pay \$2 million, \$20,000, and \$25,000, respectively.

Ameriquest - According to the complaint, Ameriquest’s telemarketers improperly called consumers on the Registry whose numbers had been obtained from third-party lead-generators. The lead-generators enticed consumers to provide their contact information, including phone numbers, using Web sites that offered information on financial and other products. The FTC’s complaint states that because consumers whose numbers were on the lead lists were not reaching out to Ameriquest in particular, the company had not developed an “established business relationship” with them, making calls to registered numbers illegal. Ameriquest also allegedly also ignored consumers’ requests to be placed on its entity-specific do not call list.

Source: Federal Trade Commission
Web site: www.ftc.gov

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1-866-PWR-4-TEX

(1-866-797-4839)

www.powertochoose.org

Do you have a telephone or electricity complaint?

The Public Utility Commission’s Customer Education Division is ready to assist you. 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

Energy-Saving Tips For Winter Season

The following are easy low-cost and no-cost ways to start saving energy this winter.

- Set your thermostat at 68 degrees in the winter and dress warmly. Use more blankets at night.
- Install a programmable thermostat – it could save about a \$100 a year
- Use compact florescent light bulbs.
- Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use.
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 115° F.
- Take short showers instead of baths - it could save up to \$28 a year.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
- Open draperies on sunny days; close them at night and cloudy days.
- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as needed.
- Caulk and weatherstrip windows and exterior doors.
- Set ceiling fans on reverse to re-circulate heat that would otherwise build up near the ceiling.
- Close vents in unused rooms – it could save \$100 a year.
- Clean dryer lint filter every time you use the dryer – it could save up to \$66 a year.
- Cover windows on winter nights with insulated curtains – it could save up to \$24 a year.
- Wrap the hot water heater in an insulation blanket – it could save up to \$20 a year.

For comprehensive information on how to make your home more energy efficient visit:
<http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/> and view the U.S. Department of Energy's -Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy – Energy Saver\$ Booklet.

Customers have role in encouraging efficient production of electricity

continued from p. 1

lower-cost alternatives.

Renewable energy, mainly wind power is being developed to plug the gap. This clean and cost-free fuel will help meet the demand. But while the fuel is free, the wind doesn't blow all of the time, and it requires costly infrastructure to deliver the power from its West Texas source to the state's population centers.

Nuclear power is another clean-fuel option and a low-cost one, but we're looking at a 10-year build out plus the continuing dilemma of waste disposal.

Finally, coal, traditionally an environmental "bad boy" but low-cost "good guy" is showing promise as new methods emerge to reduce pollution when it is burned to make electricity.

The fact is Texas needs to leave all these fuel options open to meet our growing demand, but you the customer can help by using only the electricity you need. Earlier this year lawmakers approved several measures to encourage energy efficiency. These can save you money by reducing your electricity use.

We're encouraging a more efficient mix of fuels to generate more electricity in Texas, and we encourage you to use only what you need. By working together we'll stimulate more competition in the electric industry and help drive costs down while ensuring we'll have the electricity we need.

Sincerely,
Barry T. Smitherman, Chairman
Julie Parsley, Commissioner
Paul Hudson, Commissioner

Commission sets 2008 interest rates

Texas electric and telephone customers who are over billed will be paid 5.21 percent interest in 2008 under rates established in December by the Public Utility Commission (PUC). Customers will receive 4.69 percent interest on utility deposits.

The 5.21 percent rate for over billings is based on the 90-day prime commercial paper rate over the last 12 months.

The 4.69 percent rate for deposit refunds is based on the average yield on 26-week Treasury bills during the past 12 months.

The final order is available on the PUC's Web site by going to the filings interchange under control number 33670.

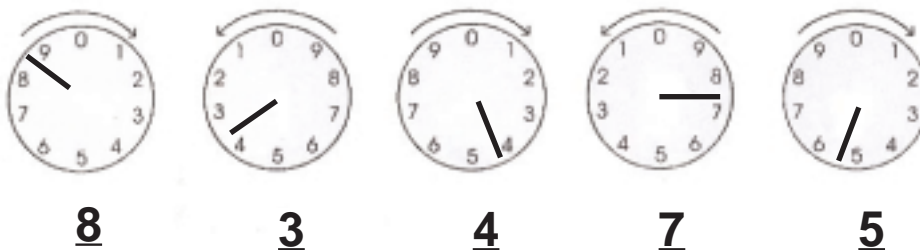
Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

Did you know...Electricity is one of the biggest producers of carbon emissions, so every time you make a coffee or turn the television on you are adding to global warming. The Environmental Protection Agency offers the following tips to help you reduce your contribution to global warming:

- **Change 5 lights:** Replace the conventional bulbs in your 5 most frequently used light fixtures with bulbs that have the ENERGY STAR label and you will help the environment while saving money on energy bills. If every household in the U.S. took this one simple action we would prevent more than 1 trillion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Look for ENERGY STAR labeled products:** When buying new appliances and electronics for your home, help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution with a selection of products in more than 50 categories.
- **Heat and cool smartly:** Clean air filters regularly and have your heating and cooling equipment tuned annually by a licensed contractor.
- **Buy Locally:** Purchase locally-made and locally-grown products. By doing so, you not only support your community and eat fresher products, but you also minimize your contribution to the carbon emitted for transporting products.
- **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle:** If there is a recycling program in your community, recycle as many materials as your community program collects. Use products in containers that can be recycled. Buy recycled products.
- **Use water efficiently:** Everyone can save water through simple actions. Turn off the water while shaving or brushing teeth. Municipal water systems require a lot of energy to purify and distribute water to households, and saving water, especially hot water, can lower greenhouse gas emissions.



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.