



Office of Public Utility Counsel

**Annual Meeting
November 12, 2010**

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Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC)

- PUC, utility regulatory agency, was created in 1975. Oversees REP service quality & and wholesale/retail electric market & telecom.
- OPUC, an independent state agency created in 1983, advocates for residential and small business consumers in electric and telephone utility cases, projects and rulemakings.
- OPUC also provides assistance through website, toll-free phone number and outreach events.



Texas Utilities Code Section 13.064

OPUC shall annually conduct a public hearing, or annual meeting, to:

- assist the office in developing a plan of priorities; and
- give the public, including residential and small commercial consumers, an **opportunity to comment** on the office's functions and effectiveness.

Telecommunications

- PUC oversees wholesale/retail telecom market and customer protection/complaints, operates Texas Telephone Choice website/Texas No-Call List, and administers low-income discount program, Lifeline (TUSF). Link-Up also provides discount of up to \$30 for residential phone service (FUSF).
- PUC statutorily tasked with handling customer complaints, including billing issues (slamming/cramming), improper disconnection, service quality, no-call violations, and pre-paid calling cards.
- FCC - wireless, long-distance, and cable.
- OPUC advocates for telecom consumers.



Electric Restructuring & Choice




- Since 2002 - Generators, TDU/wires & poles (Oncor), and retail electric provider (REP) choice (100-plus).
- For REPs in your area, shop by zip code on www.PowertoChoose.org or call 1-866-797-4839.
- Check Scorecard on customer complaint statistics.
- Also consider – rate type (variable v. fixed), Electricity Facts Label, Terms of Service, applicable usage fees, renewable content, Early Termination Fees, current contract end date.





Electric Assistance



- REP – Critical/Chronic Care; Balanced or Levelized Billing; Deferred Payment Plan; 65 + Deposit Waiver.
- PUC Lite-Up Program – up to 20% discount on summer bills. 
- TDHCA CEAP – federally-funded, locally administered. 
- 2-1-1 - local contacts assistance. 

Energy Efficiency & Weatherization

- Oncor Energy Efficiency Programs – Home (insulation, caulking, etc.), Low-Income Home Weatherization, Residential Energy Audit, Solar, etc.



- TDHCA's Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program – federally-funded, locally administered energy-related home improvements and energy conservation education (energy audits, weatherization work – caulking, weather-stripping, insulation, etc.).

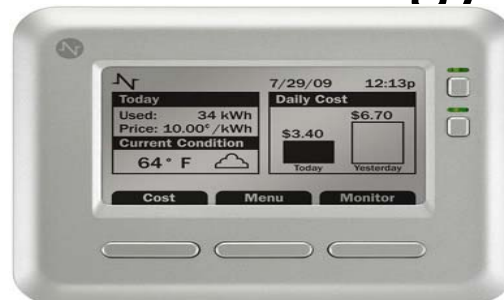




Smart Meters



- Benefits – automated meter reads, faster outage detection/restoration, new REP offerings/time-of-use rates, quicker switching, smart home/appliances.
- Free Web Portal - www.SmartMeterTexas.com
- Coming soon... in-home devices – portable; help monitor real-time energy usage & costs; \$30 and up.



OPUC Outreach & Assistance

- Outreach events, Rotary Clubs, town hall meetings throughout state.
- Website and one-pagers.
- OPUC Newsletter.
- Toll-free number.
- Complaints & Inquiries via email/phone.
- Coming soon... Social Media.





Questions?

Office of Public Utility Counsel

1-877-839-0363

www.opc.state.tx.us

