



Electric Customer Rights & Responsibilities



**Public Utilities
Commission**

Electric Customers' Bill of Rights

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is the state agency that has regulatory authority over investor-owned public utilities, including electric companies. The PUCO works to regulate the rates customers pay for electricity and ensure that companies provide quality, safe, and reliable electric service.

This brochure summarizes some of the rights and responsibilities you have as an electric customer in Ohio, and the rules electric companies are required to follow. Keep in mind that this is a summary of the rules regarding your rights, and does not take their place. For more information, please contact the PUCO or your local electric company.

Contacting the PUCO

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
180 E. Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43215

(800) 686-PUCO (7826)
(800) 686-1570 (TDD/TTY)

www.PUCO.ohio.gov

Contacting Your Electric Company

American Electric Power:
www.aepohio.com

Duke Energy Ohio
www.duke-energy.com

Dayton Power and Light
www.dpandl.com

FirstEnergy
www.firstenergycorp.com

Complaint Procedures

Informal Complaints

If you have a complaint or question about your electric service, you should first contact your electric company. The address and phone number for the electric company are listed on your electric bill.

The company is required to investigate every customer complaint received, and complaints should be resolved within 10 business days. If the company is unable to resolve your complaint within 10 business days, they must provide you with a status report every five business days following the initial period.

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction with the electric company, ask to speak to a supervisor. If this still does not help, contact the PUCO Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826). The PUCO will review the rules with you and, if needed, work with you and the company to resolve the problem.

Formal Complaints

If you cannot reach an agreement with the electric company through the PUCO Call Center, you have the right to file a formal complaint. You can request a formal complaint form by calling (800) 686-PUCO (7826), online at www.PUCO.ohio.gov, or by writing to the PUCO.

Residential customers have the option to represent themselves in a formal complaint proceeding or hire an attorney. Corporations must be represented by an attorney during the PUCO formal complaint process.

When you file a formal complaint with the PUCO, the company is given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. If the PUCO determines that reasonable grounds exist for proceeding with your complaint, the PUCO will mail you a notice setting a hearing date and time. The hearing will

take place before a PUCO attorney examiner at the PUCO offices located in Columbus. A prehearing conference may also be scheduled by the attorney examiner as a final attempt to informally resolve the complaint.

A formal hearing is similar to a court hearing, with a court reporter recording the proceedings. The attorney examiner will consider the testimony and evidence presented, and make a recommendation to the PUCO. You have the responsibility to prove the merits of the complaint, and the PUCO will then review the evidence and make a decision.

Your Electric Service

Installation of Service

When you need to establish new electric service, contact your electric company. The company will tell you what steps you must take to set up service. Be sure you call two to four weeks before you would like electric service to begin to allow for any construction work or inspections to be completed in time for the service to be ready when you need it.

The company should have your electric service installed within three business days of your call to set up service as long as no construction is required at your residence.

If the installation requires construction of electric facilities, your electric service should be completed within 10 business days after the company has been notified that the construction is complete. The company is required to notify you if the installation is expected to take longer than the usual three or 10 days. They must notify you of the delay, the reasons for the delay, the steps being taken to complete the work, and the date the installation will be complete. This notification can be made by phone; however, the company must provide you with a written explanation if the rescheduled commitment is missed by more than two days.

Deposit Requirements

When you sign up for new electric service, the company will verify your credit. If you do not meet the requirements for good credit, you may need to pay a deposit. New customers must meet one or more of the following criteria to establish credit with the company:

- The customer is a property owner or meets the legally-accepted practices to verify credit;
- The customer has had a prior account with the electric company for the same class of service within the past two years, and in the prior year of service did not have a late bill more than twice nor had service disconnected for nonpayment, fraud, or tampering;
- The customer can furnish a guarantor, or someone with good credit who will pay up to 60 days of service if the customer fails to pay the bill.

If you do not meet any of these criteria, you may be required to pay a deposit to establish credit with the company.

The electric company may not charge you a deposit of more than 130 percent of your estimated average monthly bill for regulated services. The deposit may be increased or lowered after three consecutive billing periods if the deposit you paid differs by 20 percent or more of the amount that would have been required based on the actual usage, while taking into account possible seasonal changes in your usage.

If the company keeps your deposit for more than six months, the company has to pay at least 3 percent interest on the deposit. After 12 months, the company will review your account and determine if the deposit should be returned.

If your service with the company is terminated, either by your request or disconnection for nonpayment, the company will apply the deposit plus any interest accrued to the final bill. You will receive a refund of your deposit for any amount that exceeds the amount owed in the final bill.

If you paid a deposit to your electric company and choose to enroll with an alternative electric supplier, the electric company must refund any portion of the deposit which applies to services the company is no longer providing.



Payment Arrangements

There are several options available for customers having trouble paying their electric bill:

- If you are unable to pay your bill, contact your electric company to make payment arrangements before the payment is due. The PUCO requires electric companies to offer certain payment plans to residential customers, and each company may offer additional payment options. These payment plans can include the 1/3, 1/6 and 1/9 Extended Payment Plans, Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP Plus), or budget payment plans. Contact your electric company for more information about payment options.
- Energy assistance programs are also available for qualifying households to help pay utility bills. A fact sheet is available from the PUCO with details and eligibility requirements for these assistance programs. For more information, call the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or visit the PUCO website at www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

Disconnection of Service

If you do not pay your electric bill by the due date, the company will send a 14-day notice before disconnecting your service. This 14-day notice may appear on your bill. To prevent disconnection, you must pay the amount owed by the disconnection date listed on the notice.

If your service has already been disconnected, you must pay the amount owed. If you make the payment before 12:30 p.m., your service will be restored on the same day. If payment is made after 12:30 p.m., service will be reconnected the next business day. You can make your payment by credit card, check, over the phone, or at an authorized agent. Keep in mind that you may also have to pay a security deposit and a reconnection fee before your service is restored.

If you wish to guarantee the reconnection of your service on the same day that you make the payment, you must provide the company with proof of your payment by 12:30 p.m. and notify them that you wish to have your service reconnected that same day.

If a member of your household has a medical condition where the disconnection of electric service would be especially dangerous to health, you may be eligible for a medical certification which would retain or restore service for a period of 30 days. Medical certifications may only be used three times per household in a 12-month period, and must be completed by a certified health care professional.

If you feel there is an error in your bill, contact your electric company first. You can contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) if you are unable to resolve the dispute with the electric company. However, you should still pay the amount on your bill that is not in dispute. The electric company cannot disconnect service for nonpayment of a billing amount that is in a bona fide dispute, if the customer has registered a

complaint with the PUCO Call Center or filed a formal complaint.

Electric companies can disconnect service for nonpayment year-round, including during the winter months. From November 1 through April 15, electric companies must give you an additional 10-day notice before disconnecting your service.

Your Electric Meter

Your electric meter measures the amount of electricity you use each month, and is used by the electric company to determine your monthly bill. Employees of the electric company have the right to access your meter for the purposes of reading, repairing, or testing the meter. When visiting your property, electric company employees must provide you with identification and the reason they are at your property.

Occasionally, electric companies use estimates based on previous usage to determine monthly customer bills. However, you have the right to request a meter reading to ensure that your electric bill is accurate. Electric companies are required to read meters at least once per year, and customers may request two additional meter readings free of charge per year. Keep in mind that you can only request a meter reading if your meter has not been read for two previous months, or if you believe that your meter may be malfunctioning.



The electric company will make a reasonable attempt to obtain an actual meter reading for each billing period. However, you have the choice to read the meter yourself and call in the reading to the electric company. When you terminate your service, you may want to arrange for a final reading to avoid a calculated final bill.

Reading your Electric Meter

Reading your electric meter is a simple way to ensure your electric bill is accurate. There are four dials on your electric meter with the numbers zero through nine. The dials are read left to right; be aware that the first and third dials circle clockwise and the second and fourth dial circle counter-clockwise.

Record the number indicated by the position of each of the dials. If the dial is between two numbers, you should record the smaller of the two numbers, as illustrated in the third dial. To see how much electricity you have used, subtract the reading that appeared on your last electric bill from the reading you just took. This will give you the amount of kilowatt hours of electricity you have used since the last billing cycle.

Ohio Electric Choice

Electric Suppliers

Through Ohio Electric Choice, customers in some areas have the opportunity to choose the company that supplies their electricity, while the distribution of electricity is still maintained by the local electric company. There are certain rules and regulations that customers of electric suppliers should keep in mind when selecting an alternative supplier. For more information about Ohio Electric Choice, call (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or visit www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

Complaint Procedures

If you have a complaint regarding your electric supplier, you should follow the same complaint procedure outlined for local electric companies. Contact the supplier to file a complaint; the company address and telephone number should be listed on your electric bill. If a service representative is unable to handle the complaint, ask to speak to a supervisor. If this does not help, contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) for assistance in resolving the complaint.

Electric Supplier Deposits

The contract with your electric supplier will outline the information regarding deposit requirements. If you are required to pay a deposit to the electric supplier, the deposit will be applied to your final bill and then refunded to you when service with the supplier is terminated.

Disconnection of Service or Termination of Contracts

Electric suppliers will send you a 14-day written notice of disconnection if you fail to pay your bill or meet any payment arrangements. If you do not pay the bill for your electric supplier, the contract will be terminated, and your electric service will return to your local electric company.



Before you decide to end the contract with your electric supplier, check the contract termination procedures outlined in the contract. There may be a penalty associated with ending your contract early. However, you can terminate the contract with your electric supplier without penalty if you move outside the electric supplier's service area or into an area where the electric supplier charges a different price, or if the contract allows the electric supplier to charge a different price in response to changing market conditions.

Interested in other utility issues?

The PUCO can provide information
or assist you with your utility
questions regarding:

Electric
Natural Gas
Telephone
Water
Moving Companies
Railroad Crossings
Commercial Motor Carriers
Hazardous Materials Carriers

The PUCO Consumer Call Center
(800) 686-PUCO (7826)
TTY: (800) 686-1570

www.PUCO.ohio.gov

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
180 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215

*The Public Utilities Commission is an Equal Opportunity
Employer and Service Provider*

Stay connected on
Facebook!

Scan the barcode to the right
with a capable smartphone to
"like" the PUCO on Facebook.

