



# The Monitor

March 2009

**The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio** *Your one-stop utility resource*

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## PUCO Approves Duke Energy Ohio ESP

Shortly before 2008 came to a close, the PUCO approved Duke Energy Ohio's application to establish an electric security plan, or ESP, for the supply and pricing of electric generation service over the next three years. The goals of the plan include price stability, ensuring an adequate supply of electricity, promoting economic development, job retention, energy efficiency and conservation.

The ESP, which will remain in effect through Dec. 31 2011, will affect customers' bills in several ways. The base price of electric generation will increase approximately 2 percent in 2009 and 2010 for Duke's residential customers. There will be no base generation increase for residential customers in 2011. For Duke's commercial and industrial customers, the base price of generation will increase approximately 2 percent each year of the ESP.



The implementation of the ESP, including the quarterly adjustment of Duke's fuel costs, will result in a decrease in electric rates for all customers for the first quarter of 2009. A typical residential customer using 1,000 kWh of electricity per month will see their total bill decrease by 3.8 percent.

Over the course of the plan, Duke will increase funding for home weatherization, provide funding for the distribution of fans or air conditioners to qualifying customers and provide assistance for customers at or below 175 percent of the poverty level that do not participate in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan.

**Ohio** | Public Utilities Commission

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## AEP interim rates extended for now

In February, the PUCO extended current electric generation rates for AEP-Ohio customers through March 2009. Until the Commission establishes new rates for AEP through an electric security plan (ESP), the company's current rates and riders will remain the same.

More information about is available at [www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov). Click on the "Energy, Jobs and Progress" image.

## Quick guide to small wind power in Ohio

Are you thinking of installing a small wind energy project for your own, not-for-profit use? If so, you may qualify as a customer-owned small wind generator.

An important first step in considering your options is to contact the electric utility company that owns the electric wires connected to the property where the wind project is to be installed.

- AEP Ohio: (614) 716-1377
- Dayton Power & Light Company: (937) 259-7906
- Duke Energy Ohio: (765) 454-6196
- FirstEnergy: (610) 921-6839

### Interconnection

The PUCO rules for interconnecting small wind turbines to the electric distribution system are custom made to fit the size and location of your project. If you select the size range of the potential project, the PUCO's interconnection rules will describe the technical requirements you must follow.

### Net Metering

If you want to install a wind project just for your own use, you will likely qualify for net metering, a billing arrangement for customers who generate electricity solely for their own use. This arrangement can lower your electric bill in two ways:

1. Your generator can displace the electricity you would otherwise have purchased from the utility.
2. You can earn a credit on the generation portion of your electric utility bill for any small amount of electricity your generator may feed back onto the electric utility wires.

As a net metering customer, your credit is limited to kilowatt-hour (kWh) charges only. Net metering customers are not reimbursed for distribution or transmission services. If you also have a demand (kilowatt) meter, these charges also will not be reimbursed.

If your electric meter does not measure both energy received from the utility as well as energy released back to utility's system, you can request such a meter from your utility company.

For more information about installing a small wind energy system on your property, visit [www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov) and search for "generating wind power in Ohio."

The Ohio Wind Working Group at [www.ohiowind.org](http://www.ohiowind.org) is another excellent source of information.

## Wireless Enhanced 9-1-1 funding available across Ohio

With the PUCO's recent acceptance of Meigs County's 9-1-1 plan, every county in Ohio can now access funds to implement wireless enhanced 9-1-1 service. As an added benefit, the four counties that do not currently offer wireline enhanced 9-1-1 are moving forward to provide this invaluable service.

Enhanced wireless 9-1-1 service routes emergency calls and provides the caller's location and callback information to responders. The service is currently being implemented across Ohio in two phases. Phase I wireless 9-1-1 service provides the caller's contact number and approximates the location of the call within the three nearest cell towers.



Phase II pinpoints the latitude and longitude coordinates of the call location using global positioning satellites. Of the 88 counties in Ohio, 60 have Phase II in place, and an additional eight have completed Phase I.

To fund enhanced wireless 9-1-1 capabilities, wireless customers in Ohio pay a 28 cent surcharge per line each month. Once collected, this money is deposited into the Ohio Wireless 9-1-1 Government Assistance Fund and disbursed to the counties on a monthly basis. Each county receives at least \$90,000 annually but may receive more based upon the ratio of wireless telephone numbers with billing addresses in the county to wireless telephone numbers within the state.

Counties may use the funds to finance a wide range of activities associated with the design, installation, maintenance and upgrade of wireless enhanced 9-1-1 systems.

### Cincinnati Bell and AT&T customers must request printed White Pages

If you are a telephone customer in the Cincinnati Bell or AT&T Ohio service areas, you will no longer automatically receive a printed copy of the White Pages telephone directory. You may contact your company toll-free and request a free copy. Both companies will continue to provide customers with a printed copy of the Yellow Pages business directory and an online, electronic version of the White Pages.

## Dominion's new gas rate takes effect in April

Beginning in April 2009, Dominion East Ohio will change the way it secures natural gas for customers who have not selected an alternative natural gas supplier.

### What has changed?

Under the second phase of its gas supply pilot program, Dominion East Ohio will continue to secure gas for customers that do not participate in the Energy Choice program. However, the Standard Choice Offer (SCO) rate will replace the Standard Service Offer (SSO) rate on the bills of all Energy Choice eligible customers. These customers will be assigned to an alternative supplier at the SCO rate, and the supplier's name will appear on their bill.

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) customers and other choice-ineligible customers will continue to buy gas under the SSO rate. The SCO and SSO rates will be the same, but SCO customers will pay county sales tax on the supply portion of their bill instead of the excise tax assessed under the SSO rate.

### What stays the same?

Dominion East Ohio will continue to deliver natural gas to customers, offer payment plans and handle emergency and customer service calls. All customers will still pay the same distribution rate for the delivery of natural gas supplies to their homes and businesses. SCO customers are free to choose an alternative natural gas supplier through Energy Choice or join a government aggregation group.

### How will the new rates be determined?

In February 2009, Dominion conducted two auctions to secure natural gas supplies for its customers. One auction established a SCO rate for choice-eligible customers. The other established a new SSO rate for PIPP customers and other choice-ineligible customers. The SCO and SSO rates for April 2009 through March 2010 will change monthly based on the NYMEX month-end settlement price, plus a "Retail Price Adjustment" of \$1.40 per thousand cubic feet.

### What are the NYMEX and the month-end settlement price?

The NYMEX, or New York Mercantile Exchange, is a "stock market" for energy and precious metal commodities. It sets a daily national market price for natural gas. Demand for natural gas is seasonal, and the NYMEX price can change dramatically from one month to the next.

### Will Energy Choice customers be affected by the changes?

Energy Choice customers who are currently enrolled with an alternative supplier are not affected; their contracts remain the same. If an Energy Choice customer's contract expires or their supplier goes out of business, and the customer does not choose a new supplier, the customer will be assigned to a supplier at that supplier's Monthly Variable Rate, or the customer can choose to be put on the SCO rate or choose another competitive supplier.

### What's next?

Beginning in April 2009, customers will be billed under the new rates. In February 2010, Dominion will conduct another round of auctions for the period April 2010 to March 2011.

## PUCO restructures natural gas PIPP

The Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) is designed to assist low income customers in paying for their natural gas bills. Customers whose yearly household income is 150 percent or less of the federal poverty level may pay a certain percentage of their income to maintain their natural gas service.

The PIPP program was first implemented more than 25 years ago and has allowed thousands of Ohioans to stay warm during the colder winter months. The new rules are the first major revisions made to the natural gas PIPP program since its inception in 1983.

The revised rules, approved by the PUCO last December, will lower the monthly payments of PIPP customers from 10 to 6 percent of their monthly income. The PUCO believes this will make payments more affordable as well as encourage more timely payments by PIPP customers.

A new program will also be implemented to encourage customers to make PIPP payments on time. For each payment made on time, 1/24 of customers' total arrearages will be credited. The PUCO believes this will help the customer from falling deeper into debt. This arrearage credit program will also help control PIPP program costs by encouraging responsible payment behavior.

The Ohio Department of Development recently adopted similar changes to the electric PIPP program.



# PUCO IN FOCUS



*A spotlight on the latest news affecting Ohio utility consumers.*

## DTV transition extended

The digital TV transition has been a hot topic lately. The original date of the transition from analog to digital TV signal was set for Feb. 17, 2009, but Congress recently extended the transition to June 12. However, television stations have the flexibility to stop broadcasting in analog before the June deadline, and some stations across Ohio have already done so.

To continue watching television after the transition, consumers that have analog TV sets and rely on “rabbit ears” or rooftop antennas to receive free broadcast signals must obtain a separate digital-to-analog converter to watch over-the-air TV, or lose service. The federal government offers all U.S. households up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of digital-to-analog converters. Consumers who receive television programming through any pay cable or satellite provider, or have a television equipped with a digital tuner should not be affected by this transition.



The reason for the switch to the digital signal is to free up valuable space on the analog broadcast spectrum. This broadcast space can then be used by other important wireless communication services like the police and fire departments or many emergency medical services.

### For more information

To make sure that you do not find yourself without television programming, or for help understanding the transition, call the FCC at (888) CALL-FCC (888-225-5322) or contact the FCC by e-mail at [dtvinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:dtvinfo@fcc.gov).

#### General Questions

[www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov)

[dtvanswers.com](http://dtvanswers.com)

#### Coupon Questions

[www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)

## PUCO offers outreach services

PUCO representatives are available to speak on a variety of utility issues, including electric, natural gas, water, motor carrier and railroad transportation. If you know of a community or business that would like to learn more about the PUCO, please direct them to the Office of Public Affairs (614) 466-7550. Some of the most popular requests include:

- Winter heating season and ways to save money
- Utility assistance programs
- Utility consumer rights and responsibilities
- How the PUCO works for you

The PUCO is also available to participate in trade shows and fairs across the state. At each event, the PUCO booth is stocked with educational materials, and representatives are available to answer questions from consumers.

*The Monitor* newsletter includes timely information about utility issues. The newsletter is available online at [www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov), and consumers can sign up on our Web site to have the newsletter and other information regularly e-mailed to them.

### PUCO Local Public Hearing and Outreach Schedule

#### Dayton Power and Light electric security plan

Wilmington, Municipal Building

March 4 at 6 p.m.

#### Utility bills and ways to save

Ohio Township AARP, New Richmond

March 17 at Noon

Davis Family YMCA, Youngstown

March 18 at 7 p.m.