

## Choosing an Electric Supplier

With electric choice in Ohio, you may be able to choose the electric supplier that provides the generation of your electricity. If you choose a new electric supplier, your local electric utility will continue to deliver the electricity to your home, and you should continue to call your local electric utility if your power goes out.

Electric suppliers must be certified by the PUCO before they can sell electricity to residential customers. Certification is an ongoing, thorough process to make sure each supplier is qualified to provide electricity in Ohio.

### Governmental Buying Groups or “Aggregations”

Before learning about how to choose your supplier on your own, you should also know about governmental aggregation in case your area chooses to aggregate. In Ohio, local communities are allowed, by law, to join their citizens together to buy electricity as a group and on the group’s behalf, negotiate the terms, conditions, and price of the electric supply. These groups can result in “buying power” and a lower rate for the group members.

Most governmental aggregation programs are “opt-out” programs which automatically enroll all local residents, unless they individually and actively opt-out of the program (choose not to be included). A local government can only do this if a majority of the voters approved the issue in a previous election. If your community is aggregating, you will want to learn more about how this program affects you and your choices. For more information, call the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

### Four Simple Steps to Choosing a Supplier

If suppliers are available in your area, it's easy to switch. Just follow these simple steps

- 1. Compare Offers.** To find out if a supplier is offering a lower price than your current electric utility, compare the supplier's generation price (the total price per kilowatt hour) to the “price to compare” found on your current electric bill. The PUCO’s *Apples to Apples* rate comparison charts, available at [www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov), offer information to help you compare the details about each supplier's offer. Only you can decide which supplier is best for you. You may simply want the lowest price, or you may want to consider special add-on offers, what source is used to generate the electricity, contract terms, or the reputation of the supplier.
- 2. Contact Suppliers.** Contact the suppliers that you are most interested in, and ask the questions listed below. Once you have decided on a supplier, contact that supplier directly to confirm the offer and learn how to sign up. You do not need to call your local electric utility.
  - Are you certified by the PUCO?
  - Is the price fixed or is it variable?
  - If it is a variable price, how does it change?
  - Are there any built-in price increases or decreases?

- Does the price depend on how much electricity I use or when I use it?
  - How long is the contract for that rate?
  - What happens when my contract expires?
  - Do you charge any cancellation fees?
  - Will there be switching, membership or other fees?
  - Are there any deposit requirements?
  - Will I receive one or two bills a month?
  - What sources are used to produce the electricity?
  - Is there a customer incentive for signing up?
  - Do you offer budget billing?
3. **Read and understand your contract.** Most electric suppliers will ask you to sign a contract. The supplier may provide you with a contract in person or by mail. You also may be able to sign up by telephone or on the Internet. Before signing any contract, make sure you read and understand all the terms and conditions such as how long you will have to buy electricity from the supplier, what types of fees there are, and how you will be billed. Only give out your account number when you are ready to sign.
4. **Receive confirmation.** After you sign up, your new supplier will contact your current utility for you. Your utility will then mail you a confirmation. You have seven days from the postmark date on the confirmation to cancel the contract if you change your mind.

### Your Rights as a Consumer

No matter what you choose, the PUCO will continue to protect and enforce your rights. If you feel that your rights have been violated, call the PUCO call center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

- If you do not choose a supplier, your current electric utility will still provide you with electricity.
- Your electric service should not be switched without your permission. This is called "slamming," and it is illegal.
- The PUCO still regulates the delivery of electricity, and monitors the safety and reliability of your electric service.
- Programs to provide energy assistance for low-income residents have been enhanced with electric choice. You can apply for assistance programs with one application. Call the Ohio Department of Development at (800) 282-0880.
- Suppliers are required to provide you with information on their generation sources and the by-products created.

- After you sign up with an electric supplier, your local electric utility will mail you a confirmation. You have seven days from the postmark date of this notice to cancel the contract if you change your mind.
- Your local electric utility is required to include your name, address, and usage information on a list of eligible customers that is made available to other electric suppliers. Your local electric utility can tell you how to stop this information from being shared with suppliers if you do not want to be included on the list. Watch for bill inserts from your local utility.
- Electric suppliers may not discriminate based on race, sex, or any other reason.
- If an electric supplier stops supplying you with electricity for any reason, you will be returned to your local electric utility. You will not lose power.

### **Inquiries, Disputes, and Complaints**

If you have an electric emergency (e.g. downed power line) or a complaint or inquiry regarding your bill or meter, call your local electric utility.

If you have a complaint or inquiry regarding your electric supply contract, call your supplier.

If your complaint or inquiry is not resolved, call the PUCO Consumer Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or TTY/TDD (800) 686-1570.

**If you would like to know more about the PUCO or have utility-related questions or concerns,**

**contact the PUCO at:**

**(800) 686-PUCO (7826)**

**(800) 686-1570 (TDD/TTY)**

**In Columbus only:**

**(614) 466-3292**

**(614) 466-8180 (TDD/TTY)**

**[www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov)**