

Office of the Public Advocate

Your Trusted Source for Utility Information



VOLUME 21 | SPRING 2024

ELECTRICITY GUIDE

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

THE STANDARD OFFER NOW 24-35% LOWER AS OF JAN. 1

In Maine, the supply price for electricity is set annually through a “standard offer” process administered by the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC). In this process, the PUC solicits competitive bids for the price of electricity for the following year.

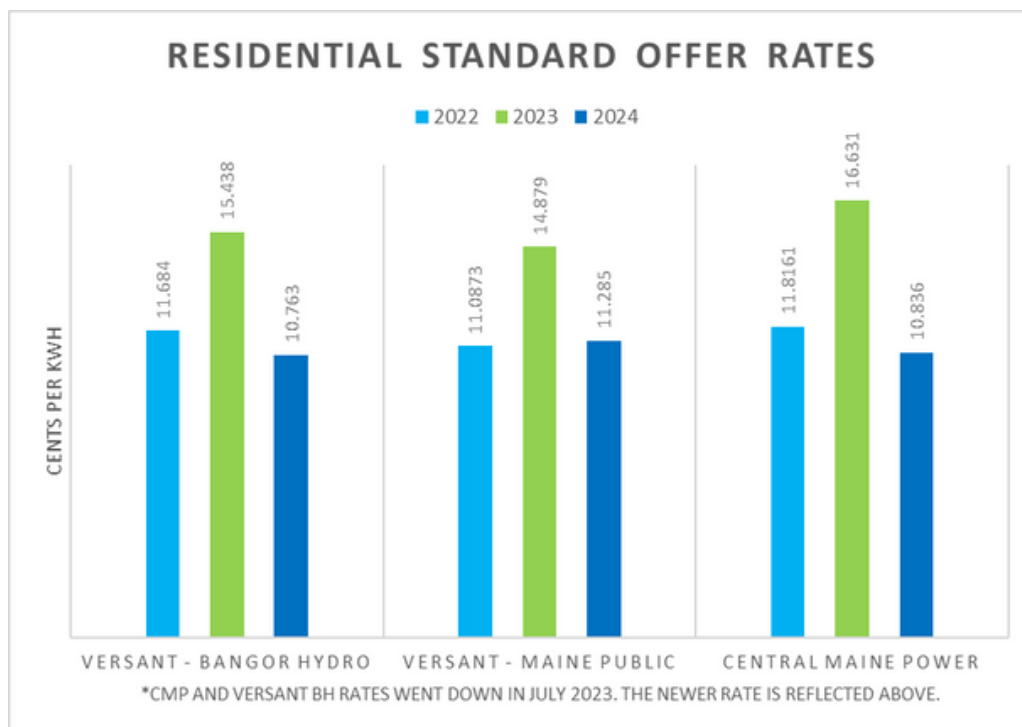
The PUC recently announced the new Standard Offer prices per kilowatt-hour beginning January 1, 2024 for residential and small commercial customers.

For Central Maine Power, the Standard Offer decreased by 35% to 10.8 cents from 16.6 cents in 2023.

Learn more at
maine.gov/energy/electricity-prices

For Versant’s Bangor Hydro District, the Standard Offer decreased 30% to 10.8 cents per kWh from 15.4 cents per kWh in 2023.

For Versant’s Bangor Maine Public District, the Standard Offer decreased 24% to 11.3 cents per kWh from 14.8 cents per kWh in 2023.



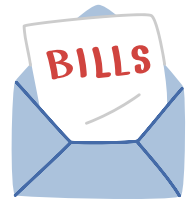
DIAGNOSE YOUR HIGH ELECTRIC BILL

1 WHO IS YOUR SUPPLIER?

If you have a supplier besides the Standard Offer, they may have changed their rate, and it may be more expensive than you expected. Call us (207-624-3687) if you need help finding your supplier info. To return to the Standard Offer, contact your utility:

CMP Customer Service: 1-800-750-4000

Versant Customer Service: 1-855-363-7211



2 HOW DOES YOUR USAGE COMPARE TO PAST USAGE?

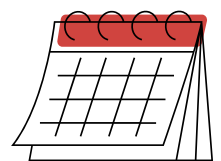
Each month, your utility bill includes a graph showing your total monthly usage. How does this month's bill compare to other months? Is there data from last month, or last year, that you can compare your usage to? (CMP and Versant also have tools on their websites that allow you to compare usage and even track it, hour by hour.) If you've started using something new in the home, or an old appliance is starting to fail, your usage will increase, causing your bill to go up.

Common Usage Culprits

- **Home heating:** Space heaters, electric heat, heat tape, heat pumps, plug-in fireplaces and even ovens, dryers and hot tubs - anything that creates heat in your home will impact your electric bill. Fans to circulate heat can also impact your bill.
- **Hot water heaters:** When these appliances start to fail, they can increase your electric bill. If it's been checked by a professional lately and you aren't noticing differences in water pressure, temperature, and you haven't been running out of hot water, you could also consider insulating the heater and its pipes - and check the temp! 120 is the recommended setting.
- **Wells:** Anything in your home that uses a motor, such as a well pump, swimming pool pump, or water softening system, will impact your electric bill. Consider getting your system or appliance serviced if you notice any issues.
- **Home cooling:** A/C units, heat pumps, refrigerators, freezers - all of these appliance use a fair amount of electricity, and fridges and freezers can use even more when they start to fail.
- **Misc.:** Is it that light over the stove you leave on 24/7? Probably not. Most lights, unless it's several additional lights due to holiday decor, are not going to be the biggest problem on your bill. Dehumidifiers, humidifiers, TVs, and computers are items you should monitor the use of and consider unplugging when not in use.

3 HOW LONG IS YOUR BILLING PERIOD?

Utility bills can sometimes range from 28 days to 33 days. A longer billing period can increase your bill. Additionally, some utilities will change your billing cycle to prepare your account to take on credits for the Community Solar program, and this can also increase the number of days your bill contains charges for.



Contact your utility - they can look at all these factors and more to help lower your bill

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1) Will signing up with a supplier besides the Standard Offer reduce my electric bill?

- The Standard Offer is the default supplier on your electric bill. There are other companies to choose from, which you can find at [Maine.gov/SupplyRates](https://www.maine.gov/SupplyRates). However, be **very** cautious about contract ending dates - your rate is likely to change once your contract is over, so stay on top of your contract start and end dates to ensure you don't unintentionally end up paying a rate higher than you originally signed up for.

2) Will signing up with Community Solar reduce my electric bill?

- Many Community Solar companies promise a savings between 10-15% compared to your normal electric bill. Note: This percentage of save is often realized over the course of the year, not monthly. However, read the fine print of any contract you are considering very carefully and ask lots of questions about the billing system and how the company plans to communicate with you.
- Educate yourself as much as possible before making a decision to ensure Community Solar is the right fit for your household budget. Visit https://www.maine.gov/meopa/electricity/renewable-energy/community_solar or call us at 207-624-3687 to get the OPA's **Community Solar FAQ** to learn more.

3) I just can't afford my bill - what can I do?

- Call your power company. They may have payment plans, financial assistance, and tips for improving efficiency.
- Call MaineHousing (1-877-544-3271) and/or your local Community Action Agency (find them by calling 2-1-1) to see if you qualify for any financial help through LIHEAP, LIAP, AMP, and other programs.
- Reach out to your city/town office for general assistance.

4) I just discovered that I'm on a new rate with a CEP and didn't agree to a new contract. How did this happen?

- CEPs are required to send you two notices between 30-60 days before a contract ends. They also need to keep proof of this notice in their files. If you don't remember seeing these notices, contact your CEP and ask them how they sent this information to you, either email or regular mail. It is your responsibility to update the CEP if your contact information changes.
- Ask the CEP for proof of the notice. If they cannot provide it, contact the Consumer Assistance Division at the Public Utilities Commission (800) 452-4699.



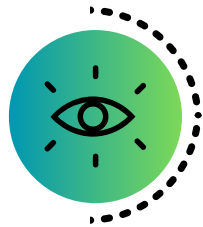
HOW TO REDUCE YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

1 UNDERSTAND YOUR USAGE

Both CMP and Versant have tools on their websites for customers to better monitor and understand their usage. Devices that run a motor, create heat, or create cooling often use a lot of electricity – space heaters and dehumidifiers are common culprits on big bills. Not comfortable on the web? Give Customer Service a call and ask for help understanding your usage.

CMP Customer Service: 1-800-750-4000

Versant Customer Service: 1-855-363-7211



2 BE EFFICIENT

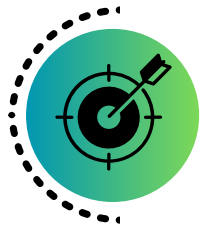
Try to tweak your usage where you can: **Efficiency Maine** has a great Energy Efficiency Tips Booklet available online – or they're happy to mail you a copy if you call **1-866-376-2463**.

Efficiency Maine also has some great rebate programs right now to help you evaluate your home's efficiency as well as rebates for insulation, heat pumps, and energy efficient washing machines and air purifiers.

Note: Even a simple change like turning off power strips or unplugging appliances when not in use can make a huge difference in your usage.

3 CHOOSE THE RIGHT DELIVERY RATE

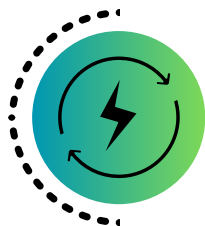
CMP and Versant both have time-of-use rates and rates designed for heat pump and electric technology users. Call them to learn more.



4 CHOOSE THE BEST SUPPLY RATE

Make sure you know your options and choose the supplier that works best for you. Options are at **Maine.gov/SupplyRates**.

Important: If you give one of these companies a call and sign up, contact your supplier before the contract ending date to either sign a new contract or request to be put on the Standard Offer when your contract ends, or you may be automatically extended and charged a higher or variable rate.



Office of the Public Advocate

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ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE



The Office of the Public Advocate's primary responsibility is to represent the interests of Maine utility consumers. Our attorneys advocate for rates, services, as set forth in our authorizing statute, 35-A M.R.S. § 1702 and practices to benefit utility customers in regulatory and court proceedings. Most of our work takes place in proceedings before the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

Our Office also intervenes in cases before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the federal agency that oversees wholesale electricity markets, interstate electricity transmission and interstate gas transportation, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which regulates interstate communications by radio, TV, wire, satellite and cable. We are also active as a consumer representative in the stakeholder process at ISO New England, the regional electric transmission grid operator.

In addition, our Office testifies before the Legislature on matters affecting utility consumers, and provides information regarding utility services to the public at large.

Learn more at www.maine.gov/meopa