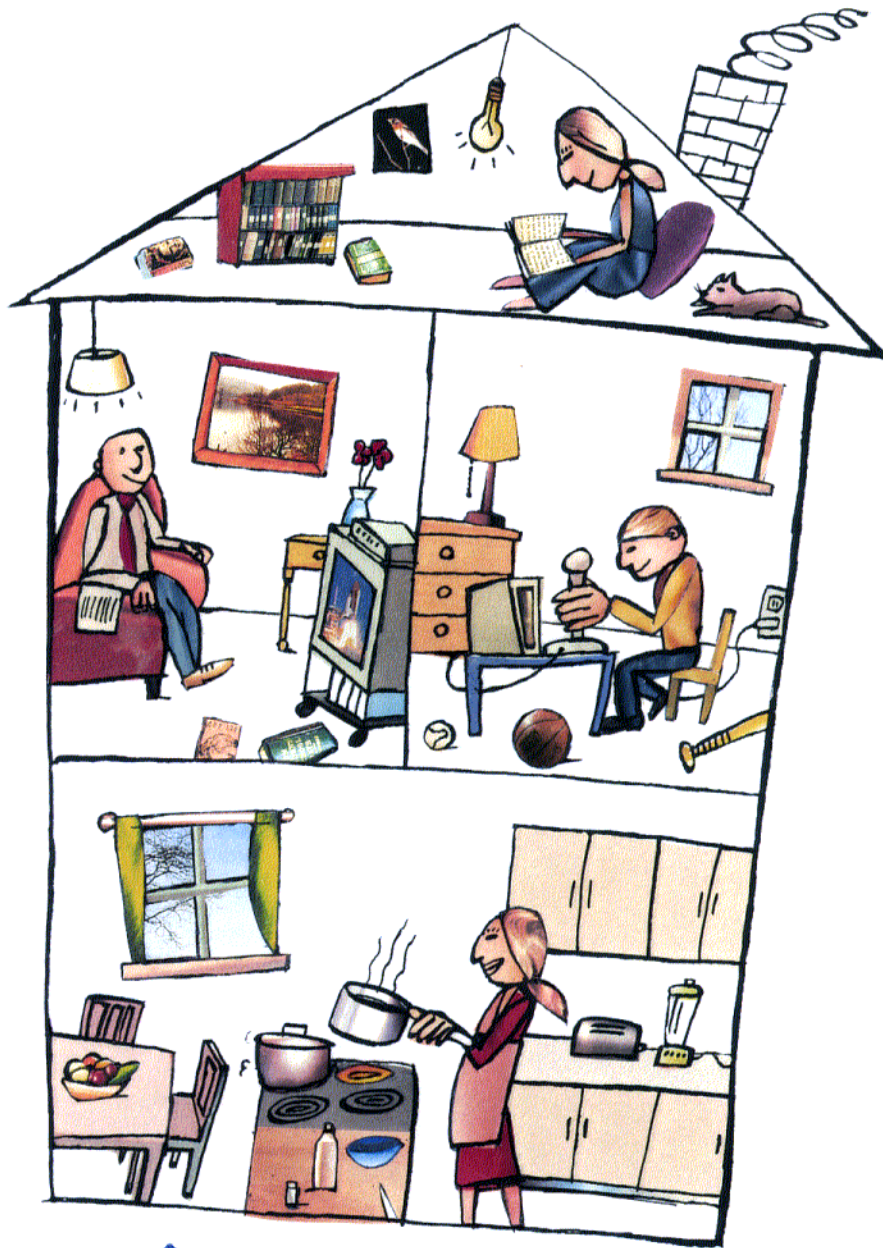


Everybody's
Power Handbook

everything you need to know about changes in Maine's electric industry.



brought to you by the
Maine Public Utilities Commission

Everybody's

Power Handbook

Provided by The Maine Public Utilities Commission



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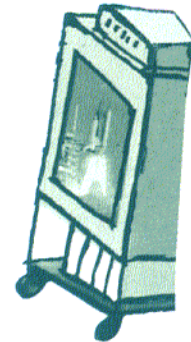


Maine's Electric Industry Is Changing!

Take a look around any room. You'll probably see lots of things that require electricity. Lights. Coffeemakers. Computers. Televisions. Electricity is vital to our daily lives.

Until now, we haven't had any choice about where our electricity came from. For the past 80 years, a single utility company has supplied and delivered electricity to your region under the supervision of the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC). But that's about to change. Beginning March 2000, Maine's electric industry will be restructured, which means the supply portion of the electric service is opening up to a competitive market. This means you can choose the company that produces your electricity.

Don't worry. You'll still get your power. A competitive electricity market won't interrupt your service. It simply offers choices that could, over time, result in savings and efficiencies for Maine consumers.



Why It's Happening

Most consumers in Maine and the rest of New England have some of the highest electric rates in the country. That makes it more expensive to live and do business in Maine. This so concerned the Maine Legislature that in 1997, it passed a law opening up Maine's electricity supply to competition. Electric restructuring is taking place in states across the country, and restructuring should, over time, help to lower Maine's overall electric rates so they are closer to the national average. New electric generation technologies may result in more efficient ways of producing electricity, an added economic and environmental benefit.





What's Changing

In the past, your local utility (now called your Distribution Company) provided all your electrical services. It produced power, transmitted it over wires and delivered it to your home. It also took care of repairs and maintenance, connected your electrical service, provided emergency services, and sent you a bill each month. The rates it charged you and all other customers were approved by the PUC.

Under electric restructuring, your present electric company will continue to deliver your electricity. It will still be responsible for wires and poles and it will connect your electrical service. If the lights go out, it will continue to provide emergency services, and will issue you a monthly bill. The rates it charges will continue to be regulated by the PUC. However, it will no longer produce your power. In fact, Bangor Hydro, Central Maine Power and Maine Public Service have all sold their generation plants.

Electricity Suppliers, operating in a competitive market, will provide your electricity. Their prices will be determined by market forces. You have the opportunity to choose an Electricity Supplier. You can base that choice on several things, including price, services or environmental preferences.

When It Starts

You have time to learn about electric choice and the choice that's right for you. Power delivered from any Supplier you choose will not begin until March 2000. However, you may begin to receive material and offers from competitive Suppliers or buying groups before then. If you want your choice of a new Supplier effective on March 1, 2000, you will need to sign up with them by early to mid-February.

It may take several years for a full range of opportunities to develop, particularly for consumers who do not use a great deal of electricity. If you are not ready to choose now, we suggest you keep this guide and use it to help you choose later as you receive information, and more choices become available. In the meantime, if you have any questions about electric restructuring, visit the PUC's Electric Choice Website at www.pucfact.com or call our toll-free Electric Choice Information Line at 1-877-PUC-FACT (1-877-782-3228).

GLOSSARY:

Electricity Supplier

Companies that are licensed by the PUC to sell electricity to consumers in a competitive market. These companies may produce (generate) their own power, or resell power produced (generated) by someone else.

Distribution Company

Companies regulated by the PUC that transmit and deliver your electricity over local lines, which they maintain and service. Only one company is licensed to provide these services in each local area. Depending on where you live in Maine, your Distribution Company will continue to be Central Maine Power (CMP), Bangor Hydro Electric (BHE), Maine Public Service (MPS), or one of Maine's consumer-owned utilities.



Before

The PUC regulated all electric rates.

After

The PUC only regulates rates for the delivery service. Electricity supply rates are determined by a competitive market.

Before

The PUC regulated electric safety and business practices.

After

The PUC regulates electric safety and business practices. The PUC provides new rules and guidelines for a competitive market.

Before

Your local electric utility company provided all electric services.

After

The supply portion of your electricity is open to competition. Your present utility continues to deliver your electricity.

Before

If there was a power outage, you called your local electric utility company.

After

You still call your local electric utility company (i.e. your Distribution Company) during a power outage.

Before

You got a single bill from your electric company.

After

You may receive separate bills from your Electricity Supplier and your Distribution Company, depending on whether the Supplier decides to bill through the Distribution Company or send its own bill. If you do not choose an Electricity Supplier and instead receive Standard Offer Service, you'll receive one bill from your Distribution Company.

GLOSSARY.

Kilowatt-hours

This is how electricity usage is measured. A unit of electrical power is equal to 1000 watts.

Electric Choice

As of March 2000, all Maine consumers may select their Electricity Supplier. However, with Electric Choice, delivery service will continue to be provided by their current utility company.





You Will Now Be Served By Two Companies

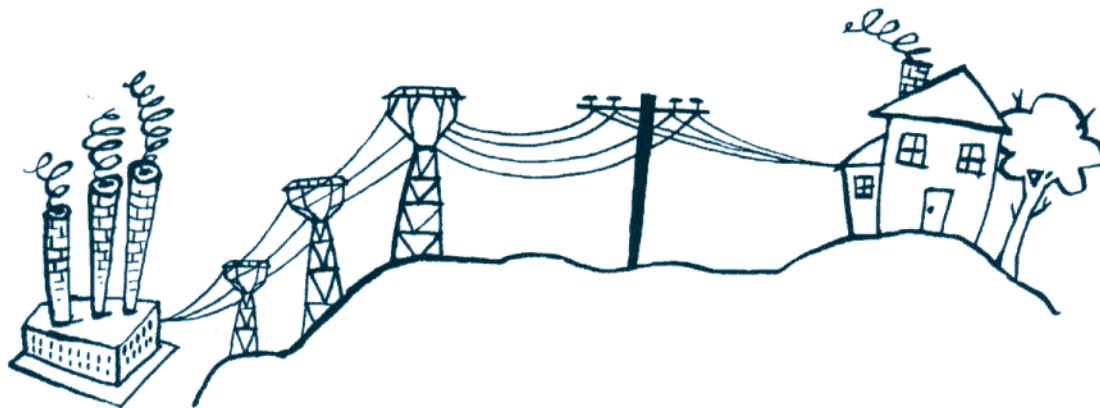
To prepare yourself for electric choice, you'll need to start looking at your electricity provider as two separate companies:

Electricity Suppliers: Companies licensed by the PUC to sell electricity to consumers in a competitive market. These companies may be actual owners and producers of electricity supply, middlemen who purchase the output from wholesale producers for resale at retail, brokers who put individual customers in touch with Suppliers, or Aggregators who negotiate with Suppliers on behalf of groups of customers.

Distribution Company: The company regulated by the PUC that transmits and delivers your electricity over local lines that it maintains and services.

Current Structure

Single Provider System



Generation

Transmission

Distribution

Home

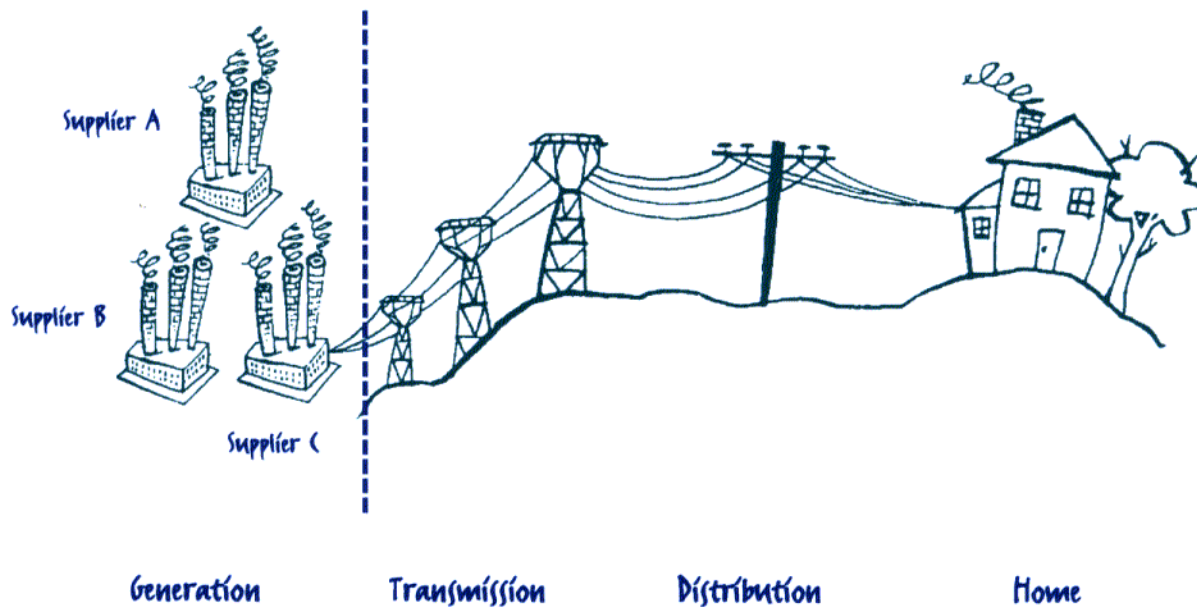


New Structure

March 2000

Electricity Supply
Competitive

Delivery Service
Single Provider





You Have Choices

Electric choice opens up several choices for electricity supply. However, if you don't choose a Supplier by March 2000, you'll still get your electricity. The choices you have include:

Choose a New Supplier

Join a Buying Group

Receive Standard Offer Service

Choose a New Supplier

Depending on the plans offered by Suppliers, you may be able to choose a new Supplier based on various options: price, terms of contract, special services, or perhaps your preference for environmentally-friendly power. Some Suppliers may offer special join-up incentives. Others may offer rates that vary by time of day, with discounts for times of day when electric usage on their system is lower. Use the checklist provided in this guide to help you compare options when you shop. Each Supplier may offer several choices, with different fees and terms. Whatever choice you make, be sure to confirm which of the Supplier's plans you are selecting, and always compare their rates with the Standard Offer Service. If you wish to choose a new Supplier, contact them directly, do not contact your Distribution Company.

Join a Buying Group

In other states where restructuring is in place, an important tool for consumers has emerged known as group buying. Buying groups, in some cases known as aggregates, enter purchasing agreements with Electricity Suppliers at favorable rates or terms for their members. Group buying is a way to improve your market position with Electricity Suppliers by offering them a large, predictable customer base. In other states, groups such as banks, churches, municipalities, trade associations, business groups and nonprofit organizations have formed buying groups.

What are the benefits of group buying?

Electricity buying groups, in some cases known as aggregates, benefit both the customer and the Supplier. Buying groups provide information and may reduce costs to members. Members of a buying group may receive discounted prices, special billing services, advice on improving the energy efficiency of their homes, or power from preferred sources such as renewable power. These benefits may mean more favorable prices and terms for group members than they can find on their own. The Supplier benefits by gaining many customers in a single deal.

Learn more about group buying

As with any new business relationship, you should carefully review the group's membership, financial strength and goals. Be sure you understand your obligations before you make an agreement. All Aggregators must be licensed by the PUC and meet financial and regulatory standards. For a detailed brochure on Group Power, or for a list of Aggregators licensed by the PUC, call the PUC's toll-free Electric Choice Information Line at 1-877-PUC-FACT (1-877-782-3228), or access one through the PUC's Electric Choice Website at www.pucfact.com.



Comparative shopping worksheet

Electricity Supplier 1

Electricity Supplier 2

	Electricity Supplier 1	Electricity Supplier 2
Name of Electricity Supplier. Contact person. Phone number.		
Electricity Supplier type.		
Price / Pricing Structure.		
Length of service contract offered.		
Any connection/service start-up fee?	if yes, amount: \$ ____	if yes, amount: \$ ____
Any cancellation fee if I leave early?	if yes, amount: \$ ____	if yes, amount: \$ ____
What generation sources do they use?	% __ hydro % __ nuclear % __ wind % __ coal % __ solar % __ oil % __ biomass % __ natural gas % __ municipal % __ other	% __ hydro % __ nuclear % __ wind % __ coal % __ solar % __ oil % __ biomass % __ natural gas % __ municipal % __ other



Receive Standard Offer Service

If you do not sign up with a Supplier or join a buying group, you will **automatically** receive Standard Offer Service. Standard Offer Service is provided to make sure that all Mainers have uninterrupted service. You may stay with Standard Offer Service or change Suppliers at any time. If you terminate your service from a Supplier and do not choose a new one, or if your Supplier terminates your service, you will automatically receive service under the Standard Offer.

Explore Different Energy Sources

Electric choice gives you control over how your energy dollars are spent, by letting you choose the environmental impact of your electricity supply. Different forms of electricity supply have different impacts on the environment. Depending on the amount of environmentally-friendly energy your Supplier uses, your choice could have a positive effect on the environment.

By law, Suppliers have to include a minimum of 30% renewable and highly efficient energy in their mix. Those energy sources might include wind, solar, hydroelectric, biomass or others. You can read the material each Supplier sends you to see what fuels they use to produce electricity and the air pollution levels those sources produce. Be sure to ask about energy source options. In other states where restructuring is in place, some Suppliers offer "environmentally-friendly" plans which include a higher percentage of renewable power.



GLOSSARY:

Renewable Energy

Power that is generated from a source that doesn't run out or is quickly renewed through natural processes. Renewable sources include:

Wind

Water (hydroelectric)

Sun (solar)

Wood burning (biomass)

Trash-to-energy plants



Non-Renewable Energy

Power generated from a source that can only be used once.

Non-renewable sources include:

Nuclear

Oil

Coal

Natural Gas





Your Bill Has Changed

Your electric bill is a good place to begin to learn about electric choice. Since January 1999, your electric bill has been itemized showing separate charges for electricity supply and delivery service. Beginning March 2000, the charge for electricity supply will be the price given to you by the Electricity Supplier you choose, or the Standard Offer price. The charge for delivery service, provided by your Distribution Company which will no longer generate your power, will still be set by the PUC.

It's important to note that electricity supply, for most Mainers, represents only about one-third of their total electric bill. Any savings gained from your choice of Supplier will apply only to electricity supply.

Who'll Send Me A Bill?

You'll still receive a bill from your Distribution Company. Depending on the arrangement between your Electricity Supplier and your Distribution Company, your Supplier may bill you separately or arrange to have its bill included with the one from your Distribution Company. If you choose Standard Offer Service, you'll receive one bill for both services from your Distribution Company.

Sample Itemized Bill		
meter	date	reading
937	02-09-99	83709
937	01-09-99	83169
KWh used		540
# of days		30
Service type: Residential		\$ Amount
Prior Balance		\$72.93
Payments Received--Thank you		\$72.93
Balance		\$00.00
Current month's charges		
Electricity Supply 540 kWh @ \$.043=		\$23.22
Delivery Service 540 kWh @ \$.083=		\$44.82
Total Current Charges		\$68.04

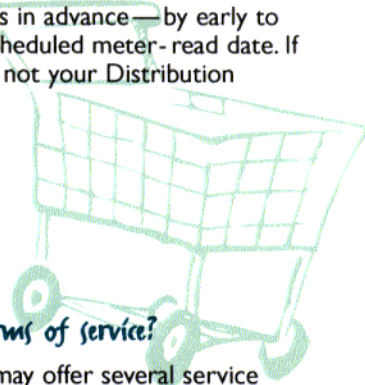


You Can Shop Around

Over time, as competitive Suppliers enter Maine's electric market, you may receive offers and information in the mail and by phone. Always compare their offers with the rate for Standard Offer Service.

For your choice to be effective March 1, 2000, you must sign up several weeks in advance—by early to mid-February. Changes made after this will become effective on your next scheduled meter-read date. If you do decide to switch, you should only notify your new Electricity Supplier, not your Distribution Company.

Once you decide to shop for a new Supplier, here are some questions you may want to ask:



1) Is the Supplier licensed by the PUC?

By Maine law, Suppliers and Aggregators must be licensed by the PUC. To view a list of Suppliers providing service in your area, visit the PUC's Electric Choice Website at www.pucfact.com, or call the toll-free Electric Choice Information Line at 1-877-PUC-FACT (1-877-782-3228).

3) What are the terms of service?

Electricity Suppliers may offer several service options, depending on your needs. Some may be established on a month-to-month basis, while others are renewed yearly. Know whether your purchase agreement is automatically renewed.

2) What pricing structures does the Supplier offer?

In addition to providing an average kilowatt-hour fee, Electricity Suppliers must tell you how they structure their fees. Are the rates fixed or variable? Is there a minimum monthly amount of electricity required, or a minimum fee? Are there any discounts for times when electricity usage on their system is lower? Electricity Suppliers may offer several different pricing plans. Make sure you pick the plan that is best for you, and be sure to confirm which plan you are getting.

4) Are there any additional fees?

Be sure to find out if the Supplier charges a connection or service start-up fee. Ask if there is any penalty if you leave your plan early. You should also ask about any join-up incentives. Some Suppliers may waive fees or offer a period of reduced rates for new customers.

Remember, each Supplier may offer several choices, with different fees and terms. It is very important that you are sure of which of the Supplier's plans you are selecting. Make sure you check this with any Supplier you choose.





Licensing Requirements

To sell electricity in Maine, Suppliers and Aggregators have to demonstrate their technical and financial capability to the PUC. They also have to disclose the required complaint information. Licenses are granted only after a review of their capability and background.

Terms of Service

Once you sign up with a Supplier, you'll receive a written Terms of Service document that outlines all the terms. You have five calendar days from the date your Supplier mails the Terms of Service document to you during which you may cancel your choice without cost.

Slamming Protections

You can't be switched to a new Supplier without your express consent. Maine law prohibits this type of "slamming" practice, with penalties for any company that deceptively obtains signatures or permission over the phone or attempts to switch a customer without authorization. To be sure that this does not occur, you must authorize the switch in writing, or if done over the phone, it must be confirmed by a third-party verification service.

Don't Call Me, I'll Call You

Maine requires that Suppliers follow federal and state laws regarding telephone solicitation. They are allowed to make telemarketing calls only between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9 p.m., and must maintain a "Do Not Call" list. You may call a Supplier to request that your name be added to their "Do Not Call" list or notify them when they contact you. You may also join a national "Do Not Call" list that will prevent telemarketing calls from a wide variety of companies. To put your name on the national "Do Not Call" list, write to: Telephone Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9014, Farmingdale, NY, 11735-9014. Be sure to include your full name and address with zip code, and phone number with area code.

Low Income Assistance

If you need help paying for your electricity, you may qualify for low income bill payment assistance, sponsored by several of Maine's Distribution Companies. To find out if you are eligible for this assistance, call your Distribution Company.





Q: Can I stay with the electric company I have now?

A: No. You will still receive delivery service from your present electric utility, which will continue to maintain wires and poles, read your meter, send you a bill and restore power during an outage. However, your current electric company will no longer be in the electricity supply business, so you will need to pick an Electricity Supplier, or if you do not choose, you will automatically receive Standard Offer Service.

Q: Do I have to choose a new Supplier right away?

A: No. But if you want your choice to be effective March 1st, you must sign up several weeks in advance, by early to mid-February. Otherwise, you can take some time to think about your choice. To make sure that all Mainers have uninterrupted service, Standard Offer Service has been established. These are companies that will automatically provide continuous service to those consumers who don't choose a new Supplier, or are between Suppliers. You may stay with Standard Offer Service or change Suppliers at any time.

Q: How do I know if these new Electricity Suppliers are really OK to do business with?

A: Consumer protections are in place to make sure that all Electricity Suppliers and Aggregators doing business in Maine meet established standards. All Suppliers and Aggregators must be licensed by the PUC and certified as technically and financially capable. If you are not sure if a Supplier is licensed, you may view a list of licensed Suppliers on the PUC's Electric Choice Website at www.pucfact.com or call the PUC's toll-free Electric Choice Information Line at 1-877-PUC-FACT (1-877-782-3228).

Q: Will I be switched to a new Supplier without my consent?

A: Maine law ensures that no customers can be switched without their clear permission. There are "slamming" protections in place, with penalties for any company that deceptively obtains signatures or permission over the phone or attempts to switch a customer without authorization.

Q: Who will send me my bill?

A: You'll still receive a bill from your Distribution Company. Depending on the arrangement between your Electricity Supplier and your Distribution Company, your Supplier may bill you separately or arrange to have its bill included with the one from your Distribution Company. If you choose Standard Offer Service, you'll receive one bill from your Distribution Company.

Additional Resources About Electric Restructuring:

Power Guide: A comprehensive guide to electric restructuring

Group Power: A guide to buying groups and aggregation

Power Sources: A guide to renewable and non-renewable electricity sources

Small Business Power Guide: A comprehensive guide to electric restructuring for small business

Video: "Electric Restructuring in Maine"

Electric Choice Website: www.pucfact.com

If you would like to request any materials, or have any questions about electric restructuring, call the toll-free PUC Electric Choice Information Line at **1-877-PUC-FACT** (1-877-782-3228)
TTY 1-800-437-1220

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