

ELECTRICITY GUIDE



A PUBLICATION OF THE MAINE
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

UNHAPPY WITH YOUR SUPPLY PRICE? CONSIDERING A SWITCH?

If you are considering choosing a competitive electricity provider (CEP) for your electricity supply needs, here are five things you need to know before making a decision.

1 - The Standard Offer Price vs Each CEP

You can always find the current Standard Offer price, compared to the other suppliers in the state, on the Office of the Public Advocate's website: maine.gov/meopa or by calling us at (207) 624-3687.

2 - The Contract

A fixed price contract will have the same cost per kWh for the length of the contract. If the price is variable, it can change each month. If the price is fixed, find out for how long, so you know if the term will last beyond the next Standard Offer price change.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

WHY DID THE STANDARD OFFER GO UP IN 2023?

In Maine, the supply price for electricity is set annually through a “standard offer” process administered by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. 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, 2023 for residential and small commercial customers.

For Central Maine Power, the standard offer increased by 49% to \$0.176 from \$0.118 in 2022.

For Versant’s Maine Public District, the standard offer increased 34% to \$0.148

from \$0.1108 in 2022.

For Versant’s Bangor Hydro District, the standard offer increased 41% to \$0.164.

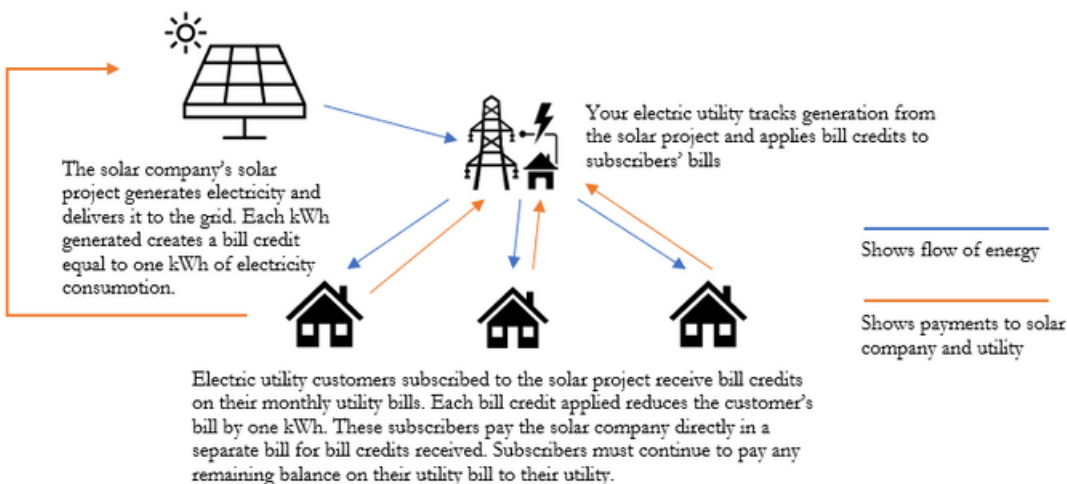
According to the PUC, standard offer price increases for 2023 are driven by increased natural gas prices, which heavily influence wholesale electricity prices across the New England region because natural gas-burning generators comprise a significant portion of the New England generator fleet.

Higher wholesale prices in turn result in higher retail prices, including the standard offer.

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

WILL SOLAR SAVE YOU MONEY?

It depends. Under Maine's net energy billing law, eligible solar projects receive one bill credit for each kWh of electricity they generate. Utility customers can sign up with the owner of a solar project to receive a share of these credits generated by the project (see the diagram below). Each credit is used to offset one kWh of electricity usage by the subscribing customer. If you sign up with the right company for the right amount of credits at the right price, you can save. Be very clear on your contract terms and do your homework.



EDUCATE YOURSELF

Questions to ask the solar company:

- When will I receive my specific disclosure form?
 - Do **not** sign a blank disclosure form.
- Am I getting \$ or kWh credit on my monthly electricity bill?
- When will the project come online? When will I start to receive credits?
- How long is the contract term?
 - Some companies have no fixed contract and others have up to a 20-year commitment.
- Will this solar farm always generate enough to cover my usage?
- What happens if I move?
- Do I need to have a smart meter to participate?
- Will my HEAP and/or LIAP benefits apply to the solar bill? (Note that you cannot use these benefits to buy solar credits)
- How does the subscription amount compare to my annual electricity usage?

Learn more: https://www.maine.gov/meopa/electricity/community_solar
or call (207) 624-3687 to request our new Solar FAQ!

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Remember: While a variable rate may offer savings now, it could change to a higher price in future months.

Also, ask when the contract will end so you can make a note to review your options before this date.

4 - The Termination Fee

Some CEPs charge a fee if you switch to the standard offer or to another CEP before your contract ends. Make sure you know if the CEP has one of these "termination" fees and how much they will charge before you switch.

5 - Your rights

CEPs are subject to oversight by the PUC, and there are rules to protect consumers. CEPs must provide you with their "Terms of Service" before you can become their customer, and you may change your mind within 5 days of signing up. CEPs also must notify you of an automatic renewal, or if they switch you to a variable price at the end of a fixed term. Always ask the CEP to confirm if they will be contacting you by mail or email. Always ensure that the CEP has your up-to-date contact information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1) How do I know if I am in a contract with a competitive electricity provider (CEP)?

- Central Maine Power customers - The last page of your electricity bill, the “Electricity Supply Account Detail” page, lists your electricity supplier and the price per kilowatt hour.
- Versant customers - The front page of the electricity bill has a Supplier Information box which lists the supplier and price per kilowatt hour.

2) My electricity is supplied by a CEP, not the standard offer. How do I switch to the standard offer?

- Contact your CEP and ask when your current contract expires and if there is a termination fee for breaking your contract early. (Their customer service number is on your electric bill.)
- If there is a termination fee and you have several months left on the contract, ask if the CEP can offer you a lower rate on your current contract.
- If you still want to switch, tell your CEP that you want to break your contract and switch back to the standard offer. (CMP Customers: There is a new form on the CMP website where you can also request the switch. Find it under Account>Understand Your Bill>Choose a Supplier.)

3) My electric bill is just too high - 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, Maine's Homeowner Assistance Fund, AMP, and others.
- Reach out to your city/town office for general assistance.

4) I just discovered that I'm on a new contract 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.

Learn more at www.maine.gov/meopa

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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