

New PUC Rules to Ensure Residential Customers Can More Easily Shop for Electricity

Recently, the Public Utilities Commission of Texas (PUC) adopted new rules to protect customers. Thanks to these rules and the Texas Electric Choice Act, residential electric customers can enjoy the benefits that come with choosing their electric provider — and be confident that they will be treated fairly.

Ensuring Retail Electric Providers Are Stable and Financially Qualified (Project No. 35767)

Customers can be comfortable that their retail electric provider is financially healthy and able to serve them for the long haul because the PUC holds retail electric providers to stringent financial and reporting requirements, making it far less likely that an electric provider would go out of business and strand its customers without service.

Bringing Clearer Communications to Customers (Project No. 35768)

To ensure customers are aware of their electric service, the PUC now requires that retail electric providers deliver a written notice of contract expiration at least 14 days but no more than 45 days in advance. The rule requires simpler contract language, an improved Electricity Facts Label and clear rules about what prices, terms, and conditions may change in a product, when they may be changed, and what customer notifications must be made.

Supporting Existing Customer Protection Rules

The new rules help to solidify the strong customer protections that have long been in place in the competitive market. Among other requirements, REPs serving residential customers must:

- Register with the PUC, meet the Commission's financial requirements and demonstrate they have the creditworthiness and technical ability to buy and supply electricity;
- Maintain privacy of customer information and not discriminate among customers;
- Not add charges to a customer's electric bill for services the customer didn't request;
- Provide customers with a disclosure of their rights and an Electricity Facts Label that makes "apples-to-apples" comparisons of retail electric providers easier;
- Make deferred payment plans and discounts available for low-income Texans and those with an inability to pay;
- Make Spanish-language support available to customers;
- Place customer deposits in interest-bearing accounts and return that interest to customers;
- Follow a mandated timeline and provide notice in case of disconnection;
- Investigate any customer complaint within 21 days;
- Provide a Terms of Service Statement detailing contract terms, cancellation penalties, deposit requirements, fees, payment arrangement options, how to cancel service, and other obligations of the REP; and
- Allow a customer to cancel a service agreement within three federal business days after receiving the terms of service



**Retail Electric Providers: Working With the Legislature
and the PUC to Protect the Rights of Texas Customers**
