



## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

# CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel  
10 West Broad Street  
Suite 1800, Columbus, OH  
43215-3485

EMAIL:  
[occ@occ.state.oh.us](mailto:occ@occ.state.oh.us)

WEBSITE:  
[www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org)

# Consumer Protections in ELECTRIC CHOICE



From the onset of electric restructuring in 1999, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, has represented the interests of residential electric customers and insisted that consumer protection standards be included in the law. State legislation required the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to establish certain customer rights to be enforced throughout the electric choice program.

Electric suppliers must be certified in the state of Ohio. The certification process is important because all suppliers wishing to provide electricity in Ohio must prove their company meets a certain level of standards.

Ohio's electric choice program provides for consumer protection standards to ensure a safe and successful competitive marketplace. For example, all electric suppliers marketing materials and agreements must be consistent with the following protections:

- ▶ Suppliers must reveal the type of rate they offer, whether it is a fixed rate (same rate for generation service throughout the length of the agreement), a variable rate (a rate that can fluctuate based on numerous factors) or other rate options, as

well as a clear and understandable explanation of the factors that may cause a rate to vary;

- ▶ No supplier can market electric services to you with false or misleading information. This includes promises of savings that may not exist, failure to disclose specifics of the agreement or providing false information about the energy sources used to produce the electricity; and
- ▶ Suppliers cannot solicit by telephone those customers who requested the PUCO place their name on its "Do Not Call" list.

### Agreement

Every certified electric supplier must provide you with a service agreement upon enrollment. Included on that agreement must be the following information:

- ▶ The supplier's name, toll free telephone number and address;
- ▶ Switching fees, if applicable, to transfer from your local utility to a new supplier;

# Consumer Protections in **ELECTRIC CHOICE**

## **CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET**

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org).



*The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.*



- ▶ An itemized list of prices, fees and the amount of recurring and non-recurring charges, billing cycle and late payment fee information and other terms and conditions;
- ▶ An outline of the electric suppliers' complaint handling procedures; and
- ▶ Notice with any applicable automatic renewal provisions.

If customers are part of an aggregated community, they will receive information about the agreement terms and conditions from the aggregated group.

### **Enrollment**

There are several ways to enroll: mail, fax, door-to-door solicitation, the Internet and by phone. Once an agreement has been executed, the supplier is required to notify your local electric utility within three to five days, depending on how you enrolled, that you have chosen a new supplier.

Your local utility will then mail you a confirmation notice. Included with the confirmation notice must be information explaining your right to cancel the contract should you choose to. Customers have seven days from the postmarked date on the confirmation notice to cancel their contract without penalties.

***Note:** Once the seven day cancellation period has passed, customers will automatically be enrolled with the supplier. If you choose to then cancel that agreement, make sure you check with the supplier for any penalties associated with the early termination of an agreement.*

