

Ameren customers reminded of rights

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Marion, Ill. -

Ameren customers could be eligible for compensation if they suffer long power outages, under a new state law that took effect on the same day that electric rates went down, state Rep. John Bradley and the Citizens Utility Board said Monday.

SB 1987, which was signed into law in January, was best known for opening the door for a study that will measure the feasibility of a "clean coal" plant in Taylorville. However, on Monday, June 1, another provision closed a gap between service-quality standards for ComEd customers and those protecting Ameren customers.

As a result, Ameren customers now could be eligible for compensation for damages caused by power outages that affect more than 30,000 customers, last at least four hours and are the fault of the power company (not weather-related). Under the new law, the expense of giving customers compensation in these instances cannot be recovered through rates.

"This new law gives people in southern Illinois the same rights with regards to power outages as folks in Chicago," said Bradley, a Marion Democrat. "If there is an outage that is not related to bad weather, then the law may provide southern Illinoisans with much-needed relief."

"Obviously more needs to be done to make sure electric customers across Illinois are properly protected from bad service," CUB Executive Director David Kolata added. "However, this is a step forward in the long fight for fair rates and quality service in Illinois' power industry. Customers should know their rights."

CUB has prepared a fact sheet, at www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org, for customers who suffer outages and have questions about whether they are eligible for compensation. Those without internet access should call CUB's Consumer Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, for a copy of the fact sheet.

People also can call AmerenCIPS, 1-888-789-2477, for more information.

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