



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CONSUMER ALERT: NEW COMED PRICE UP 26% FROM LAST YEAR, CEJA CREDIT OFFERING RELIEF TO CUSTOMERS

As Illinois heads into what could be one of the most expensive winters in state history, Commonwealth Edison's new price for electricity is up about 26 percent compared with a year ago. But the Climate & Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) is offering customers some much-needed relief through a credit on bills, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) said in a consumer alert issued Monday.

As of Oct. 1, the Illinois Commerce Commission reports that ComEd's non-summer "price to compare"—the rate customers should compare with alternative supplier offers—is **9.765¢ per kilowatt-hour (kWh)**. This rate, in effect through May 31, 2023, includes the supply price and a transmission charge. ComEd does not profit off the price of electricity—it passes those costs onto customers with no markup.

ComEd's price is approximately 26 percent higher than last October's price—but CEJA includes a provision that will give some relief to customers this winter. The landmark energy legislation calls for giving support to carbon-free nuclear power plants through a charge on electric bills—but that charge becomes a credit in the case of a severe escalation in wholesale energy prices, like what's happening now.

The CEJA credit is about 4 cents per kWh through May of 2023, which works out to an average total of roughly \$18 a month, ComEd said. The credit is for residential customers—you don't have to apply for it or take any action. It appears as a line item called "Carbon-Free Energy Resource Adjustment."

"We are pleased that CEJA can deliver some much-needed relief to consumers in a difficult winter," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. "Gov. Pritzker and the General Assembly deserve credit for making sure this consumer protection was included in CEJA."

Customers also are getting hit with high natural gas prices. The prices charged by Northern Illinois utilities in October, the beginning of the winter heating season, are up 28-97 percent from the year before.

Nicor Gas: \$1.24 per therm (up 97 percent from last October)

Peoples Gas: \$1.07 per therm (up 48 percent from last October)

North Shore Gas: 86.18¢ per therm (up 28 percent from last October)

Note: Gas utility supply prices can change monthly. Nicor, Peoples and North Shore Gas do not profit off supply prices. They pass those costs onto customers with no markup.

"This winter, nobody should take risks to lower their utility bills," Kolata said. "The safest, most reliable way to fight these price spikes is through energy efficiency. Efficiency is about keeping your home safe and your bills more affordable. We're asking all Illinois consumers to look out for each other and make sure friends, family and neighbors are staying safe and warm."

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The energy price increases are due to a perfect storm of problems affecting consumers from coast to coast. Natural gas prices go through periodic spikes, and that volatility, which began in February of 2021, has kept winter prices at their highest levels since the winter of 2008-09. Other events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are helping to make a bad situation worse. Gas, which is often used to generate electricity, has pushed power prices to extreme levels across the nation.

CUB listed several key points for energy customers this winter:

See if you qualify for energy assistance. The application process for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has reopened through May 31, 2023, or until funds are exhausted. Households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for LIHEAP funding. To apply or learn more, visit www.helpillinoisfamilies.com or call the Help Illinois Families Assistance Line at **1-833-711-0374**.

Stay in contact with your utility. Consumers who are struggling should contact their utilities to see if they qualify for other energy assistance, inquire about payment plans to pay off debt and learn about energy efficiency programs. Keep the lines of communication open if you're having trouble this winter.

Beware of alternative supplier rip-offs. Alternative electricity and gas suppliers are impacted by the same market conditions that are causing utility prices to increase, so be careful about getting lured into bad deals. Be wary of low introductory rates that will skyrocket after a short period, and read the fine print for add-on fees that can raise the cost of the plan. Since 2015, Illinois consumers have lost more than \$1 billion to alternative electricity suppliers alone.

If your community has negotiated a power deal with a supplier, it's possible the price is lower than ComEd's supply rate. Contact your community and inquire whether it has a community power deal. If so, find out how the price compares with ComEd's supply price, and when the offer expires.

Energy efficiency can help soften the blow of high prices. Energy efficiency is always important, and it's especially key at times like this. Weatherize your windows and doors to keep warm air in and cold air out. Set your thermostat at a safe level: 68 degrees when you're awake and home, and bump it down a few degrees when you're away or asleep. CUBHelpCenter.com, CUB's special online resource, has more tips.

Consider a community solar deal to help ease costs. Community solar deals right now guarantee savings compared to ComEd's supply price. Be a careful shopper: Get more information at our special website, SolarInTheCommunity.com. (Note: Several of the offers have a waitlist, so check with the companies.)

CUB is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

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