



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CUB WARNING TO COM ED CUSTOMERS: BEWARE OF BAD ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIER DEALS

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) on Monday reminded Commonwealth Edison customers of the utility's new summer power price and warned customers about getting lured into bad alternative supplier deals. Even in this high-priced environment, ComEd's supply price is likely the best bet, the watchdog said.

ComEd's new summer supply price, June through September, is: **10.399¢ per kilowatt-hour (kWh)**

Note: This price, which includes the supply price and a transmission charge, represents about a 50 percent increase from two years ago. The price will change in October, but it is expected to continue to be elevated.

"We urge Illinois consumers to carefully review any alternative electricity supplier offer pitched to them," CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "Customers have lost far too much money to alternative suppliers over the last decade. Even in this high-priced market, ComEd is probably your best bet for electricity supply."

Soaring electricity demand has become a major issue in recent years, with the proliferation of data centers to manage energy-intensive artificial intelligence. But CUB stressed that alternative suppliers are affected by the same market conditions that keep ComEd's price high. Since 2015, **Illinois consumers have lost \$2 billion to alternative electricity suppliers, CUB estimates.**

CUB is working to pass the "No More Utility Bill Rip-Offs Customer Protection Act" (House Bill 4313), a series of reforms to protect utility customers from bad energy deals. Among the protections, HB 4313 would require that suppliers cannot at any time charge a supply rate more than 10 percent higher than the utility supply price. Also, it would require a customer's signature at the time of automatic contract renewal if the supplier is increasing the rate.

CUB's tips:

Consumers pitched an alternative supplier offer should scan the fine print and be wary of:

- A low introductory rate that will skyrocket after a brief period. (Find out how long a rate lasts, and what the new rate will be.)
- Add-on monthly fees that raise the cost of the plan.
- A force majeure provision. Suppliers charging a fixed rate, which may protect a customer from a spike in prices, could claim "force majeure." That is a legal term to describe a company claiming it can no longer honor a contract because of unforeseeable circumstances beyond its control.

Remember, going with an alternative supplier will NOT protect you from utility delivery rate hikes. Those hikes impact delivery rates, what we pay the utility (ComEd) to deliver electricity to our homes. Everyone pays those delivery rates, even if they are with an alternative supplier.

Be wary about showing your bill to just anybody. If somebody comes to your door and says they want to look at your electricity bill, don't hand it over or give out your account number, unless you are sure you want to sign up for an offer. A sales rep who sees your bill can get your account number and sign you up for an offer without your permission—a scam called "slamming." Decisions about your utility bill are important, and you don't have to make them at your doorstep. Don't give out any sensitive info, even if the person at the door claims to be from the utility company. Instead, ask where you can get more information about the offer and end the conversation.

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If you are with an alternative supplier, watch your bill carefully. Be prepared to get out of the offer if you notice it's charging you a higher rate than the utility's supply rate above. You should be able to get out with no penalty, but it can take up to two months to switch back to your utility.

Remember, even if you are with an alternative supplier, you still get a bill from your utility, typically with the alternative supplier charges included in the "Supply" section. If you want to end the offer, call the alternative supplier using the phone number for the company listed on the bill.

Check if your community has negotiated a "municipal aggregation" deal. **Municipal aggregation** is when community leaders negotiate with an alternative supplier to try to secure a reasonable electricity price. Don't assume a community power deal will save you money—savings aren't guaranteed. Make an apples-to-apples comparison between the aggregation offer's price and your utility's supply rate, and find out when the aggregation offer expires.

There are other ways to control your energy costs. CUB's online resource, CUBHelpCenter.com, has tips on how to get through an expensive summer.

Practice energy efficiency. Simple things like weatherizing windows and doors—to keep cool air in and warm air out—can help soften the blow of this price spike. Don't take unnecessary risks that keep your home too hot and threaten your health. Energy efficiency is about eliminating waste but staying safe and cool. **Read CUB tips.**

Stay in contact with your utility. Consumers who are struggling should contact their utility to inquire about energy assistance, payment plans to pay off debt, and energy efficiency programs. CUB calls on ComEd to offer good payment plans to help more utility customers pay off their debt and stay connected.

See if you qualify for energy assistance. To learn more about the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), visit www.helpillinoisfamilies.com or call the Help Illinois Families Assistance Line at **1-833-711-0374**. Also, ComEd offers a [Low Income Discount program](#).

Consider solar power.

- A community solar deal allows you to enjoy the benefits of solar power without having to install panels at your home. Community solar offers currently guarantee savings compared to the utility's supply price. But be a careful shopper: Get more information at our special website, SolarInTheCommunity.com.
- Learn more about **rooftop solar**. (ComEd customers, check out the [Switch Together program](#).)
- Also, **CUB has information** about income-qualified solar programs.

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For more than 40 years the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has been 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 CUB's website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.