

Wondering what all the ads for choosing an electric supplier are about? During the 1990s, the New Hampshire Legislature took steps to provide electric supply choices to electric customers. It took some time, however, for a competitive electric energy supply market to develop. Things moved more quickly for larger commercial and industrial consumers and the energy supply market has now grown to include smaller commercial and residential customers. There are now many companies registered to supply energy to your home or business. The Commission's website lists all the competitive energy suppliers doing business in New Hampshire.

Your electric bill consists of two parts – delivery service and energy supply. Delivery service is the poles and wires that bring electricity to your home or business. Your electric utility (also known as an electric distribution company) delivers electricity to all customers within the electric utility's defined service area. The energy supply portion of your bill is for the electricity you use in your home or business. Who supplies that energy is up to you, the consumer. You may continue to buy your energy from your electric utility or you may choose to buy your energy from a competitive energy supplier.

If you decide to choose a competitive energy supplier, you will still be a customer of your electric utility for the delivery of electricity to your home or business. The utility will still be responsible for restoring power if there is an outage. What will be different is that you will now also be a customer of a competitive energy supplier for the actual electricity that you use in your home or business. You may receive one bill, sometimes called consolidated billing, from your electric utility for both the delivery and the energy. Or you may receive two bills – one from your electric utility for the delivery of the electricity and the other from the competitive energy supplier for the electricity you used. Everyone's bill is different, but a rule of thumb is that at least half of the total bill is for delivery and the rest is for the electricity you use.

Thinking about choosing a competitive energy supplier? When you choose a new electric energy supplier, you are choosing a company that will generate your electricity or purchase that electricity on your behalf. Before you shop for a new electric energy supplier, look at your bills to determine what portion is for delivery and what portion is for the electricity you use. Write down the number of kilowatt hours you use and the kilowatt hour price for energy shown on your bill. These are the numbers you will use to compare with offers from competitive energy suppliers. If you currently receive an Electric Assistance Program (EAP) benefit and you switch to a competitive supplier, you will lose the EAP benefit on the energy supply portion of your bill.

The amount you save from choosing a competitive supplier may be offset by the partial loss of the EAP benefit, so look carefully at the rate you will end up with before you make a choice.

Ask questions when talking to competitive energy suppliers. Things to consider include:

- What is the price per kilowatt hour – kWh – of electricity offered by the competitive supplier?
- Is the price fixed (locked in for a period of time) or variable (subject to change over time)?
 - If the price is fixed, how long is it fixed for?
 - If the price is variable, how does it vary? Will the supplier notify you if the price is going to change? Is there a cap on how high it can go?
- Are there any additional customer charges or other recurring fees?
- Is there a contract? How long is the contract? Is there a charge for early termination?
- What are the terms and conditions of service? Review terms carefully before making a decision. Ask questions to clarify anything you don't understand.
- Are there different prices for different contract lengths?
- Can you change your mind? How long do you have to do that?
- How do you cancel the contract?
- Is there a termination fee if you end the contract early?
- What happens at the end of the contract? Will the competitive energy supplier notify you in advance?
- Is there an automatic renewal clause if you don't do anything when the contract ends?
- Will you receive one bill or two?
- Is there a bonus for signing up?
- Does the supplier offer a choice of energy sources, such as green or renewable energy options?

If you have questions about choosing a competitive energy supplier, please contact the NH Public Utilities Commission at 1-800-852-3793 or at puc@puc.nh.gov .

Remember, regardless of who you buy your electricity from, you will continue to call your electric utility for outages, emergency services and questions about your service.